

EXPLORING THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP: BLACK GREEK MEN ON A
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE CAMPUS

by

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(Under the direction of Reuben A. Buford May, PhD)

ABSTRACT

This project explores the meaning of membership for 20 undergraduate members of a Black Greek Fraternity on a predominantly white campus. Utilizing a semi-structured interview method, twenty members of one fraternity were interviewed. The data reveal that the members utilize the fraternity in the construction of a unique masculine identity that negotiates the contradictions of their race, class, and gender identities. This masculinity incorporates elements of the hegemonic masculinity model, which is typically conceived as straight, successful, competitive, and individualistic. It also incorporates elements of the Afrocentric model, which emphasizes community, cooperation, and connection. In the context of this identity development, the members also described the role of the fraternity as a voluntary organization which provided them with connections to campus, to each other, and to society in general.

INDEX WORDS: Black Greek organizations, Hegemonic masculinity, Black masculinity, Minority student retention, Tinto's theory of college student attrition, Voluntary organizations, Intergroup interaction, Afrocentric socialization

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DEDICATION

To the brothers who generously shared of their time and themselves, their thoughts and stories, and who helped me to grow in the process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In his dictionary of American educational desegregation, Jeffrey Raffel (1990) provides a timeline of important events in this history, making it clear what a hard-won victory educational desegregation was for this country. These include the Southern Regional Education Compact which was signed on February 8, 1948 by fourteen states trying to avoid the desegregation of their institutions of higher education and the Southern Manifesto, signed on March 12, 1956 by over 100 southern senators, which denounced the Brown decisions (which overturned Plessy v. Ferguson, declaring separate as inherently unequal). One significant event that did not make the timeline provides the context for this project, the desegregation of the University of Georgia.

In January of 1961, two African-American students registered for classes at the University of Georgia (UGA) in Athens. These two students, the late Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter-Gault, were the first African-American students admitted to UGA. At the time of their enrollment both students were already members of National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations, the national council for historically Black Greek organizations, having joined at their previous undergraduate institutions. These organizations provided them with a great amount of support during their time at UGA. In fact, her national sorority provided the money for one quarter of Ms. Hunter-Gault's tuition (Hunter-Gault 1993).

At the fortieth anniversary of this desegregation, Ms. Hunter-Gault joined current

members of her sorority in singing their official hymn. Dr. Holmes' memory was honored by current members of his fraternity through a powerful performance naming previous fraternity members who had also performed notable firsts in the university's history. These firsts included the first African-American drum major and the first (and now, second) African-American student body president and vice president.

At this same celebration, Ms. Hunter-Gault commented on the paucity of African-American students currently attending the university, questioning whether she would have had the courage to register and attend so many years ago knowing now how little progress would be made for African American students. The University Student Affairs Department has also been concerned with the low rates of recruitment and retention of African American students for at least ten years, based on information received from that department (Tripp 1991).

The history of African Americans at UGA is intricately connected with historically black fraternities and sororities. Based on the fraternity presentation, many of the success stories of African Americans at UGA involve fraternity membership. This project seeks to explore the function and influence of fraternity membership on twenty undergraduate members of a black fraternity as it relates both to their concept of themselves as African-American men and their college experience at this large, southeastern university.

This project attempts to answer the question of how black fraternity members use the organization in the development of a masculine identity that resolves the contradictory expectations of their race, class, and gender identities and enables them to thrive in both in college and beyond. These contradictions are based on their unique

experience in dual worlds, a phenomenon that was described by W.E.B. DuBois (1907) as “double-consciousness.” As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. wrote in his book, Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man, “Whatever else we were, we knew that we were black men. And there in all its glory, that was our weird double confinement . . . At the overlap of the two categories, black and male, wasn’t there an amalgamation-effect that was more than simply additive?” (Gates 1997). Several researchers have written about black masculinities, proposing this type of amalgamation effect (Roberts 1994, Hunter and Davis 1994, Jackson 1997). This paper attempts to delineate the content of that amalgamation identity.

CHAPTER 2

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

While the history of many fraternity members at UGA is characterized by success, this is not the normal portrayal of Black men in social research. Much of this research characterizes black masculinity and the black male experience as deviant if not pathological (Majors & Mancini 1992, Gibbs 1988, Oliver 1984). According to Connell, black masculinity has generally been perceived as a "sexual and social threat to the dominant white cultures" (Connell 1995, p. 197). A characterization of black masculinity as flawed and oppositional began with Frazier's (1939) ideas about the deleterious impact of slavery and oppression on black men. This characterization has been carried through several decades of research typically conducted on African-American men from a lower-class background who often have criminal records, and who are in no way representative of the entire black male population (Hunter & Davis 1994, see also Duneier 1992 and May 2001).

Numerous social statistics support this characterization of black men as an endangered species (Oliver 1989), which was named by Gibbs (1988) and favored by Majors and Mancini (1992), including high incarceration and unemployment rates and low life expectancy rates (Oliver 1989). College attrition rates are no different. Black males have the highest attrition rates of any college student population (Mow & Nettles 1985, Taylor & Howard-Hamilton 1995, DeSousa & Kuh 1996) and consistently report higher levels of isolation and alienation than their female counterparts (Allen 1992).

Allen (1992) attributes this to lack of structural and normative change in the college environment since the admission of African-American students to predominantly white institutions. However, in addition to research that explores reasons for black male failure in higher education, Allen suggests “more must also be known about what enables black students to experience personal and academic success” (Allen 1992, p. 27).

As a follow up to the desegregation celebration performance, which named the numerous successes of Hamilton Holmes’ fraternity brothers, this research will explore the meaning and function of fraternity membership as a possible mechanism of success. It attempts to address the way in which one specific group of minority men utilize their fraternity membership to adapt to and adapt the concept of masculinity in order to construct a masculine identity that is both useful to and flexible for them. Following the recommendation of Hunter and Davis, it will hopefully explore a “perspective on manhood and masculinity often hidden in the discourse on the Black male ‘crisis’” (Hunter and Davis 1994, p. 21).

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Decentering Hegemonic Masculinity

Characterizations of black masculinity as dysfunctional are largely based on comparison with an unnamed white norm (Hunter and Davis 1994). As cited by Andersen (1993), Ladner believes this practice is consistent across social research on the African American experience. “Blacks have always been measured against an alien set of norms. As a result they have been considered to be a deviation from the ambiguous white middle-class model, which itself has not always been clearly defined” (Ladner in Andersen 1993, p. 40).

In an attempt to delineate the content of this white norm, Connell (1995) has developed the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which he defines as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy” (Connell 1995, p. 77). Hegemonic masculinity is related to Gramsci’s ideas about hegemonic ideologies that “preserve, legitimate and naturalize the interests of the powerful – marginalizing and subordinating the claims of other groups” (Wetherell and Edley 1999, p. 336). Hegemonic masculinity marginalizes and subordinates women and also alternative forms of masculinity. Although the specific definition varies by social context, hegemonic masculinity is understood contemporarily as being white, straight, successful, and competitive (Speer 2001).

David and Brannon (1976) have classically described this model in their book, The Forty-Nine Percent Majority: The Male Sex Role. The authors outline four important rules regarding what makes a man a man in America, including to be as unlike a woman as possible, which is typically revealed as emotional detachment (Bird 1996), to desire and work for success and status, to rely only on yourself, and to have an aura of aggressiveness and violence. In her research on hegemonic masculinity, Bird (1996) describes some of the implications of this type of masculinity. “To express feeling is to reveal vulnerabilities and weaknesses; to withhold such expressions is to maintain control . . . [c]ompetition facilitates hierarchy in relationships” (Bird 1996, pg. 122). This model has important consequences for the relationships of men to one another. As they are in constant competition and are prohibited from expressing their emotions, it is difficult for men to develop intimate, trustworthy relationships with one another (Roberts 1994, Bird 1996).

Messner (1993), citing Baca Zinn and Collins, has called for a “critical perspective that decenters, and thus problematizes, hegemonic masculinity, rather than taking it as a universal normative standard” (Messner 1993, p. 137). This decentering would allow space for alternate masculinities, including those of racial minorities.

Hunter and Davis also articulated the need for this problematization.

[B]ecause early revisionist perspectives on Black masculinity and male role performance were typically steeped in the hegemony of masculinity and manhood, they failed to elaborate on the varied adaptive meanings of manhood that may have grown out of the Black experience (Hunter and Davis 1994, p. 23).

Afrocentric Masculinity

By focusing on the unique experiences of African Americans and on their African cultural heritage, a model of Black masculinity has been developed that deviates from the competition, individuality, and emotional detachment emphasized in the white male model. Instead, it emphasizes community needs and cooperation among individuals (Nobles 1980, Akbar 1990) as well as intimate relationships between men and a decreased emphasis on the dichotomy between male and female (Hunter and Davis 1994). These characteristics can be traced back to African tradition but are also influenced by the experiences of African Americans living in a racialized society. Racial masculinities are by necessity collective in nature (Connell 1995) because, as Ward argues, “the integration of the individual’s personal identity with one’s racial identity is a necessary and inevitable developmental task of growing up black in white America” (Ward 1990).

The most significant aspect of an Afrocentric identity is an emphasis on community and collectivity. Oliver (1989) wrote that the key for Afrocentric socialization is, “to internalize a definition of adulthood that associate[s] maturity with one’s contribution to the mental and political liberation of Black people” (Oliver pg. 27). Other aspects are closely related to this sense of common destiny with other African Americans or connection to African Americans as a community, including an emphasis on the unity of the family and the community, and on the collective nature of work and responsibility (Oliver 1989).

Amalgamation Masculinity

African-American men can be seen as adapting a masculine identity that incorporates aspects of both the white ideal and the Afrocentric ideal (Akbar 1990). Defining African-American men solely by the European-American male model ignores their dual existence and limits the explanatory power of any theory in delineating the unique and varying experiences of black men in America (Jackson 1997). However, emphasizing only the Afrocentric model ignores the influence of the dominant masculine model on the identity development of African-American men living in this society. Therefore, a model of black masculinity can and should be developed which describes the content of the “amalgamation effect” named by Gates (1997).

