

THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF MEMBERSHIP IN AFRICAN AMERICAN FRATERNITIES
AND SORORITIES ON THE COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCE AND PERSISTENCE AT A
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Darrick A. Claiborne

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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APPROVED BY:

Matthew Ozolnieks, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Shariva White, Ed.D., Committee Member

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand if the experiences of African American members of African American fraternities and sororities at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) impacted their collegiate experience and persistence to graduate. The researcher used Albert Bandura's social learning theory to guide this study. Methods for African American students' persistence include leadership and modeling. The researcher chose a central question considering the perceived impact of membership in African American fraternities and sororities on its collegiate experience and persistence at a PWI. The participants of this study were a purposive type of sampling. The participants were 12 African American Alumni of the same PWI. They were student members of African American fraternities and sororities. The collection methods were an initial survey, interviews, and document analysis. The documents used for document analysis were archived yearbooks and fraternity and sorority websites. The modified Van Kaam data analysis method was used. The six themes identified from the collected data include: (a) identified hometown mentors, (b) hometown leadership examples, (c) exposure to fraternity/sorority life prior to enrollment, (d) accountability (e) elevated goals for personal achievement, and (f) personal community responsibility.

Keywords: Attrition, Social Learning Theory, Fraternity, Sorority, African American

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List of Abbreviations

Predominately White Institution (PWI)

National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC)

Black Greek Lettered Organization (BGLO)

Historically Black College or University (HBCU)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of African American fraternity and sorority members at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) and its impact on collegiate experiences and persistence. The overall rate of African American participants graduating from college was a low rate of 31.76% in a previous study on student motivation and persistence (Ashraf et al., 2018). Extra-curricular organizations can be a resource to engage first-year students to remain enrolled at a PWI (De Zeeuw et al., 2021). Could there be a positive perceived impact of membership in African American fraternities and sororities on its members in the collegiate experience and persistence through graduation? Armstrong & Jackson (2017) noticed that researchers in previous studies provided data on how leadership programs and mentorship between members of organizations enhanced their members' academic prowess and leadership qualities. Some African American students establish a community by participating in organizations, not fraternities and sororities, such as mentor groups and organizations related to their major (McGuire, Sweet, et al., 2020). Educational institutions that encourage open environments of inclusion have a more successful rate of closing the achievement and attrition gaps within the student population (Lumadi, 2019). In this chapter, the background of the study includes the historical, social, and theoretical significance. The other sections of the chapter include background, situation to self, problem statement, purpose statement, the significance of the study, research questions, definitions, and summary.

Background

Many African American students find it challenging to establish a community at some

PWIs (Walker-DeVose et al., 2019). On select campuses, African American students may find that they are the only students of color in many of their classes (Walker-DeVose et al., 2019). The lack of social community can cause the student to drop out or transfer to another institution (Barbera et al., 2020). Students that have social integration into the overall culture of the university campus within their first year are less likely to drop out (Petersen & Arends, 2018). African American fraternity and sorority organizations serve the community, help advance civil rights for other marginalized groups, and provide a community for members to bond (National Pan-Hellenic Council, 2020). The researcher included the historical, social, and theoretical background of the role of African American fraternities and sororities in the following sections.

Historical

Historically, organizational founders determined college campuses' oppressive social and political culture as a potential catalyst for forming fraternities and sororities (National Pan-Hellenic Council, 2020). The National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) governs nine African American fraternities and sororities (National Pan-Hellenic Council, 2020). Founded in 1930, the NPHC organizations united in their collective experiences as student victims of systemic ethnic oppression and segregation laws and practices (National Pan-Hellenic Council, 2020). Members of African American fraternities and sororities share a comradery rooted in the foundation of community pride, determination, and achievement (Armstrong & Jackson, 2017).

Three PWI-founded African American fraternities and sororities share a similar focus of helping African American students establish a community (National Pan-Hellenic Council, 2020). The founders formed their organizations due to mounting racial tension and almost nonexistent minority populations during the early 1900s (National Pan-Hellenic Council, 2020). Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated established its fraternity in 1906 after membership of

African American students in Caucasian fraternities at Cornell University was not permitted (O'Malley, 2019). Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, founded in 1911, encouraged honorable achievement among its members (Parks & Laybourn, 2016). Members supported the civil rights movement of the 1960s (Wade, 2020). Like membership in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, NPHC organizations developed into life-long commitments that bridged the undergraduate collegiate experience with the needs of communities at large (National Pan-Hellenic Council, 2020).