Function of the Fraternity

The collective nature of the construction of a racial masculine identity points to the need for peer relationships and support. Jackson (1997) believes that the presentation of only European-American models of masculinity leads to a disconnect and an inability of black men to identify their own experiences in the literature. This has been found to be true for minority students on a predominantly white campus, who often report high levels of alienation and social isolation as well as a pressure to conform to the white ideal (Allen 1992, Feagin and Sikes 1995, Willie and Cunnigen 1981, Zea et al. 1997, Steward 1990).

In his structural theory of intergroup interaction, Blau (1994) wrote about the role of voluntary associations in connecting members to each other and to society. This is true for members of historically black as well as for members of predominantly white Greek systems. Blau connects this part of his theory to Tocqueville, who emphasized the

role of intermediate organizations in serving as links between the individual and the state. Fraternity membership functions as an intermediate association linking its members to the university, to the larger black community, and also to society in general, serving to connect them to a group and lower their perception of isolation.

As it relates to connecting members to the university, the fraternity can be considered a mechanism of social integration. Tinto hypothesized that student attrition is highly correlated with the level of social and academic integration of the student on campus. Related to Durkheim's theories of social integration (specifically his classic study of suicide), Tinto argues that variations of levels of social and academic integration affect persistence at a college or university differently (Tinto 1995). A student who is highly integrated only academically or socially is at a higher risk of leaving college than a student who is highly integrated both socially and academically.

The theory takes into account the most commonly measured precollege factors, including family socioeconomic status, admissions test scores, and high school GPA, but gives greater significance to the importance of the levels of integration after coming to college. Students who are well integrated on these two levels are much more likely to remain in school than those who are not (Knox, Lindsay, and Kolb 1992). Importantly for this study, post-entrance factors that affect academic and social integration are much better predictors of black student success than traditional precollege measurements (Murguia, Padilla and Pavel 1991).

Both Moran, Yengo and Algier (1994) and Murguia et al. (1991) found that participation in same-race organizations did not increase isolation for African-American and other minority students, as commonly believed, but actually made them feel more

apart of the campus community (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton 1995, Moran et al. 1994, Murguia et al. 1991). Murguia et al. identifies these organizations, including fraternities and sororities, as “ethnic enclaves.” Students use these enclaves to scale down a large campus in order to deal with it more effectively. It is in this function that the black Greek organization can most clearly be seen as unique from that of white Greek organizations. Based on the incongruence in the overall campus environment and the needs and experiences of African American students, same-race organizations create a unique niche for these students (Tinto 1995).

Dawson, as cited by Smith and Moore (2000), argues that “racial group identity depends a great deal on the extent to which individuals have access to information relevant to that identity and believe that a particular identity is consistent with their own reality. Racial identification becomes less salient to individuals when information about the political, economic, and social worlds of blacks is not accessible” (Smith and Moore 2000, p. 6). Membership in a historically black fraternity provides members with historical information about the history of African Americans and with models that share their experiences and ideals, something common for voluntary associations (Blau 1994). “Members who become acquainted through organizational activities influence one another’s behavior and provide information outside their immediate environments” (McPherson & Smith-Lovin 1986, p. 62). This enables them to utilize the fraternity in their development of a racial masculine identity and to gain information about issues in the black community.

As a voluntary association, the fraternity not only connects its members to the campus and the black community, but also functions in the creation and maintenance of

social networks that connect members to each other and to society (Rotolo 1999, McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook 2001). Rotolo writes that “young Black workers face a disadvantage in the labor market because they lack the social ties that allow otherwise capable workers to gain meaningful employment” (Rotolo 1999, p. 200). Therefore, common fraternal membership is one type of powerful weak tie that can provide its members with the social capital necessary for successful competition in the labor market (Granovetter 1973).

In summary, the experience of members of a black Greek organization may be seen as having some similarities to their white counterparts but also having some important distinctions. The specific experience of black students on predominantly white campuses points to a greater need among minority students for same-race support groups (Murguia et. al 1991), something white students find through their participation in mainstream organizations that are predominantly white by default. The need for peer support in this environment is especially significant in the construction of a racial masculine identity (Connell 1995, Smith and Moore 2000). As it functions to integrate African American students into the college campus, the black Greek organization can be seen as decreasing the isolation of its members (Moran et. al 1994) and providing them with important information about black history and culture (Smith and Moore 2000) which is useful in the construction of a racial masculinity.

Class Status in Voluntary Association Membership and Masculine Identity Development

Membership in voluntary associations is most common for members of the middle and upper classes (Blau 1994, Rotolo 1999, McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001). Blau writes that organizations with multiple levels (like national Black Greek

organizations) allow members to exercise greater influence in society. Since members of the middle class are more likely to be members of voluntary associations, this increases their social and political power. In his interviews with six African American high school students, Price found that the importance of membership in social organizations was more salient to those members of his sample who he identified as middle class (Price 2000).

The content and development of masculine identity has also been found to vary by social class (Price 2000, Franklin 1992). Middle-class men are more likely to emphasize success and achievement and may be less likely to experience the close male relationships described by their lower-class counterparts (Franklin 1992). Cazenave emphasized in his research that, “there can be no adequate study of masculine roles devoid of a critical analysis of the workings of American social structure and the relative positions of particular groups of men within it” (Cazenave 1984, p. 654).

This same variation by social class is found in the minority college student experience (Smith & Moore 2000). Smith and Moore found that, contrary to findings from nationally representative samples of black Americans, on college campuses those students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds felt closer to their fellow black students (Smith & Moore 2000). This is attributed to the predominance of upper- and middle-class blacks on college campuses.

Several researchers have emphasized the importance of analyzing social phenomena at the intersection of race, class, and gender (Price 2000, Messner 1993). This project attempts to understand the meaning and function of fraternity membership in the masculine identity development of the interview subjects and its role as a voluntary

association in connecting them to college, the black community, and society in general.

The meaning of the fraternity must be understood in the context of the multiple identities of the members, their racial and gender identity, as well as their social class position.

The interview data and analysis reveal several important themes that have been developed in this literature review. The findings will affirm the existence of an amalgamation masculine identity and the importance of the fraternity in increasing the sense of closeness the subjects feel to the campus. They also illustrate the value of fraternity membership as a social network tie.

CHAPTER 4

FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND

This study was conducted under a social constructionist framework. It is assumed that by listening to the men talk about their experiences with the fraternity, on campus, and in general, it is possible to gain an understanding of how they construct their reality and think about their lives (Gubrium and Holstein 1997). George H. Mead (1964) classically described this perspective. Mead believed that the self is created through a social evolutionary process. “The self is attained only through his taking the attitude of the social group to which he belongs” (Mead 1964, pg. 18). Groups encounter problems and develop solutions to these problems (Mead 1964, pg. 4). Thus an individual’s identity is shaped by the problems encountered by their groups and the solutions created to overcome these obstacles.

The reality that social scientists attempt to understand is available through the voices of their subjects. Identity then is assumed to be created through interaction, thus “masculine reality is considered to be socioculturally constructed and maintained” (Jackson 1997). Allowing the voice of the subjects to be heard is one of the most difficult problems facing a researcher. Rosanna Hertz (1997) described some of these difficulties in the introduction to *Reflexivity and Voice*.

The respondent’s voice is almost always filtered through the author’s account. Authors decide whose stories (and quotes) to display and whose to ignore. The decision to privilege some accounts over others is made

while developing theories out of the data collected. As they shift between data and theory, scholars make decisions about the voices and placement of respondents within the text (Hertz 1997, pg. xii).

In an attempt to in some way limit these filters, the findings presented in this research contain numerous and extensive quotes from the interview subjects in order to hear the stories of the members as "meaningful accounts of existentially problematic experience" (Denzin 1989, pg. 138), as opposed to the common practice of providing short out-takes and limited "exemplary quotes."

While several theories were considered when developing this research, ultimately, the subjects speak for themselves about what is important to them. They discussed how they develop and negotiate their identities through fraternity membership and how they utilize that membership to connect them to each other, the campus, and society in general. Specifically, their amalgamation of the ideals for white masculinity and the ideals of the Black community into a unique masculine identity can be understood as a combination of their heritage, their societal context, and the existing social structure (Jackson 1997, Blau 1994).

The initial interest in this project began in college. In my position as a member of the traditionally white Greek system I volunteered to serve as the representative for my sorority to a committee composed of and chaired by representatives of the three Greek systems, Panhellenic (NPC, the national organization for traditionally white sororities), Interfraternity Council (IFC, the national organization for traditionally white fraternities), and Pan-Hellenic (NPHC, the national organization for historically black fraternities and sororities). After that first year as a member, I served as co-chair of this committee that

planned programs to increase the interaction between members of the three Greek systems.

Following up on this extra-curricular interest, I conducted an interview project with NPHC members for a class on the minority experience in higher education. These and other undergraduate activities built both an interest and a knowledge base about the Black Greek system and its function for members on predominantly white campuses. As a graduate student, I witnessed the performance of chapter members honoring Hamilton Holmes at the University's desegregation celebration. I was interested in exploring what compelled already successful students to join this fraternity and what role it played in their college experience and their life after college.

My social identity as a young, white, female did cause some initial hesitation in considering this project and a large amount of self-reflection throughout. It is highly likely that these men would not discuss certain aspects of their lives because of my status as an outsider. However, I do share a common Greek experience and a background in working with NPHC organizations that created a shared space from which to communicate. In talking with the respondents it was also discovered that my identity might be the one most likely to gain access for numerous reasons connected with my social distance from the members. This was reiterated in a post-interview conversation with one of the members. A black or white male who was not a member of the fraternity could be seen as attempting to gain access to fraternity secrets. Discussing the fraternity with a black female is more likely to contain elements of justification because of the sometimes contentious relationship between black men and women (hooks and West 1991).

Importantly, a search of the available literature on Greek organizations and their function on campus made it clear that the distinct experiences of African American students in the historically Black Greek system were almost always overlooked, if not completely subsumed, under the larger, predominantly white Greek system (Fox et. al 1987). I pursued the research project based on this lack of information, my own belief that there was something to explore and as a way to share these stories with others (Denzin 1989).

CHAPTER 5

SAMPLE AND METHODS

The interviews were conducted on a large, predominantly white, southeastern university. Twenty interviews were conducted of chapter members of one historically Black fraternity on the campus. These organizations have a long history in the black community and in U.S. higher education. The first Black Greek organization was founded in 1906 at Cornell University. There are now nine national Black Greek organizations under the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) (Ross 2000). Current membership in the NPHC is over 1.5 million. According to the history of the NPHC, racism had prevented blacks from joining already existing white fraternal organizations. Black students on both historically black campuses and predominantly white campuses founded fraternal organizations to enhance their college experiences and to deal with political and social issues facing the black community (Rodriguez 1995). Jones in fact identifies the “macro-political roots of BGFs [Black Greek fraternities] as socio-political movements” (Jones 1999, pg. 26). This is different from the specifically social focus of predominantly white fraternities and sororities (Fox, Hodge and Ward 1987).

The chapter on this campus averages approximately 20 active, undergraduate members. The interview subjects ranged in age from 19-23 and all were at the sophomore level or above (for more information on the interview subjects, see Appendix B). Participation was voluntary and the men received no compensation for their participation, although the chapter has requested a copy of the final paper. Access to

respondents was gained initially through a personal contact with one member, followed by asking members who had completed an interview for other contacts, through further contacts with members at fraternity-sponsored events, and ultimately, by attending a chapter meeting and passing around a sign-up sheet for volunteers. The ages and years of the respondents were accurate at the time of the interview.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview style. There was an evolving interview schedule but the subjects were allowed to deviate from it. The researcher followed up on any new ideas with probes to expand on the newly introduced topics. The open-interview style provides a greater opportunity for the interview subjects to address issues that are relevant to them (Denzin 1989). The researcher attempted to create an interview environment "in which two or more persons creatively and openly share experiences with one another in a mutual search for greater self-understanding" (Denzin 1989, pg. 43). This is an attempt to avoid creating a uni-directional interview atmosphere that is authoritarian and exploitative in nature (Denzin 1989).

The taped interviews lasted from 25-90 minutes, largely depending upon the communication style of the interview subject and how many new topics were introduced and followed up on. The researcher then transcribed the tapes verbatim. These transcripts were analyzed for common themes in comparison with the others. A method of constant comparison was used to identify those topics that occurred repeatedly as well as those that were unique or unusual (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

The interviews occurred in two stages, with nine being completed in the spring semester of 2001, after which an analysis of the themes and ideas was conducted for an initial write-up of the project. These themes were then used to inform and expand the

interview schedule in the fall semester of 2001, at which time the final eleven interviews were conducted. In this way an attempt was made to follow a dialectical model of allowing the data to guide the development of the research project. The initial and final interview schedules are provided in Appendix A.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

Pathological Images of Black Men

A review of the social science literature reveals an orientation towards black masculinity as pathological. This is typified by Gibbs' (1988) article, "Young, Black and male in America: An endangered species" and Oliver's (1980) idea about the tough guy image adopted by black men as a "dysfunctional compensatory adaptation."

Unfortunately, this representation is not unique to the social sciences (Duneier 1992).

Several of the subjects expressed their frustration with the mainstream representation of black men. One member described the media image of black men as emotionally hardened and shutoff from their emotions. Another member expressed his frustration with his own feelings of discomfort when driving through a poor black neighborhood. He said,

That's just not right and I know that that's nothing that I've really been brought up in, that's nothing that I've been taught by my parents, that's just maybe through other friends and I think definitely through the media. You know, that fear of being in a black community.

The members placed the responsibility for this continuing negative image of black men on both the media and the general public. The inability of the general population to see successful black men as anything other than exceptions to the rule was particularly

frustrating. Following are just a few of the statements made by the members in their response to the question of how they perceived the general representation of black men.

Darin, a senior finance major said,

I think with the fact that you are always seeing a lot of black males, you are always hearing a lot of bad things about black males and not really hearing any good things about black males that people just feel threatened by us by, even though you have more people doing good, you have a lot more black males doing good than doing bad it's just, people don't remember, people don't realize that they don't see that.

Rick, a senior marketing major was particularly discouraged by what he saw as the current practice regarding public feelings about black men.

But right now I feel that, while black males have come a long way in this society that really we haven't gone anywhere. And by that what I mean is that stereotypes are so strong that when a black male is successful, when he is doing what he is supposed to do, when he is a leader in his field, his business or whatever, he's looked at as an exception. Whereas, I feel like that shouldn't be the case. I feel like if there was a genuine respect for African-American males as a whole then he wouldn't be looked at as an exception. He would be looked at as just another African American male that's become successful. And there are many more to come versus he's extraordinary or he's a model for their race, exactly, model for their race or something like that. And that's why I say that we still have a long way to go because while there are a lot of successful black men, there are so

many more that are still struggling, that are still looked at the same way they may have been looked at in the 60's. The only thing now is I feel that racist views are just harbored now and I'd rather someone say what they feel then hide it inside and that's one thing I've seen in my class, that a lot of people still have these perceptions of black males, black women, minorities in general, they just don't really say it as much. So right now I feel like we're walking around in society and everyone is just keeping their feelings in the closet and that's why I feel like we haven't gone anywhere because we're fighting an invisible ghost, if we don't know it's there. So we still have a long way to go because until those feelings are brought out in the light and stereotypes can be put away with, then we're still going to be, like I said, fighting that invisible ghost. And once black males aren't looked at as the exception or like I said, models for their race and are just looked at as another successful person, not even a black man, just, oh he's a successful man, doing what he's supposed to do to get where he's at, then that's when I'll feel like we've come a long way.

Oscar, a senior education major believes that at this point in American history, the prevalence of stereotypical thinking is particularly disheartening.

I feel because it's 2000, we're in another millennium and people still have, people still make uneducated comments or believe in things that they have or believe things or try to place things on other people they have no clue about. That bothers me. That people are still thinking the ways that they

thought 20-30 years ago. I believe in understanding people before you make judgments.

The practice of making exceptions out of “good” black men was also frustrating to Pete, a senior biology/pre-medicine major.

Stereotype of a black man. Are all the opposite things of what I said a good black man is. Dishonest, sneaky, deceitful, I guess this all, this would pretty much be the same thing. Lazy. Full of excuses, not responsible for their own actions. And then there is always, they make exceptions, but there are a few exceptional men who don't follow these. And I really get pissed off when I hear stuff like that. You know black men are like this, this, this, this, and this but there are maybe one or two guys who aren't like this. I don't like that, I really don't.

In describing their interest and decision to join the fraternity, the interview subjects often mentioned how the fraternity image was a clear departure from these negative images. The fraternity members were engaged in the campus and were approachable and supportive of younger African American students.

Jake, a junior business major, described how the actions of the fraternity members were very different from the common perception of young black men.

They were doing the most stuff on campus. They were really trying to make a difference and stuff. You never kind of see young African Americans kind of giving, giving a damn about what's going on and they did, and I mean, that's cool.

For James, a junior business major, the fraternity,

Helped me to realize that there w[ere] Black men out there doing positive things. Because Black men, I don't know, it just helped me to see that there w[ere] Black men trying to do positive things, that did, well, that try to do positive things, that do care about others, that do care about their grades and all that and not just stuff that's stereotypical of other Black men.

Participation in fraternity annual meetings showed Evan, a senior business major, How many black men out there, you know, are successful and [are] being successful and how when you look at the media you're really only seeing one side. That's one side of the story . . . I don't think I ever really believed the media but it's like, I guess it's more proof to what you really thought.

This reiteration of what he believed about African Americans was also described by Jake.

[I]t didn't change what black is to me, it just showed me just another, another face of what African Americans could be and what African Americans are supposed to be.

Clearly, membership in the fraternity is one way the members counteract the negative information they receive about what a black man is and can be, so that their own self-perception is not steeped in the "crisis" representation they see all around them (Hunter and Davis 1994).

Amalgamation Masculinity – The European American Model

Masculine identity development is based upon the unique experiences of each individual, “within particular social institutions and subject to varying historical contexts” (Bird 1996, pg. 122). As stated previously, the fraternity members’ experiences must be understood in the context of their intersecting identities as black, male, and middle-class. Although there was some variation in the class backgrounds of the interview subjects, by their very presence on a college campus they adopt and adapt to a middle class identity. This social context provides a framework for understanding the articulation of the members of a commitment to ideas about what it means to be a man in America, Connell’s (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity. Most salient for these members seemed to be ideas about success and achievement as well as autonomy and individualism (Speer 2001).

Several of the members mentioned that their decision to join the fraternity was largely based on its professional, business-oriented focus. Evan said, “Then I went to a couple of programs and I really thought, they were real, real professional and I was attracted to that.” Often this business-focus was something they felt was lacking in their own lives. Max said,

See one thing that attracted me to [the fraternity] was that you see these guys at a party having fun just like everybody else and the next day you’ll see them in business attire doing a professional program. That was very attractive to me because they, my freshman year I didn’t know, have any sense of business about myself whatsoever. . . . so it was more for me the business aspect and the good personalities and the good vibes that I got

from these guys. As well as, I mean the closeness between these Black men at a predominantly white campus. They were running things, you know which was very attractive.

Jaeses talked about how being around these men helped him to stay focused on his goals.

They were a group of strong positive brothers, you know just always trying to encourage each other. You know a lot of my friends back at home, you know a lot of them were into a lot of trouble things so that's one of the reasons why I stay down here just also. I'm always surrounded by good, good men who have a positive outlook on life. They like to have fun, that's important but they always know at the end of the day it's about our business and trying to go forward with our goals.

For many of the members, the key goal was to leave college and be successful. While their definition of success was multi-layered, the first requirement was a good job. Laron, a sophomore biology/pre-medicine major said, "I think that you need to have some type of ambition, you need to know where you want to be in life." This is what they see both fraternity alumni and local chapter graduates doing. Steven said,

I was like, if I graduate from the University of Georgia, I need to be in some kind of sales job, making a little bit of money, but I mean and that was kind of scary but like when I joined the fraternity and I looked at the people getting out and getting like really good jobs immediately.