NPHC organization members at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) shared a mission of establishing social and political equity (National Pan-Hellenic Council, 2020). The founders established a community of like-minded, high-achieving students with connections to the surrounding communities (National Pan-Hellenic Council, 2020). Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated sought to establish a community supporting the limited number of women enrolled at the majority male student body of Howard University in 1908 (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2021). The organization became the first organized African American Greek-lettered sorority in 1908 (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2021). Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated established a sorority at Howard University in 1913 (*About Delta*, 2022). The founders extended public service to the university's surrounding community, supported women's right to vote, and engaged in other political issues affecting African Americans (Cann, 1952). Currently exceeding a membership of 200,000, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, encourages innovative firsts (*About Delta*, 2022). The sorority members produced large-budget film projects to combat African American women's negative imagery (Coleman, 2007).

Social

African Americans have a social responsibility to establish a community through the desire to form a strong subculture of leadership development, economic success, and equality (Meikle & Morris, 2022). Most African American students at a PWI desire to be within the primary culture while maintaining a solid subculture representing their community (Oikonomidoy et al., 2021;2020;). Some students establish these social connections through various resource groups targeting African Americans. Besides fraternities and sororities, some resource groups include African American student associations, choirs, and other special interest groups like the Jubilee choirs formulated at Fisk and Hampton universities (Chrisman, 2018). Jubilee choir members share the history of the African American Christian experience in their performances (Chrisman, 2018). Concert attendees receive the message in the role of the student (Chrisman, 2018).

As defined within Bandura's (1971) social learning theory, organizational members demonstrate modeling by presenting similar worldview experiences through social programs. In addition to modeling, organizations at a PWI offer students the opportunity to display a united social presence while providing a space to commune with other students of similar interests and backgrounds (Oikonomidoy et al., 2021;2020;). Some of the participants may belong to other special interest groups. Special interest group members bring community experience through similar worldviews and historical experiences (Chrisman, 2018).

Theoretical

The repeated commitment to leadership and modeling leads to understanding the theoretical background. According to Albert Bandura (1971), social learning theory defines behavior and attitudes modeled to others. Social learning theory's (1971) importance explores

the organization's perceived community engagement where achievement, pride, and leadership are taught and learned. These lessons will determine if the foundation is enough to cause its members to remain an established community and persist through graduation. Adults that receive hands-on education through social learning are more academically successful (Chuang, 2021). Adult learning could occur through modeling positive emulated behaviors (Chuang, 2021).

People know of fraternities' and sororities' internal mentorship programs that offer positive emulated behavior modeling (Armstrong & Jackson, 2017). Bandura determined that within social learning theory (1971), direct experience provides positive behavior observation opportunities through an excellent social learning system. Also, Bandura named behaviorism a comprehensive theory for social learning because it includes stimuli, cognitive processes, and control through reinforcement (Bandura, 1971). The essential core of the mentorship program that builds upon strengths for success is the learners (Chuang, 2021). The organizations should have members committed to leadership and modeling.

Fraternity and sorority members welcome the responsibility to provide modeling behavior and acceptance of a reputation of mentorship being a function of the organization (Hevel et al., 2018). According to Hevel et al. (2018), students with strong leadership skills are generally interested in joining fraternities and sororities to surround themselves with other leaders. Organizational members associate leadership excellence and community responsibility attributes (Turk, 2012). Usually, successful students attribute their success to the admiration of role models that profoundly impacted them (Ahn et al., 2020).

Although African American fraternities and sororities are student-led on campus, the individual organizations are incorporated and operate as nonprofit businesses. The non-profit incorporated business structure differs from the other student-led organizations on college and

university campuses. Members can demonstrate higher achievement standards using social learning theory (Bandura, 1971). The organizational members can also demonstrate socially responsible behavior using social learning theory (Bandura, 1971). Learning environments encouraging social participation and academic success increase opportunities for social imitation and persistence (Romadhon et al., 2019). The members exhibit the prevalence for an optimal environment for their members to thrive and persist.

Organizational members imitated the leadership and modeling examples demonstrated by the organizational leaders. Heavily influenced organizational members during social interaction exposure are related to social learning theory because of differential association (Kruis et al., & 2020). Imitation is also related to social learning theory and differential reinforcement usage (Kruis et al., & 2020). As members begin to imitate other positive members, there is an opportunity to explore the influence of fraternities and sororities on the PWI campus to encourage persistence. African Americans familiar with the leadership and modeling examples in their personal experiences could find it easier to seek out subcultures that practice those methods (Huerta et al., 2018).