Kevin also talked about the importance of being a success after college.

When I leave school I want to be a success, too, I don't want them to not acknowledge, oh he didn't really come from UGA. That, that type of thing. There's a standard that you really have to live up to around here and nobody really wants to give that up.

Through it's emphasis on success, the fraternity provides additional pressure and support to live up to this goal.

Evan believed that without the resources provided by the fraternity, he would not have the drive he does today.

Cause everything in this fraternity is about just striving to be successful and it's not just people just sitting there like whatever, we're just at UGA to be here so anytime you're with a group of people like that, regardless if it's a fraternity or any other organization you're going to have resources because people are going to know about resources and they're going to tell you about those resources so, I think it definitely made me, like if I wouldn't have been Greek I probably wouldn't be where I am right now or as strong-minded as I am now or as career-oriented, I guess.

David also credited much of his current success to the fraternity. At the time of the interview he had recently been chosen for one of the highest positions on campus. He said,

The [fraternity members] on campus were mentors to me, they told me what to do, what to get involved with, how to be success, successful on campus and I'll just say that I can't show how much I appreciate that.

And that's basically what made my decision, you know, that I wanted to be part of something like that.

The job of maintaining this commitment to success and achievement was never done. Michael said, "[W]e try not to rest on that and say okay we've done this, let's now encourage our members and support them to do other things." For Thomas this pressure not to rest on your laurels was what helped him succeed. "I think they're things that you could, you could do it the whole, all, the whole time through but maybe just be around people who maybe push you to want to be successful."

Nathan, a senior sociology/political science major, gave an example of how important the framework of support provided by the fraternity could be, even for someone who was already successful, as he considered himself.

I knew that I did want a brotherhood so to speak and people that I could surround myself by, positive people that are like me who have the same goals and aspirations in mind, who want to be successful, who are already successful and so this would probably be my best choice. I know one of my fraternity brothers was telling me that during our intake cluster one time they had a CEO of a corporation and he was trying to be a [fraternity member]. This man clearly, you know he was the CEO of a corporation. As soon as he was initiated he wrote the fraternity a big check for thousands of dollars. I mean clearly this man has already made his mark, I mean he's done his service, so to speak, but he still wants to be among, I guess, the ranks of men like himself. On a more, more personal, more close relationship.

Michael also talked about the example set by fraternity alumni. His description reveals the complexity of his definition of success. It means both career achievement and commitment to the community, something that will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

We have doctors and lawyers who really are successful in their area so for them to say I want to give back to the community while working with people who are also striving to be successful. And I think that's where [the fraternity] stands out, we have probably, we are probably the most goal-oriented group of Black males in the world. So we work really hard to make sure we keep that structure.

When responding to the question of whether or not they would recommend this university to other African American friends or family members, several of the interview subjects believed that while the campus might not be the ideal environment for minority students, it is up to the individual student to create a positive experience for themselves. This emphasis on individual autonomy is described as the “cultural ideal for the self identified in the industrialized West” (Jenkins 2001, pg. 350). Importantly, this autonomous self is less characteristic of women than of men (Sampson 1988) and can be seen as a commitment on the part of the members to the autonomy and individualism central to the construction of a white European masculinity (Speer 2001).

Jaeses, a senior business major said,

I guess it's what the minorities make it, if you want to sit back and give in to a lot of stereotypes of how you feel that people view you or what not

then you can get pretty lost up here real quick. There's a lot of resources up here.

This was reiterated by Blake, a junior agriculture communications major and by Oscar, a senior education major. Blake said,

I love UGA. Despite the race problems and everything else, it's like everything else, I mean your school is what you make it, your college experience can only be determined by you, I'm the only one who can determine how my college experience is. If I don't go out and make things happen for my own self then they're not going to happen.

Oscar said students who are not proactive about their college experience will miss out on the great opportunities available to them on campus,

Because it's a lot of people here and if you're not, if you don't have good people skills you will sit in your dorm room for four years and let a terrific experience pass you by. If you're not ready to step out on your own and be on your own and take care of yourself totally.

The college student who is ready and willing to take care of himself or herself can make a good experience out of even less than positive circumstances. These emphases on individuality, as well as those of success and achievement show what these fraternity members share both with their white counterparts and with men in general (Speer 2001).

Amalgamation Masculinity – The Afrocentric Model

However, the interview subjects also often attributed their satisfaction with college to their fraternity membership. Working in cooperation with each other, they were able to be more successful (Akbar 1990). Steven described it this way, "it's never,

it's never that one person has access to something on this campus that they won't share." Ryan said,

They let me know a lot of things going on on campus. And, were very willing to share things that they had learned to help me along my way as a freshman coming into this big school."

Max believed this sharing was an important aspect of brotherhood. "[I]t's about doing what it takes to make your brother better than what he is you know. It's not, you can't be selfish." This sense of cooperation is a clear deviation from an individualistic focus and is characteristic of the communal nature of an Afrocentric philosophy (Hunter and Davis 1994).

Kevin acknowledged that making that unselfish decision was not always an easy thing but the members came to understand that it was the right one.

And that's always been a conflict as far as doing what's right for [the fraternity] as opposed to doing what is personally satisfying to you. And that, that's always been a struggle for everybody. I mean that was a struggle for me whether, whether or not to go to a party or do something like this program because you figure in the whole scheme of things it's just college. But it's bigger than that and that's what I think a lot of us had to get used to.

Jaeses described being guided and encouraged by his brothers.

So it was good to see like, especially another man come push you along, especially another black man just come push you along and say I see the potential in you and everything you know. You have a lot in you, you're a

real gifted young man and you can do a lot of things if you just go for it.

And many of them showed me the ways to go for it so. Right now I try to spread my word back to the young ones, the young [fraternity members] and then black males in general, anybody in general.

He believed that the help he had received from his brothers gave him the drive to do the same for other young men.

I guess because you're always the minority, you can't ever get so much in a place where, my own background, I come from a humble background, I think there's a lot of black men have to be humble, be humble about where you're at. I would never have attained so high in my life that I can't look back on those who haven't made it. That's my whole drive in life, to help out those, to get where I want to go in life and pull up other people so.

In the spirit of cooperation Kevin believed that each person in the fraternity had something to offer the others and they were stronger and better because of the opportunity to learn from each other.

I think, for the most part anybody could look at any one of our fraternity brothers and draw something from them. And that's probably what I get most out of it. Each person has something that they can help you with and that you can learn from.

Pete expressed a similar sentiment. "[A] person that is a good black man is one who is not afraid of being taught something or learning something from someone else."

This cooperative feeling sets up the possibility for more honest and authentic relationships with the other men. They are no longer in direct competition with one

another and therefore are not required to put on a tough façade. Jaeses talked about how valuable that emotionally honesty was to him.

I've gone through bad examples, bad situations up here where just late at night I can call up my brothers and we can go out and sit down and talk just like real men, be open with each other, we cry together, so. It's always good, you can lean on another man like that, not just a black man but a man in general, so. And you open yourself up to them. . . . I've never really been open like that with anybody especially another guy so that's pretty good just to see some of the brothers cry, to see some of the situations they're going through because we all go through stuff in life and you know it's like we all can let our emotions out with each other and just be real, like real men. . . . I don't have any problems going to one of my brothers saying I'm messing up with this and I don't know how to do this or can you help me with this because many times you know how men are we think we, we've got big egos, we're arrogant, I'm just like that, I'm really guilty of that myself so I can always get checked by my brothers, they will always put you in check you know if I'm getting out of line they'll come and say you know you're acting pretty silly right now. They always let you know about that and it always feels good to ask them for help.

This comfort with reaching out and asking for helping juxtaposes dramatically against the autonomous self emphasized in the hegemonic model (Speer 2001).

For Kevin being able to share your feelings was integral to being a good man.

I guess probably the last thing is just being sincere, saying what's on your heart, saying what's on your mind, not really holding your tongue. . . . when you love somebody, when you really care about somebody, you need to say it.

Blake eloquently articulated a commitment to being in touch with your emotions that is in direct contradiction to the hardened black masculinity described in Cool Pose (Majors & Mancini 1992).

[I]t is important as a black man that we have emotional strength. Because emotions, that is what is going to make you survive is your emotional strength and your endurance and perseverance. Not only in a physical environment, but in the workplace with a glass ceiling approach thing going on. That's what is going to get you through. You know what I mean, a general hardness is not going to help you out. . . . When your wife, when something happens with your wife then you've got to be able to handle that, and there's a time to cry, if you need to cry you should be able to cry, and so that's when emotional strength is coming to play again. . . . you cannot shut off.

This emotionality can be seen as part of another characteristic of Afrocentric masculinity, which is a less dichotomized idea about what makes a man a man and a woman a woman (Hunter and Davis 1994). William, a junior business major described his father as his ideal in spite of the fact that his father had had a less successful and focused working life and often made less money than his mother.

[S]ometimes it can cause a man to feel like not as much of a man because he's not supporting the family but I mean he's still supporting the family in other ways besides monetary means. As far as just keeping a good household and taking care of what needs to be taken care of.

For Laron, this decreased emphasis on a hypermasculinity meant not striving to always be the authority figure in the household and respecting women.

You should want to take care of your family, you should be in a position to provide for your family in a respectful way. And when I say that I mean like not I'm the provider, this is my house, you follow my rules or whatever. It shouldn't be in that situation. You should have respect for everyone around you. . . . Success, family, respect for women. I got that from my mom.

In striving to live up to a masculine ideal, African Americans must also consider the role that race plays in determining their existence and therefore structuring their priorities. The men emphasized their feelings of connectedness to the status and future of all African Americans. This is related to similar findings in other research on Black masculinity, where manhood is linked to the "collective we" which illustrates how experience with oppression can override the mainstream masculine ideal of individuality (Hunter & Davis 1994).

Rick described numerous characteristics that define a good black man, not the least of which is a commitment to supporting the community.

And with that a good man is someone who takes responsibility for everything they do, someone who cares about others, someone who's

driven, someone who knows where they want to go, and not even necessarily that because I think that you can be a good man without necessarily knowing what you want to do with your life. But someone who has good beliefs, good values. I can't necessarily say believe in God because they could be of a different religion. But I guess good beliefs and good values. As far as the whole thing being a good black man, with that I just feel that taking pride in your culture and your race, trying to do everything you can to uplift your race. Not bring it down. Not to fall into the stereotypes that are so commonly associated with black men. To try to break those stereotypes because that's what they want, they want us to just go out there and commit crimes and violence and things of that nature. Just be able to have the pride, the pride in yourself, the confidence in yourself and integrity in your race to step away from that and know that there's a different lifestyle no matter where you came from. A lot of times people say you know stuff about your socioeconomic class or where you grew up and things like that and I disagree with that, I feel it starts with your family values. You know I can live in the poorest house but if I know what it takes to be a good person then I can instill those same values in my kid and so I make sure they go down the right path. True enough it's going to be harder with those, with bad elements around them but I believe it starts with family values and I don't know, there's a lot of things that go into being a good man. Respecting others, I think that respect is a big thing. People are always, people are always wanting to say I'm the

man, you should respect me but it goes in respecting others too. I feel that you gain respect from others by respecting them. I don't know, there's so many things. I guess that's all I can really think of right now, though . . . my main thing, if I could say one thing is just breaking the stereotypes, not falling into the stereotypes and allowing them to shape you or how you are. Having enough confidence in yourself to know that you can be educated and successful but still have pride in your culture, your race and not care if people look at your success and say that you sold out or that you know, you want to be white or things of that nature, to know that you're doing it for yourself and so that you can get to where you need to be so you can reach back your hand and help out your race, help out your race, look back and bring some of us along with you. I think that's, that's being a good black man.

From his experience, David believed that a desire to serve had to be a key part of any member's personality.

A wanting to serve the community, I think that's big also, not just you know say outside community, but campus community also. I think it's, I don't know if it's born to [fraternity] men or whatever but all of them really want to help people, you know.

Evan connected this commitment to an understanding of the advantages in your own life.

[I]t's everyone's responsibility to kind of help those that didn't grow up in the same economic background as we did so giving back to the community I think is definitely one thing.

Pete also emphasized a love for and involvement in the community.

Jake believed that through service (the fraternity's motto) the men were able to rise above challenges they might face.

And that really means that if you serve the community you arise. And if you're serving the people you'll rise above all the stuff that's going on in the community. And that's what we try to do.

Oscar believed that the image of Black men working in their communities was a powerful contradiction of the typical image of Black males.

It has given us, it has given, I will say that it has given to the community an icon of a Black man and what these group of black men can do that not only just [this fraternity] but all fraternity men that work here in the community, here in Athens, these are a group of black men who together serves the community, empowers other students at the university, they still party and have fun but they take care of business, they run a business, an organization, a brotherhood. I just think the fraternity, the fraternity just does all these different things and you just, you're talking about a group of black men and I think that's a powerful thing.

This connection to the community and serving as a role model was also voiced by Darin.

I mean if you can't, one of the main things that is coming up in the black community is each one reach one and so just trying to reach out to the younger males and leading them in the right path so we can get more, so we can get more black males to being good black men.

Rick believed that taking the lead on issues affecting the Black community was necessary for the fraternity members to live up to the legacy of previous members.

I think that's our main purpose, just to uplift the community and society as a whole, it's not just about black issues, it's about issues in general and I feel that any [fraternity] man should be at the forefront of any major issue that's happening in society and especially when it pertains to the African American community.

So, the men ascribed to characteristics of the dominant masculine model including being focused on business and achievement or success and on autonomy and self-reliance. However, these ideas did not preclude their interpretation of manhood also including cooperation with each other, emotional honesty, and a commitment to serving the Black community. The connections provided by the fraternity will be articulated in separate sections below but can be understood as fitting into this model of an amalgamation masculinity.

Function of the Fraternity – Connection to the black community

As it relates to Blau's (1994) ideas about the role and function of voluntary associations, the fraternity was one mechanism through which the members connected to the black community. This was accomplished through community service projects and attendance at state, regional, and national conferences. The history of the fraternity and its previous members also provided an important personal connection to black history and created a need for the members to live up to this legacy. Connected to Jones' (1999) characterization of black Greek organizations as socio-political movements, this effect is similar to that found by McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook (2001). They found that

"discussing politics with at least one other member of a voluntary organization strongly boosted a person's political mobilization both inside the organization and in the larger community" (McPherson et. al 2001, pg. 433).

Thomas believed that one of the biggest functions of the fraternity was to create connections for members to their community.

I think that it's a way to give back to the community, it's a way to make African Americans and other minorities build so that they're part of society . . . it's a way to make the community feel, the Black community in particular, feel, feel at home, to feel part of the broader community.

This connection to the Black community was something that Laron had never really experienced before.

I've always grown up in a majority white neighborhood. Never had like, like just a group of black people that I could interact with all the time besides my family. So that was just an experience and then so I learned a lot from that. More culture.

As stated above, this connection to the community also meant a connection to Black culture and history. Several members talked about how learning about the historical figures who were members of the fraternity made them feel more personally connected to that history, often times to men who were already personal heroes. Jake was awed by the extent of the fraternity's history, saying,

Before there was the NAACP, before there was the SCLC, before there was an Urban League, before there were any of these other organizations that have helped black people throughout time, there was [this fraternity].

He continued,

And these men, that did such, so many of these monumental things, you're like yeah, I'm in the same fold . . . But when you start reading and go deeper you start gaining a real understanding of what you're about to be a part of man I mean, you get the little goose bumps and everything you know.

Based on the things that had been accomplished Michael said,

After that I did some history on the organization and found that it went a lot deeper than just a welcoming group and a fraternity and it was more like a *movement*, that's what I saw it as.

David equated his connection to these figures as a familial relationship.

It's almost like I'm, I consider it being a part of their family, you know and living on, living their legacy out. I guess, to sum it up, it gave me a more personal feeling of my historical role models, you know.

It reiterated William's desire to achieve.

[I]t's like all these guys are good guys and they are associated with it and they were leaders and big influences in things that have happened over this past century then you think, I want to do something like that, you know what I mean?

James, Steven, and Oscar echoed that sentiment. James said,

It just made me proud that, and let me know that I have something to look up to, I can't, it's not just something you just do. And like it's, like you said, just to be social or just to get the many positive things that come

along with it, you have to put in work, have to put in your time to make it successful, cause if there wasn't people like that, that laid the foundations for us, you know we wouldn't have the name that we have today so you know, you've got to keep up the light, keep up the name, hold up the light.

Steven said,

It's just like, just like you said, people inspire all these other people, all these other great people to do great things. It's like a sense of, they set this precedent and I can't, it's almost a sense of I can't let them down.

Oscar said,

And just knowing that those type of men were a part of this fraternity, men that had the power to change the world, I mean it's just, it's an amazing feeling to have and to know that you're a part of it. That for it to hold, to stand, to hold that kind of prestige, it's up to you to continue it on.

Function of the Fraternity – Connection to other men

As stated previously, the fraternity often provided them with their first opportunity to experience “real,” emotionally honest relationships with men. In his research, Franklin found that middle-class men were less likely to experience these types of relationships than their working class counterparts and would utilize fraternal membership as a substitute (Franklin 1992). The genuineness and closeness of the friendships described by the interview subjects indicates that, while they might be found through the fraternity, they were no less close. Like Duneier's regulars, these men believe in the fraternity they “have found a place where they can be themselves without

competing for the regard or positive evaluation of others” (Duneier 1992, pg. 164). This was described by Steven when he said,

[W]hen you’re around people for such a long time and you all share like a common bond you’re really like, all that coolness like floats, flies out the window, you don’t care about acting stupid or saying stupid things or stuff like that.

He no longer had to be concerned about whether or not what he did or said would be negatively interpreted by his fraternity brothers and that he would have to pay a price for not being cool enough.

For Jake, being comfortable with the guys meant that he could be more emotionally honest.

[Y]ou know how guys are kind of macho, I’m not going to cry, I’m not going to show any kind of emotion? Well, when you can, when that person’s feeling that emotion and you can feel it with them and you understand what they’re going through. It’s not, it’s not quite empathy, it’s something more than that. It’s more of a mental connection because you all been through so much together and you always know for life that you’re going to know this person. It’s not just a college thing and you ain’t going to see them no more you know, they’re yours for life you know. It’s just a good, good feeling man, kind of knowing you always got a friend.

Darin, a senior finance major, described brotherhood as “being able to understand a person, like you can sit down and just look at somebody, look at your brother and be like, know what’s going on with him.”

Rick, a senior marketing major, when asked about his definition of brotherhood, spoke eloquently about the powerful effect having these friendships has had on him.

I think it’s just that, I think it’s through the teachings of the fraternity and learning about what it truly means to be a brother to someone, I think that that just, it takes the bond that we have to a different level because we do share that rich tradition in the fraternity that we’ve joined. That was kind of like the stepping stone for us to really form the bond that we have and I really look at them now, like they’re my brother more than just someone I met in college and formed a bond with and like I said it’s hard to describe, even when talking with other people about, even when I talk to my dad about it, when I talk to him he’s always told me, I’ve tried to tell you about the brotherhood you’ll experience but you can never know until you experience it for yourself. And I can’t even say it’s with [the fraternity] across the board because to be honest I do, I have known about chapters that haven’t had the brotherhood that we share here at [this chapter]. I just think it’s something that we preach to any new member coming in, this is a brotherhood that you will love and that you will appreciate and that we’re a family and anything you need, that you can come to me and talk about. And I think that once we get to know each other and we know so much about each other then it just takes it to the next level of being there

for someone when they have problems in their family or money problems or anything like that. Some things I've gone through in college that they've been there for me for I never would have imagined that anyone would have been there for me like that, like I said, outside of my immediate family so when I talk to someone about it, it's hard to explain but it's so many things going through my head of my experiences that it's hard to just pick just one but it's definitely an experience that anyone I guess who was deemed worthy of becoming a [fraternity member] I would just want them to experience because it's something that I always will remember, always take with me, these are bonds that I will take with me until the day that I leave this earth, it's not just while I'm in college. Because it's a lifelong commitment but it's also a lifelong brotherhood. I don't know if I answered the question, I started rambling a little bit.