Situation to Self

The researcher's motivation to conduct the study was from the ontological philosophical assumption and paradigm. The ontological assumption is due to the high probability of multiple representations of realities of the experiences as defined by Creswell and Poth (2018). The social constructivism paradigm guides the study (Jung, 2019). Human action and interaction shape the participants' worldview (Jung, 2019). Using the paradigm was essential to consider some factors contributing to the participants' marginalized situations without creating a study that further marginalizes them for the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The organizations' uniformity as a part of the neighborhood community was one of the many perceived organizational core attributes. As a native of an all-African American neighborhood in the northwest side of Charlotte, North Carolina, many community events included the attendance of African American fraternity and sorority members. The fascination began with observing the uniformity of the members wearing their organizational colors at community events. Also uniformed in actions are examples of internal mentorship programs, the promotion of community pride, and support programs for its members. Fraternity and sorority members have a collective social responsibility to leadership within the community (Hevel et al., 2018).

Whether the population was predominantly African American or not, the fraternities and sororities appeared to have a strong presence. As a first-year student, it was easy to notice a significant cultural difference from personal experiences in Charlotte. The African American student population represented a low percentage of the total population at University South (College Scorecard, 2020). What was similar in personal experiences in Charlotte was the African American fraternities' and sororities' presence. The campus organizations, like Charlotte's fraternity and sorority members, participated in service projects and displayed positive representation. The pride in membership and academic excellence was also present in organizational members.

Many student members of the African American fraternities and sororities were excited to speak about their chapter members' academic excellence. These discussions also included examples of various members who were active leaders of other organizations and campus efforts. Students with perceptions of traditional leadership ideologies within the fraternal experience join

their fraternities based on those perceptions (Waterman et al., 2020). Leadership ideologies can transition into student activism.

Student activism could be the response to inequities on the college campus. In the early 1990s, a prevalent charter member of the University South chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. was a movement leader. The purpose of the movement was to request that the University South officials provide diverse programming on the cable stations in the dormitories. The cable company excluded channels from the many available channels in the cable packages focusing on African American entertainment. As the movement leader, she became a student activist. Student activism is an effective way for student leaders to communicate with the university as a conduit between the affected community and university officials (Cole & Heinecke, 2020). The movement leader met with the university officials to present the African American channels' inclusion case. She also organized meetings to engage the African American students to voice their concerns for representation on campus. Her persistence in drafting a petition and gathering thousands of student signatures from all ethnicities and backgrounds helped make campus programming more diverse. The quest for diverse representation led to many historical firsts at University South.

There are a couple of examples of historical firsts at University South. Two of the most popular elections were for Student Government Association and the Annual Homecoming Court. It was rare for either of the elections to have more than a couple of African American contenders. It was also rare for African American participants to be runners-up in the top prize at University South. An example of a University South historical first of African American leadership on campus in the 1990s was a local chapter member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. The student body voted him as the Student Government Association President. African American students

would represent their organizations for various elections on campus. He became the first African American president of the Student Government Association at University South.

The other example of a University South first was one of the local chapter members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. at University South being voted Miss Homecoming during the early 1990s. Students who were members of the fraternities and sororities appeared to have rallying support for votes and promotion. Usually, minority students collectively choose to support one another at PWIs (Miller & Bryan 2020). The level of support for students who are not members of fraternities or sororities seems to differ from the promotion for fraternity or sorority members at University South. There was an overwhelming level of support of minority students from the Greek organizations to support other members of other organizations (Frega, 2019).

The comradery between the African American fraternity and sorority members at University South was remarkable. The successful establishment of community leaders of the African American fraternities and sororities members was significant. Each organization appeared to have an estimated 15-20 active members on campus. A high engagement level of alumni returns for homecoming at the university. The overall experience at University South seems excellent, with high personal engagement and the anticipation of reuniting with classmates yearly at homecoming. Some organization members have expressed how they have never missed a homecoming weekend since graduation. There appears to be no intention of giving up the tradition of being engaged with their undergraduate chapters' members. The traditions incorporated into the organization's functionality are the graduate members who serve as mentors to keep those traditions essential components of the local chapter members' experiences

(Frega, 2019). Establishing a community at the university during a pivotal time of any college student's life keeps the desire for fraternity and sorority engagement levels high.

Researchers conducted a study to analyze university students' persistence to graduation by establishing an identity with a community or submerging themselves in the academic experience (Barbera et al., 2020). The analysis of the study by Barbera et al. (2020) was reminiscent of personal experiences entering a PWI as a freshman. As one of many African American first-generation students, there was a desperate need to seek a way to establish a community. Mitigation of the risk of first-generation students at universities occurs through students' engagement in first-year student development programs (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018). Different first-year programs existed at University South for students. University officials paired first-year students with an upperclassman that participated in the program as a first-year student. Program leaders typically paired first-year students with a member of one of the African American fraternities and sororities. One dedicated mentor was a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She was the petition's creator for diverse cable television options for students who lived in the dormitories. Part of the mentorship experience was her teaching the various on-campus options for social participation. The mentors presented opportunities to find a community that represented individual interests. Through engagement with the assigned mentor, lessons of crucial leadership skills were received as perceived motivation to continue pursuing diversity on the campus. The mentor's engagement led to personal involvement with the Student Programs department to direct theatrical productions at the university each year until graduation from University South. The intense focus on student activism, achievements of diversity, and community establishment appear to be responses to the root of the attrition problem.

Problem Statement

Attrition of American college students is a general problem at colleges and universities (Carthell et al., 2020). In the United States of America, only 64.2% of public college students return to school after the first year (Yair et al., 2020). A more focused problem is the disproportionately high percentages of African American college student attrition at Predominantly White Institutions (Carthell et al., 2020). The research topic was the perceived impact of African American fraternities and sororities on their members at Predominately White Institutions in the African American collegiate experience for persistence. In a study on college student persistence, Barbera et al. (2020) explained that students that fail to become involved with an identified community have a higher chance of dropping out of school. Not many changes appear to have occurred in the statistics of lower enrollment of African American students. Carthell et al. (2020) determined that African American students that participated in academic retention programs were less likely to withdraw from school.

Purpose Statement

This phenomenological study aims to understand the experiences of African American fraternity and sorority members that graduated from Predominately White Institutions. African American fraternity and sorority members will be defined as participants who attended PWIs and have persisted through graduation. The theory guiding the study is the social learning theory developed by Bandura (1971).

Significance of the Study

Attrition of student resource group participants was a focus of previous studies (Brooms, 2018). The focus of the previous studies was not on the more profound fraternity or sorority bonds between members (Brooms, 2018). Some studies of African American attrition focused on

students' hometown environments and socioeconomic status (Oikonomidoy et al., 2021;2020;). Brooms (2018) identified that successful African American students in resource groups like the Black Male Initiative program at the University of Cincinnati were encouraged to persist. There is the consideration of implementing possible programs at other PWIs where attrition is high. This planned study relates to the concept of leadership resulting in student success, like the study conducted by Dawes (2018). This planned study also relates to the research by Harper et al. (2018), where the African American students learned to persist on campus through mechanisms to combat the implications of negative stereotypes through strong community building.

Empirical

The study's empirical significance is the opportunity to receive the actual perceptions of the impact on the African American fraternity and sorority members through their unfiltered experiences as undergraduates at the chosen university for the study. It is essential to review some factors that may have impacted the African American student on the PWI. There is the consideration of significant reasons related to community and perceived impact (Chambers, & Walpole, 2017). Students identify a relationship with organization members as forming a supportive community that could promote persistence through graduation (Strack et al., 2018).

Theoretical

The study's theoretical significance is to analyze the participants' perceived experiences related to Bandura's (1971) social learning theory. The theory could be practical as a model for other resource groups that are not African American fraternities or sororities. To examine the variables that improve persistence in minority students, researchers evaluated a resource group through a collegiate experience study focused on mentoring and modeling (Brooms, 2018). Resource groups are organizations or programs that encourage students to succeed academically

(Brooms, 2018). Brooms determined that resource groups create a sense of belonging and bonding between their members. Brooms also shared the example of a resource group such as the Black Male Initiative (BMI) program at the University of Cincinnati. Members receive academic and holistic support to persist (Brooms, 2018). Brooms (2018) celebrated the resource group members for their perceived impact on students to remain in school.

Practical

The practical significance of completing the study at the chosen PWI is to gather and analyze the perceived experiences of African American fraternity and sorority members. The university will benefit from graduate experiences. The university administrators could learn how the culture may have contributed to the success of the African American graduates. The University leaders may also learn of ways the social culture of the University may have contributed to the attrition of the African American students. This study's practical significance is the determining factors that a minority student may consider as a need for establishing community and promoting persistence while attending a PWI. Exploring the stresses experienced by the minority group may also contribute to higher attrition rates for that segment of the university population.

Research Questions

The following is the main research question for this study:

Central Research Question

What is the perceived impact of membership in African American fraternities and sororities on its members' collegiate experience and persistence through graduation from a PWI?

The central question is the foundation of the research to learn about the African American member of the organization's experiences and their impact on persistence. Becoming a member

of the organization is evidence of establishing a community (Chambers & Walpole, 2017). West African traditions originating from Ghana are like the rituals present in the African American fraternities and sororities, disseminating culture and building community (Chambers, 2016).