For Max, a junior drama major, brotherhood means "someone who is going to make you cry with the truth," even if that means not always getting along. "Brotherhood's just like being a brother, you know brothers fight, brothers disagree but brothers do what it takes to keep, to keep it there, you know." Several of the fraternity brothers mentioned the presence of arguments and disagreements as a key factor in revealing the depth and sincerity of these relationships. Kevin said,

There are a lot of times when we get upset and mad at each other but because we respect each other so much, that it just ends there. Because there are too many arguments and debates. But that's, you know you do that with people that you are really close to, you do that with people you

feel comfortable with, that, who you can say some of the things that you do. And it always comes back to that.

Pete repeated this sentiment.

Now for me I just say family is, it's just one word, it defines it, like real family. And regardless, it has its ups and it has its downs like a real family. You don't get along all the time with this person but you still love them and love is the word that I mean, I really mean love. You really love them, you love these people. Because who better to, who do you actually have problems with. You don't have problems with people that you don't care about. You only have problems with people that you love.

Several of the interview subjects shared this familial characterization of their relationship with their brothers. Thomas, sophomore political science major said brotherhood is

A bond that you, that you have with other men and that you just can't, that you can't compare anything to. It's being able to call somebody when you, when you're in need you know so, being able to have them call on you when they're in need you know. Cause I have two biological brothers and so, since coming to [the fraternity] you know, I've gotten so close to my fraternity brothers that, that, I mean it's like we have the same mother and father biologically because we've gotten so close.

William, a junior business major said

I mean when you first come on this campus you can see just the interaction of how you can have 20 some guys that are that close and

know everything about you and you know you're family. I mean it's not like they're actually family but I mean it's real tight, it's really close.

Pete, a senior biology/pre-medicine major said,

But for me I think that the brotherhood aspect and I'm going to take it away from that, not even brotherhood, it's just actually a family. A group of friends slash brothers, people that are actually close-knit individuals. People that all have common goals in life and that is to, to progress in the world. To do better for themselves and it's just a genuine love for another man. I love it, it's great.

David described his older fraternity brothers as

My family outside of family. Cause I know if I need anything, my brothers are going to get it for me. As far as undergrad, it's like surrogate fathers, you know, they're like there whenever I need them, always giving advice, pick me up when I fall down. Things like that. Like, like a support group you know, always there for me.

Max was surprised to find this kind of relationship on a college campus.

That brotherhood that I was talking about, that's attractive. You know that's, to see a group of Black men on a predominantly white campus you know are, are acting like they get along and they're, they were raised in the same house, that's, that's like, you want to be a part of that you know, so . . . I would have never thought that when I came to college, that it'd be like, especially Black guys, that we'd have a connection or whatever.

Having this type of supportive relationship was not only surprising to the brothers, but they believed it was something that men need. Thomas, sophomore political science major said,

I think brotherhood is, is, is having somebody to lean on. I think, I think it's being able, being able to call on somebody in a time of need and being able to share your happiness with somebody. Brotherhood is, is, is never being alone.

Michael, senior marketing major said,

And see, I think what you want, you're constantly looking for like a family wherever you go. As soon as you move to a new city you want that network of friends that you really can connect with. No one really wants to be lonely, and I think even men need some kind of network with other guys, so, who are all going through the same thing you are, in the same environment, who are all trying to be successful and I think [the fraternity] is really good for that.

Jake said that "outside of my family, they're all I've got, these men, they're all I got, outside myself."

Having these close male friends not only provided needed support but it also helps the interview subjects become the men they aspire to be. For Jaeses,

They're a good network, they help build you up. I know for me they've definitely helped change me since I, since I first came to UGA. I'm definitely a changed man now and I have to say a lot of it had to do with [the fraternity], just taking everybody, trying to draw upon some of their

experience and always having them there to listen. Especially at a campus like this where we're the minority. Many of, most of the [fraternity members], we all have our heads on right so, everybody tries to push each other up.

For Kevin, the commonalities he saw the fraternity men as having with himself was a major impetus to join the group.

[J]ust becoming really, really close with these guys that you plan on staying in touch with for the rest of your life, who you have a lot in common with, who you see doing really good things in life and wanting to be associated with people like that.”

This sense of sharing common values is a key characteristic of voluntary organizations, the similarity of the members helps to create a strong sense of unity (McPherson et. al 2001).

Oscar also believes that,

[The fraternity] has enhanced me. It enhanced me in the fact that it has given me opportunities to meet different people, to understand different situations, to be a part of something, to say it belongs to me, that I worked for it.

This sense of ownership plays a central role in maintaining the members' commitment and connection to college (Tinto 1995).

Function of the Fraternity – Connection to the campus

In spite of high levels of expressed satisfaction with their college experience, the members articulated an understanding of the difficulties facing minority students who

come to a predominantly white campus. This included an understanding of the disorientation and alienation that is consistent with previous research and unique to a minority student experience on a predominantly white campus (Feagin and Sikes 1995). The members were able to connect to the campus through their fraternity. They also believed that the fraternity had a responsibility to reach out to other African American students to help them feel more a part of the campus because it can be difficult for minority students to feel comfortable on in an environment that is very different from the one they came from. This sense of responsibility to other black students is related to similar findings about black Greek organizations serving as a "quasi-activity office" for black students on a predominantly white campus (Fox et. al 1987, pg. 522).

Ryan described this difference.

The environment itself is different, the way you learn is different, the way the classes themselves are structured is different. But, as far as culturally, like I said if you're used to, if you've been spending your whole life, now this isn't my case but in a lot of cases where people are used to being around, where, people that look like them, their whole life and coming to a new, brand-new school, thirty-thousand plus people, and, essentially you're just a number to them, that is going to add on a different level of weariness that I feel you're going to have to go through. Not feeling accepted maybe, on a hall, you may be the only Black person on a whole hall where people are trying to get to know each other but that's one more label that you may have to you know, counteract against other people in your hall who may not be as open or may not be as accepting to other

people who are not like them, on the, on the level. So, I would say in the housing communities, in the classrooms, at social events, that would be the main weariness and you know uncomfortability when it comes to you know, freshman coming in. Especially minority students.

Thomas reiterated the difficulty in acculturating to a new environment and how much he appreciated the support the fraternity attempts to provide for new minority students, especially through it's annual beginning of the year programs.

And that, that program really, really struck me because you know, they didn't have to do that, so you're like why, why care what someone's first day is, you know? And it was really for African American students because it can really be a culture shock you know coming here as a freshman and seeing, that you make up six percent.

Having strong relationships with other fraternity members is one way to counteract the possibility of alienation on campus. This works for the men and is also something they strive to do for fellow minority students who are not members. Oscar said,

So I've learned a lot about myself and being able to bond with another man and have that friendship and build those relationships and memories with my fraternity brothers has really enhanced my education here at the University of Georgia. And the things that we do for the student population, the African American student population and other minorities here at the university it's wonderful. It's a big place for us all but when we are in a small number and this is all I know then it's great to have those

organizations that are here, that are doing those things to try to keep everybody happy, show everybody that hey, we're here, we can still have our culture and the things that we enjoy doing and we can step out and reach out and meet and greet other people and build those relationships but we still have a home here so I think that part of what NPHC organizations do is a wonderful service to the university.

This is important to Oscar because of the unique opportunity for growth provided by the college environment.

Just having that support because we all go through things, in these times, we're learning a lot about ourselves, about ourselves as adults. When you're going through those things, mom and dad are away now and you can't call them for everything, you have to deal with some things yourself. But you still need that friend or those people that support you there with you and that is what my fraternity has given me.

Several of the members believed that they had gotten more out of their college experience by being members. Thomas said,

It's definitely made my experience here better because I've done things that I probably wouldn't have done if I hadn't become an [fraternity member]. Things that I probably could have done the whole time but things that I probably wouldn't have wanted to do. It's definitely impacted my college career in, in a positive way and I would do it a hundred and fifty times over, you know.

Jake believed the fraternity had helped him connect with other people on campus, through participation in its activities. This can be connected to Tinto's idea that the integrating mechanism does not have to be a central to the campus environment to be effective (Tinto 1985). Jake said,

It's great, I done met so many wonderful people I just, you kind of almost, if you really immerse yourself at this institution and [the fraternity] will help you do that. You know and it's just something where you kind of break out of that whole shell that you once were, you're almost like a totally different person.

He also believed that membership in the fraternity served an integrating mechanism for other brothers.

I can say for certain that for a lot of the members in the brotherhood this is maybe one of the main reasons why they're still here, you know. Because they didn't like it at first either, you know. You gotta, UGA's one of those things that's got to kind of grow on you, you don't like it immediately, it's got to kind of grow on you. But I think it was one of the mainstays of why I'm here cause you know it's like instant family and you know, you become social and everybody gets, everybody knows you and even though everybody knew you before it's like a, I don't know . . . kind of like you feel I wouldn't say important to nobody or nothing like that but you feel . . . (S: Connected?). Yeah, you feel connected totally to the campus man you get to do a lot of stuff.

Michael actively sought this type of connection and believed fraternity membership made the college experience much more enjoyable.

So that was one of my goals, to maintain my enrollment at UGA, so I thought this was an organizations to help give me that support, yeah . . . I think we probably, I think that the Black Greeks who come here and graduate are more prone to come back and visit because I think we have the better college experience.

Evan had similar feelings.

I was looking for some type of organization that I could really identify with. Cause I was involved in some things before but they weren't really, they were things I did just to do, to put on my resume . . . I was just looking for an organization I could really play an actual role in.

He continued,

It's been real positive, like I said in high school I didn't do, hang out with a lot of people, whereas at UGA I've been really, like people say the best years of your life are college, I'm pretty sure I'll be saying that for awhile. I've had a whole lot of fun at the same time I've done well academically and improved myself professionally, better speaking skills, better writing skills, just overall become a better person.