Sub-Question One

What were the characteristics of the organization and internal programs that attracted the participants to pursue membership?

The goal is to ask participants to express their perceptions of the fraternity's and sorority's characteristics. The researcher can link perceptions to studies that suggest that leadership and mentorship are attractive to prospective members when joining the Greek-lettered community (Strack et al., 2018). It will also be interesting to observe a connection between the perceived characteristics and the longing for a spiritual connection with students of similar cultural backgrounds and experiences (McGuire, McTier, et al., 2020).

Sub-Question Two

How has the perceived impact of membership in an African American fraternity or sorority encouraged the member to remain engaged in mentorship programs for currently enrolled undergraduates?

Sub-Question two is an inquiry about the perceived impact that encourages graduates to remain active as mentors for other fraternity and sorority undergraduate members to promote persistence. Graduates committed to mentoring African Americans who have chosen to study within the same academic majors as their degree programs increased the successful graduation rate to 36% (Hernandez et al., 2017). Mentorship from graduates was highly influential in combatting attrition by providing undergraduates a perceived resource to understand their experiences (Mondisa, 2018). Suppose the establishment is interested in mentorship roles after

graduation. In that case, the possibility of engagement remains, resulting in persistence for current undergraduate fraternity and sorority members.

Each participant was interviewed to discuss the impact of their fraternity or sorority membership on their collegiate experience and persistence through graduation. The participants shared their initial perceptions of the university upon their arrival as freshmen. The fraternity and sorority members also shared membership experiences and the significance of those experiences to promote persistence to graduation. In a study by Gona et al. (2019), attrition rates at a Predominantly White Institution were collected for heavily recruited African American students. The heavily recruited minorities were 30% of the first-year class (Gona et al., 2019). While being the top-ranked students of the recruiting class, attrition rates remained at a maximum percentage of 85% (Gona et al., 2019). The researcher of this study explored the research and examined the phenomenon of African American graduates from a PWI with higher attrition rates for the African American student population.

Definitions

This study used the following terms for a clear comprehension of the various components.

1. *Persistence* – The determination that students must overcome circumstances and factors that threaten the possibility of graduating is persistence (Ong & Ko, 2018).
2. *Predominantly White Institution (PWI)* – A public college or university with a predominantly Caucasian student body and a much smaller percentage of African American students seeking a community (Jones & Reddick, 2017).
3. *Historically Black College or University (HBCU)* – A public or private college or university with a majority African American study body where an ethnic community exists based on the

founding of the institution to provide education to African Americans during a time when there were no opportunities for acceptance into Predominantly White Institutions (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014).

4. *Community* – A group of students identifying with other students in their similarities in ethnicity and fraternal or sorority bond (Mbah, 2016).

5. *African American Organization* – The organization's membership is primarily African Americans founded as social groups to build a community (Pelzer, 2016).

6. *Black Greek Lettered Organization (BGLO)* – One of the nine fraternities or sororities that act as counter space for African American like-minded students committed to serving the community and gathering as a community (Pelzer, 2016).

7. *Perception* – The African American participants' experiences when the common factors conflict with educational persistence are observed (Watson, 2016).

8. *National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC)* – The governing organization of nine African American fraternities and sororities (National Pan-Hellenic Council, 2020).

Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to understand the experiences of African American fraternity and sorority members that graduated from Predominately White Institutions. African American fraternity and sorority members will be defined as participants who attended PWIs and have persisted through graduation. The goal was to learn if their membership impacted their collegiate experience and persist through graduation. A plan to examine the research gap to determine if membership helped its members persist. Through this phenomenological study, the understanding of the experiences of African American fraternity and sorority members that graduated from PWIs demonstrated that through social learning theory, communities rooted in a

desire for high leadership representation and modeling of leadership through mentorship should be built-in in into new resources groups. Also, by identifying the causes of attrition of American college students as is a general problem at colleges and universities, the focused approach of recognizing the problem of the disproportionately high percentages of African American college student attrition at PWIs can guide the research of the experiences of members of that student population.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to conduct a systematic review of the literature related to the perceived impact of membership in African American fraternities and sororities on the members' collegiate experience and persistence. This chapter includes a literature synthesis on subjects about organizations' presence on university campuses and its effects on members. Also included in the analysis of the theoretical framework is related literature. The chapter concludes with a summary section. Social learning theory evaluates the impact of membership (Bandura, 1971).

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's social learning theory (1971) is the primary theory for the research. This study will use social learning theory (1971) to examine the positive effects of the theory on fraternity and sorority member persistence. The social learning theory components of mentorship and leadership are present through motivational learning data and executed as positive reinforcement (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018). The following section within the theoretical framework is a detailed analysis of the organizational commitments of leadership, mentorship, and service. The last section of the theoretical framework synthesizes how the topic relates to the theory.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura (1971) described social learning theory as learning when the teacher exposes the learner to the knowledge source in various and repeated encounters. Reinforcement is a catalyst for motivational learning for the learner. The teacher easily transfers information to the learner through repeated interaction (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018). Bandura (1971) explained that cognitive mediation helps acknowledge the differences between awareness and behavior.

Bandura (1971) suggested that the concept of modeling is the primary source of effective observational learning (Bajcar & Babel, 2018). Through modeling, the learner can develop skills that motivate and develop the learner's drive for success in many different environmental conditions (Tarsono, 2018).

The behaviors in a researcher's study are most analyzed using social learning theories (Kruis et al., 2020). Kruis et al. (2020) acknowledged the significance of behavioral processes for academic learning and visible empiricism. The empirical evaluation of the learning theory behaviors is through social learning theory (1971). The perceived learning of positive leadership attributes could be recognizable in fraternity and sorority members' academic success (Carthell, 2020). Students' positive leadership attributes could be the catalyst for persistence through graduation. Social learning theory observes and measures subcultures for successful practices and techniques (Kruis et al., 2020). "They state the surge in the therapy movement toward efficiency, research-supported methods, and evaluation of outcomes is a credit to behaviorists, and there is evidence that these approaches do change behaviors" (Chavis, 2012).

Stimulated deep learning within social learning theory constructs benefits college students fully engaged in the academic experience (Dutta et al., 2019). Dutta et al. (2019) determined that enthusiastic students about the material presented for learning became motivated to persist through to graduation. Students mirror enthusiasm from their peers and the mentors and educators who teach the material (Dutta et al., 2019). Mentors and educators can guide or persuade the learner through social learning theory modeling (Bandura, 1971).

Origination

Social learning theory originated as a psychodynamic theory (Bandura, 1971). Bandura (1971) understood and assumed that mentorship is highly effective with a few available

evaluative concepts. Bandura's Social learning theory (1971) will be the primary theoretical reference for the learning response to the teacher's stimuli for receptive learning through mentorship. African American fraternity and sorority members consistently list mentorship as one of the many positive activities the organization's members support (Castellanos, Gloria, Besson, & Harvey, 2016).

Cheung et al. (2020) recognized the importance of college and university students remaining healthy through an identified psychological well-being measure. Students maintain their psychological well-being and adjust to their new collegiate environments relating to their home community and high school experiences (Cheung et al., 2020). A mentor's influence could be a successful coping mechanism for the dynamic change of the first-year student. Cheung et al. (2020) used student questionnaires to receive responses from first-year and transfer students to determine their difficulty in successfully transitioning into the college environment. Cheung et al. (2020) determined that staff and other leaders should engage with the student entrants to help them transition into higher education environments.

Major Theorists

Bandura (1971) hypothesized that teachers reinforce authentic learning through repeated information exchange sessions and repetition. Bandura (1971) explains in the literature that the learner must be able to identify takeaways from the social encounter with the teacher. Bandura identifies the modeling process as a construct in social learning theory. The second consideration for social learning theory is the transmission of response (Apesin & Gong, 2018). The response transmission determined different methods to develop learners' desire to act and emulate leadership behaviors (Apesin & Gong, 2018).

Researchers' use of social learning theory to examine academic issues within various subcultures in student populations has been the most popular approach to analyzing university social problems (Kruis et al., 2020). Social learning theory in social and behavioral sciences has grown exponentially (Kruis et al., 2020). Social learning theory explains the most successful influencing behavior for intended outcomes (Kruis et al., 2020). The interventions of influenceable behavior are most effective through modeling, mentoring by those in authoritative positions, and imitation by the student recipients of instruction (Kruis et al., 2020). Leadership and Mentorship are interventions of influenceable behavior that could advance in the literature.

Leadership and Mentorship Advancements in the Literature

According to Castellanos et al. (2016), African American fraternity and sorority members consider leadership and mentorship essential characteristic traits. Leadership and mentorship are qualities that fraternity members choose to encourage their members to adopt (Armstrong & Jackson, 2017). Researchers should explore the importance of leadership within fraternities and sororities to understand the practice of modeling positive behavior (Armstrong & Jackson, 2017). Modeling leadership and mentorship attributes for African American fraternity and sorority members could also be influenced by depictions of the organizational culture in mainstream movies, television shows, novels, and magazines (Slak et al., 2020). Demonstrated depictions of its members' leadership and mentorship as positive attributes (Johnson et al., 2019). The message muddles the introduction of mainstream viewers to many negative attributes regarding fraternity and sorority life (Apesin & Gong, 2018). The research will be essential to look for examples of leadership and mentorship in the data. The researcher plans to have African American fraternity members provide examples of perceived negative experiences that motivated them to persist. As Johnson et al. (2019;2020;) explained in their study, the participants could

also process negative information. Some members may have synthesized their total experience by learning from leadership and mentorship examples from other members.