Ryan believed,

It definitely opened up the campus to me a lot more than I think, than I would, you know then I would have expanded by myself or just on my own . . . Had I not been a [fraternity member], because so much has been

opened up to me through them, through older brothers who have come in and let me know of different opportunities and different things I could get involved in, that I know I wouldn't have been exposed to as a regular student who was uninvolved in the fraternity. Most of my, most of my involvement has come from brothers telling me this is a good program to get involved in, or brothers encouraging me, hey this is something new, you might want to check it out.

In reflecting on his college experience Kevin said,

[L]ooking back now I definitely see had I, had I not pledged, that I don't think college would have been as enjoyable as it, as I think it is . . . I think a lot of, especially a lot of minorities, they're going to have a negative opinion about UGA as far as what it has to offer minorities and in a certain sense I do agree, there, there really just aren't that many things if you go downtown there really just aren't too many places that cater to us. But that doesn't prevent me from going over to J's apartment and just hanging out and therefore that's fun, to me.

Having gone through some particularly difficult times since starting college Darin believed the fraternity provided him with the supportive environment he needed to get through school.

I was going through a lot of stuff and it kind of, it helped me meet a lot more people that it was something that I actually needed because it was more of a family away from home. It helped me grow up a lot because before then I was going home just about every weekend.

For Rick, seeing how supportive the fraternity was towards him before he was even a member was one of the main reasons he decided to join.

[O]nce I got to know them, once I saw the brotherhood that they had between each other and the way they extended themselves out to me and other freshman or other guys on campus, then I was like well maybe this is something I should look into because the bond I saw them having seemed to be a little bit different than the bond I had with my friends back at home because it was built around a legacy or a tradition so that's what initially sparked my interest in it, in really pursuing it I guess.

Pete and Thomas had a similar experience. Pete said,

And they were more or less coming off trying to assist and help me through my college experience so. I mean that's just the beginning of how everything happened but from then on I was just, I really got engulfed in wanting to be a part of this because I think, I thought these guys just were great, a great bunch of guys. They were more or less, they didn't come off to me as just being a part of a clique. They came off as being friends, people that were genuine so that's why I felt like I could really, really be the kind of person that could fit into a group like this.

Thomas said,

I didn't know all these things but you know all these guys are like taking me in as a younger brother because you know, that's, that's definitely something that, that we try to do, when people get up here, you know we

kind of serve as a mentor to them and you know you can't help but, you know, want to be a part of that.

The interview subjects expressed a strong commitment to providing the support they received to other students, particularly black male students. As Jake described it,

You want to know what's going on with these young, young freshman because you were a freshman once and you wanted somebody to ask you what was going on with you.

Steven believed that this need for support was unique to a predominantly white campus.

At a white campus you're there to facilitate a lot of things for like the minority students but at like, at a predominantly Black campus you're really, the need isn't really there.

Jaeses believed that membership in any campus group was a good way for students to improve their college experience.

Just overall, as far as minorities on campus, the experience, I think being in the frat it definitely, especially at a predominantly white college, it will give you a lot better advantage. I think you'll have a lot better experience. But then again that goes with any group you are in. You know the football players, they have a better experience versus when you come up here just as a black male, most of the time you find yourself against the odds.

Ryan said,

I could say one of the biggest examples of brotherhood I'd say was exemplified to me through one of the members of the fraternity before I

pledged was by one of my good friends; [he] told me, while I was over at his house just talking to him about different things, about the university, about the fraternity, whatever have you, he told me his main concern, as a junior talking to a freshman was me graduating from this school. And to me that just totally encaps-, encapsulated everything that we try to focus on or exemplify. Through our initiatives, our programs and our principles. Looking out for, particularly African-American males here at the university, and in general in the Black community as a whole. Helping out one another and making sure to present positive reinforcement and support wherever it's needed.

Oscar believed that the support did not come from just his fraternity but from the NPHC organizations in general.

There are a lot of other minorities that are involved in a lot of things that we do but I definitely do, I think personally without the NPHC organizations here African American students would just kind of fall by the wayside. It's not a, especially socially. Without a minority, without the NPHC organizations socially there's really a whole lot of nothing else that is planned for African-American or minority students. And I think just the programs and the things that we, the pageants that we participate in, that we host, and the balls that we hold, different parties and scholarships funds and scholarships that organizations give out and services that they do in the community, getting the other students to participate in service. I think just without it there would be a lot of

ignorance where those things wouldn't be known. I think we do a great job of getting information out to the students and getting them to realize what kind of impact that we can have on this community and on the campus while we are here.

The members' expressions of commitment and connection to the campus through the fraternity reveal a level of social integration that Tinto (1995) believed was central to college persistence. The fraternity as an integrating mechanism can then be identified as an example of Murguia's "ethnic enclaves" which allow minority students to create a comfort zone on campus from which they can interact with of the wider campus community (Murguia et al. 1991). Tinto believed that students who were not part of the majority group could still find ways to connect to the campus. He wrote, "Insofar as individuals are able to find some communal niche on campus, then it is possible for a person to be seen as deviant from the broader college environment and still persist to degree completion" (Tinto 1995, pg. 121).

Function of the Fraternity – Connection to and connections in society

Membership in a national fraternal organization with thousands of alumni creates social network ties that were valuable to the members (Granovetter 1973). They utilized these ties as they thought about and did attempt to leave college and find success in their chosen careers. The connections of the fraternity also provided assistance to the members during college, specifically through an e-mail listserv connecting them to alumni. This is especially significant based on previous research that shows a paucity of social network ties for African Americans in the labor market (Rotolo 1999).

Steven told the story of how the network of alumni were able to help two of the members get elected to two of the highest student positions on campus. He said,

Like [fraternity brother] and [another fraternity brother] running for [a prestigious campus position], that was one of the biggest things, and that's like a direct result of all these other brothers doing like all these great things around the world and stuff like that.

It helped connect David to the resources that were available.

I guess just it's not just the African American community. That's what's so special about it. It's where you have a unique opportunity to I guess, go outside my culture, at a predominantly white school and have a major connection to people here. And I think that's unique because if you're just staying within your community of course it's always good to build your community but it's also good to get connections from everyone else and there's so many resources on campus you know. And if you stay isolated and segregated there's going to be so much you're leaving behind.

Jaeses expressed a strong sense of responsibility for passing on that information to other students.

Like I said, it's low rates as far as males on this campus, black males so they don't really have anybody to talk to. And that's where members of the fraternity, leaders and just black students in general, we have to come in and kind of help them along, help push them along and let them know it's alright to get help and it's alright to ask for things because we know, we paid our dues so to speak. We've been up here for four years, we

know the people you want to go talk to, the administrators you need to get in contact with, the teachers to take, what social outlets to go to downtown. How to talk to people, interact with people you've never been around with.

As is discussed in much of the social science literature on social networks, fraternity membership can be a highly effective tool in assisting members in the job market after college. Several members were well aware of this benefit and some described specific instances when it had benefited them.

Steven used this success as an example to his father about why he should join. "And I was like well everybody graduates, everybody goes on to have like these great jobs and connections and stuff like that." The networking possibilities also influenced Nathan's decision to join.

Also I knew that it was going to open a lot of opportunities for me to network with other people in different professions and more specifically the area of work that I'm looking into getting into so, I pretty much made my decision.

Terrence said,

And also I see it as being a network for me when I get out I guess in the real world if you will, me connecting up with other brothers or other people of other fraternities and make sure I succeed myself or whatever, doing things like that.

Evan had in fact met a fellow fraternity brother who was an employment recruiter for a large corporation. The brother was able to arrange an interview for him. Evan believed this network was an important function of the fraternity.

I would just say really the brotherhood just being there for other members when they have issues in their life when they need help, supporting them in their endeavors, whether academically or professionally, career, whatever. And just like, even beyond college, you see, you know, meet someone on the street or in your workplace or anywhere, just having that common bond with them.

Steven also saw it as an important and useful function. He said, “And take the people in the chapter or whatever and use each other to achieve, achieve whatever goals you want to and like that’s something that I’ve learned quickly.”

Oscar agreed, saying,

That’s one thing that the fraternity has done for me even here, just here in Athens. I have fraternity brothers that are personnel directors for Athens-Clarke County, that are lawyers and just hold, principals, they just hold positions where if we need assistance, if we need help, they’re there. For advice, whatever that, whatever we need, if they don’t have it we all put our brains together and find a way to get it and I think just having that support staff, anybody that has that support staff can do anything that they want to do.

Jaeses said that he experienced this possibility very soon after becoming a member. “Like I say, joining it I’ve seen like a whole new network just open up, a lot of

access to things out there so.” He met a fellow member who was able to give him support and guidance about pursuing a post-baccalaureate degree.

William had a summer internship with a large company and met a fellow brother who he thought would provide him with assistance in getting a permanent job. He said,

He’s pretty high up so that’s going to help me out, you know hopefully, I’m not counting on that but it’s always a positive thing because you know we joined the same organization, we kind of have the same morals, he knows the kind of person I am, you know what I mean?

He was also excited about attending the regional and national conventions,

Because there’s going to be a lot of [fraternity members] there, you know, big name people and of course being in college and worried about my career and stuff like that and just getting those contacts, you know what I mean. I’m excited about that.

These examples clearly illustrate the function of the fraternity in forming a social network for the members (Granovetter 1973). They have the expectation and experience to confirm that their fraternity membership will assist them in the job market.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The typical social science representation of black men is one of masculinity in crisis. This is also true for African-American men in college. However, the experiences of the African-American fraternity men who were interviewed for this research contradict these images. A review of the literature reveals two competing masculine identities, one that is described by Connell (1995) as hegemonic masculinity, typically competitive, individual, and organized around success. The second is an Afrocentric model that emphasizes collectivity and community over competition (Akbar 1990). Based on these conflicting models, what is the content of the masculine identity the young men developed, how do they use the fraternity in this process, and what influence does it have on their college experience?

The interviews with these men offer clear examples of the complexity of constructing a Black male identity in American society today. The men utilize their fraternity membership in ways that reflect the Afrocentric model of cooperation and connectedness to the black community and more specifically to other males. They articulate a strong connection to the past and future of the black community and seem to experience high levels of emotional honesty and connection in their friendships with each other (Akbar 1990), which is contradictory to previous findings on the content of middle-class black male friendships (Franklin 1992).

However, they can also be seen as conforming to many of the ideals that are part of the mainstream white model. The members talked about the importance of success and achievement both during and after college. They also emphasized individuality and the necessity to be self-sufficient (Speer 2001). The adoption of more mainstream values is perhaps connected to their middle-class experience as well as their gender identity.

I believe this creative adaptation is consistent with Cornel West's (1991) description of jazz, a distinctly African-American art form, which he believes has had a dramatic influence on the way Americans think about their reality. He says,

It does not wallow in cynicism or a paralyzing pessimism, but it is also realistic enough not to project excessive utopia. It's a matter of responding in an improvisational, undogmatic, creative way to circumstances, in such a way that people still survive and thrive (hooks and West 1991, pg. 34).

Certainly the masculine identity developed by the interview participants seems to be a creative and undogmatic response to their circumstances.

It remains for the experiences of these young middle-class black males to be incorporated into a model of Black masculinity. Messner's (1993) call for the decentering of hegemonic masculinity requires that we take into account the influence of intersecting and interacting identities on the creation of a masculine identity. To reiterate, this research hopefully adds to a "perspective on manhood and masculinity often hidden in the discourse on the Black male 'crisis'" (Hunter and Davis 1994, p. 21), which means we must follow the recommendation of these subjects and stop making "exceptions" of the successes.

On college campuses, the specific function of same-race support groups, in the form of Greek organizations, must be understood as separate and unique from the traditionally white organizations they were initially modeled after. This is especially important in the context of current questions about the value and purpose of Greek organizations (Kimbrough 1995) as well as questions about the need for minority student programming (Taylor & Olswang 1997). Murguia et al. (1991) argues that because these “ethnic enclaves” are a part of the natural ecology of the campus environment, their efficacy should be supported by university policy. Tinto (1995) echoes this call for support, writing, "one approach to the question of institutional policy on retention is that which looks towards a restructuring and/or modification of the social and intellectual conditions of the institution and the creation of alternative mechanisms for the integration of individuals into its ongoing social and intellectual life" (Tinto 1995, pg. 104).

This requires thinking about fraternal organizations in the context of what we know about other voluntary associations and their benefits for members (Blau 1994, Rotolo 1999). This research makes an initial attempt to incorporate the literature on the integrative, supportive nature of voluntary associations as it can be related to the college student experience. The wealth of information available in this literature can and should be utilized in future research about minority student retention and persistence. The conclusions reached in this study are in no way generalizable to the entire population, even to the entire minority student population. The very nature of the study forces that limitation. However, in the tradition of other exploratory, qualitative research these findings can be used to inform future research that encompasses a larger population. Future research will seek to provide additional quantitative data that explores the function

of Greek membership for minority students on predominantly white campuses. The content and construction of alternate, amalgamation masculine identities should be explored beyond that of African-American young men. Also, studying the masculine identity of African-American men may offer some insight into white masculinity (hooks and West 1991).

This analysis presents only some of the themes that emerged from the interviews. It should not be taken to imply complete uniformity among the members. A more seasoned researcher might have provided a different analysis. Often times in the course of this project I felt that the generosity and richness of the thoughts these gentlemen shared could have been better put to use by a more experienced researcher. Future research will explore some of the other, smaller themes that emerged from the data. However, the two main concepts presented here, the function of the fraternity in the development of amalgamation masculinity and the role of the fraternity in creating connections in and after college for its members, were the most significant themes discovered by this author.

There was also great variety in the ideas, opinions, and experiences of the subjects, not the least of which was their perception of the role of racism in their lives. This seemed to vary by age, background, year in college, and even major (as one subject joked, it's hard to be a sociologist and an optimist). For one gentleman who had finished his student teaching, he seemed to be more concerned with the racism that would be experienced by his students than any impact it would have on his own life. Often times I felt the subjects underestimated the prevalence and force of not historical racism but of currently existing racism.

It was an admirable hopefulness, nonetheless. It seemed related to the sense of autonomy and personal control that many of the subjects articulated. They expressed a firm belief in the possibilities they could create for themselves and their community.

There are several questions related to Black Greeks, commonly addressed in the existing literature that I did not address in this work. This includes the issues of hazing within the Black Greek system and the function of this system in maintaining a “want-to-be-white” black elite. In my mind, these images (although not always completely without merit) are overly simplistic and in some way contribute to the negative image already referred to in this paper of Blacks as either lacking in unity and identity or as besieged by violence. In my interactions and observations of these men, I saw a group of young people who were comfortable with themselves and generous with others. I attribute what I perceive as their great generosity towards me to this self-assuredness. What this will look like in 15-20 years I cannot say. For this writing, however, they have developed a style, an identity, and a sense of place that works for them.

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APPENDIX A – INITIAL AND FINAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Greek Membership Study – Initial Interview Schedule

- 1) Fraternity Story – How did you learn about the fraternity? Become a member? Are you a legacy?
- 2) What is the meaning of the fraternity to you?
- 3) Has membership in the fraternity changed your definition of what is black?
- 4) Has it changed your feelings about Black history?
- 5) How do you think it has impacted your experience at UGA? Positively? Negatively? Is there any conflict between your membership and your role as a student?
- 6) Is there any advice you would give to a brother or cousin on coming to UGA and joining the fraternity?
- 7) What other activities do you participate in on campus?
- 8) What is your personal definition of brotherhood?
- 9) Demographics – age, major, year in school, high school attended, parents jobs.

**Greek Membership Study
Final Interview Schedule**

Respondent Number:

Interview Date:

I am a sociology graduate student and I am working on a research project that explores the experiences of African American male undergraduates who are members of an historically Black fraternity. This interview will be tape-recorded so that I have an accurate record of our conversation. However, your identity will be protected. This is a confidential study. Only what you say will be used. Please feel free to ask questions at any time during the interview and to not answer any questions you are not comfortable with.

I'd like to start by getting to know a little bit about where you came from and what your background is. Then I'd like to find out more about your experiences at UGA and your experiences with the fraternity.

A) Background Information

- 1) Where were you born? (city, state, country) Where did you grow up? Attend high school?

- 2) How old are you? Do you have any brothers and sisters?

- 3) What was your family like growing up? Parents still together?

- 4) What do your parents do?

- 5) How often do you talk to your family? Who are you closest to?

- 6) What is your major? Why did you choose this area?

3) How do you think fraternity membership has influenced your experience at UGA? Positive/Negative? Does it ever conflict with your academic goals?

4) What is your personal definition of brotherhood? Do you think this chapter lives up to that? Why or why not?

5) Did being a member of this fraternity change your definition of what is Black? (Strong emphasis on academics, strong history of previous members)

6) Does membership in this fraternity and participation in its activities influence your feelings about non-Black students?

7) How did your parents feel about you joining the fraternity? What do you share with them about your fraternity experience?

B) School Information

1) What made you decide to come to UGA? What other schools did you consider?

1) Did either of your parents attend UGA? Did they support your decision to come to school in Athens? Do you have other siblings who went to school here?

2) Do you feel like you made a good decision in your choice of school? Why or Why not?

3) How would you describe your experience at UGA? Positive or negative? Why?

4) Do you think this is a good campus for Black students? What things are good about it? What things are not so good? Would you recommend this campus to friends and relatives who are looking at schools?

5) What other activities are you involved with besides the fraternity?

E) Conceptions of Manhood

1) What is your personal description of a "good" Black man?

2) Who are your role models in this area?

3) Do you think the fraternity influences your growth in this area?

**4) How do you perceive Black men are portrayed in the media/general public? How does this influence you?
(Frustrated/Not bothered)**

Are there any other things about your experiences at UGA, the fraternity, or in general that you think are important but that we didn't cover in this interview?

Do you have any questions about this project or anything else?

Thanks so much for your willingness to participate in this interview. I hope you enjoyed the chance to think more about the fraternity and what it means for you. Please feel free to contact me with any additional information or any questions.

APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

- 1) Michael, 21, senior, marketing major, father is an insurance agent, mother works in international affairs at a major university.
- 2) Jake, 20, junior, business major, father is an insurance agent, mother is a teacher.
- 3) David, 20, junior, pre-medicine, father is an accountant, mother is a nurse.
- 4) Steven, 21, junior, speech communications major, father owns a marketing agency, mother is a psychologist.
- 5) Thomas, 20, sophomore, political science major, father owns an ice cream company.
- 6) Ryan, 22, senior, speech communications major, father owns a computer consulting firm, mother works for a government agency.
- 7) Terrence, 20, junior, sociology major, father is a lobbyist, mother is a librarian.
- 8) Max, 21, junior, drama major, father works in a factory, mother is in the military.
- 9) James, 20, junior, business major, father works for an actuarial firm, mother is a housewife.
- 10) Kevin, 22, senior, broadcast journalism/sociology major, father is retired from the military, mother is an elementary school principal.
- 11) Jaeses, 22, senior, business major, father works for an airplane manufacturer, mother is a high school administrator.
- 12) Evan, 22, senior, business major, father is a scheduling analyst for a public transportation system, mother is an administrative assistant.
- 13) Blake, 20, junior, agricultural communications major, father works for a manufacturing company, mother is a teacher's assistant.
- 14) William, 20, junior, business major, father is a loan officer, mother is a medical technologist.
- 15) Darin, 23, senior, finance major, mother works in a factory.
- 16) Nathan, 22, senior, sociology/political science major, mother works for the public library.
- 17) Rick, 22, senior, marketing major, mother is a banking computer consultant, father is a computer programmer who works for the public school system.
- 18) Laron, 19, sophomore, pre-medicine, mother is an accountant, stepfather is a business manager.
- 19) Pete, 23, senior, biology pre-medicine major, father works for the military, mother owns a daycare center.
- 20) Oscar, 22, senior, social science education major, father is an operations manager for a vending company, mother was a law secretary.