Leadership. Leadership modeling may be a successful method of impact in adult learning. Successful African American women in leadership roles often attribute their success to education, leadership development, and strong relationships with others who share an understanding of their cultural identity (Sims & Carter, 2019; Sales et al., 2019;2020;). Rarely are student leadership actions studied to impact collegiate experience and persistence (Preston-Cunningham et al., 2016). This study aims to research the African American fraternity and sorority members to discover leadership practices as a gap in the literature.

Self-efficacy leadership development is a successful method of impacting students. Apesin and Gong (2018) studied the self-efficacy development of leadership skills of African American first-year students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Apesin and Gong (2018) requested that students submit answers to questionnaires where they asked them to measure their leader self-efficacies. Research has determined that collegiate leadership was highly relevant to first-year students' self-efficacy (Apesin & Gong, 2018). Apesin and Gong (2018) determined that first-semester leadership and mentoring opportunities strongly correlated to students' academic success and ability to persist. The consideration of the study's findings should also be relevant to African American fraternity and sorority members who are developing leadership and mentoring skills. As members of African American fraternities and sororities at PWIs. This study will examine the higher African American students' self-efficacy in their leadership skills while being members of their fraternities or sororities at a PWI. Suppose a higher self-efficacy is a confidence booster necessary to develop persistence.

The shared importance of teaching leadership skills and development through mentorship and leading through a servant leadership worldview by fraternities and brotherhoods founded as religious organizations is evident (Barrera-Blanco et al., 2020). Barrera-Blanco et al. (2020) used questionnaires and interviews to learn the effectiveness of servant leaders in the desire to provide social aid. The researchers explored the characteristics of a servant leader. The researchers evaluated whether taught characteristics helped make the members better servant leaders (Barrera-Blanco et al., 2020). Suppose the students were more engaged in the mission of the religious brotherhood. The teaching characteristics of members are related to Bandura's (1971) social learning theory. The teacher is willing to educate the student. The student is motivated and receptive to learning in their educational environment. The leadership lessons also appear to permeate groups that value achievement through leadership and mentorship, such as Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, which highly values honorable achievement (Parks, & Laybourn, 2016).

Mentorship. Mentorship is a parallel method used by peers to demonstrate behavior personalized for a peer learner's success (Chiu et al., 2019). A successful mentor has experiences that should be relatable to the learner as a model for comprehension (Belmore, 2019). Mentoring is a universal style of teaching where learners can receive personal or professional guidance (Belmore, 2019). Positive interactions and the quality of the connection between the mentor and the student assigned to them are indicators of a mentored student's successful outcome (Docherty et al., 2018).

Internal and External mentorship is an essential function of African American fraternities and sororities (Armstrong & Jackson, 2017). Armstrong and Jackson (2017) determined that fraternity members' mentorship helped them resist cultural and institutional obstacles threatening

their academic experience. Using the theory of social learning (Bandura, 1971), professional and leadership skills occur throughout the multiple opportunities for African American male students having repeated experiences with the fraternity members through the mentorship programs (Armstrong & Jackson, 2017). It is essential for fraternity and sorority members who graduated from a PWI to provide synthesizable experiences for any mentorship to motivate persistence.

There are examples of observed peer leadership as a transparent and effective way to engage students in their experiences on campus and connect student leadership principles with core tenants of leadership practices (Friedel et al., 2017). The researchers used the course development method to engage the student participants in observing relevant academic scholarship practices, educational evaluation of the experiences, and proper guidance on developing leadership skills. Like the expected tenants of social learning theory, the participants would become more engaged in the peer leadership experience (Friedel et al., 2017). The expectation is to learn various skills and concepts useful for learners' practices (Friedel et al., 2017). The researchers also believed that the proximal peer interactions described by Vygotsky (1978) created the perfect developed environment for peer education and mentorship from the principle of peer leadership.

How the Topic Relates to Social Learning Theory

Fraternity and sorority members can foster a collegiate environment with a foundation in social responsibility (Banks & Archibald, 2020). Banks and Archibald (2020) believed that the rigorous reinforcement of impressionable students' core leadership and mentorship values must formulate their positive perceptions. The perceptions of fraternity and sorority impact on the African American student's persistence are measurable, pertinent for this study, and necessary to

evaluate the research questions through social learning theory (1971). There are significant theoretical advancements that include research related to leadership and mentorship.

Theoretical Advancements

Researchers suggest that structured African American fraternities and sororities exist through community service and interactions through members' leadership and mentorship experiences (Cheung et al., 2020; Garcia, 2020; Pearce et al., 2016). Suppose the organizational experiences that motivated the members to persist are related to leadership and mentorship. The organizations' leadership and mentorship practices can be proposed as other resource organizations to promote persistence. Successful learners with lived experiences must be understood to model effective programs promoting persistence (Ives et al., 2020). The shared lived experiences of minority students at a PWI could be used to create organizations like fraternities and sororities (Arellano, 2020; Garcia, 2019; Raque-Bogdan & Lucas, 2016).

Social learning theory (1971) is highly effective for African Americans' behavioral therapies (Kruis et al., 2020). The learner's worldview must be considered the foundation of any application of leadership and mentorship learning (Kruis et al., 2020). Chavis (2012) discovered that the African American worldview in leadership and mentorship training is crucial for the entire concept of practical learning. Teachers should avoid replacing the African American worldview (Chavis, 2012).

The observed development of fraternities and sororities has a worldview that encourages scholarship, leadership, perseverance, and community uplift (Parks, & Laybourn, 2016). In their research, Parks and Laybourn (2016) also discovered that the fraternity and sorority members had visions of continuing the leadership and mentorship beyond the colleges and universities. The members successfully connected active alumni chapters to their surrounding undergraduate

chapters. The African American worldview that identifies the relevance of building a community through high ideals was a cultural necessity for the collective goals of defeating institutions of social injustice (Parks, & Laybourn, 2016). Recognizing the modern African American fraternity and sorority members' abilities to recognize a similar African American worldview through training for leadership and mentorship as a survival mechanism for its members to persist could advance social learning theory deriving into cultural learning practices.

Related Literature

Through the research conducted by Hughes et al. (2019), it was clear that homogeneity has been an issue in previous studies. The marginalizing of African American students as a monolithic segment of the student population created the necessity to develop organizations that they could use to represent their unique points of view (Byars-Winston & Rogers, 2019). McGuire, Sweet, et al. (2020) determined that African American males seek Christian and secular social organizations with members who share similar experiences and support their worldview. Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, Incorporated, was founded in 1911 at Indiana University to establish a campus presence for African American students. Due to the limited number of African Americans enrolled, it was difficult to fellowship (Parks & Laybourn, 2016). The African American students established a community by forming a fraternity (Parks & Laybourn, 2016). Individuality is encouraged. Parks and Laybourn (2016) described the organization's founders as determined to be a source of inspiration for its members. They wanted to pursue accolades of honorable achievement in any of its members' unique aspirations and establish community among other non-members on the campus (Parks & Laybourn, 2016).

Students seeking a friendly community at a PWI may gravitate to fraternities and sororities that appear to have a similar cultural worldview and culturally relevant definitions of

high ideals (Garcia, 2020). Marginalized students at a PWI might develop a heightened desire to find organizations that will satisfy their needs for a sense of belonging while encouraging academic success. Like the African American student experience, Latina/o sorority and fraternity members classified as students within a minority subculture have similar reasons for establishing their organizations (Garcia, 2020).

Leadership is the commitment to resolving social problems affecting the collegiate environment (Garcia et al., 2017). Students may establish a community with a mission to improve their campus environment. The commitment is like the founders of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated on the campus of Indiana University, who sought to establish an organization to improve its social environment (Parks & Laybourn, 2016). Fraternity members thrive when using their cultural knowledge for survival in unfamiliar environments (Morojele, 2017). Learning is easier for individuals who share cultural knowledge and feel comfortable learning from one another (Morojele, 2017).

In the related literature section is the exploration of previously examined literature. Additional analysis is on the issues contributing to the problem and the collegiate environment. The next section of related literature synthesizes the gap in the literature. There is a deeper analysis of student success strategies and positive student experiences. The last section of related literature explores how the proposed study can fill the gap. This exploration includes discovering standard methods of success from graduates and potential actions for implementation.

Examined in Related Literature

The direct conflict in some African Americans' mainstream success presents a problem accessible, racially inclusive, and equal opportunity experience for the African American college student (Amechi et al., 2015). The impact of assuming homogeneity of the African American

male is considered a significant factor in African American male persistence failures at the university level (Hughes et al., 2019). Each student has unique experiences and circumstances that lead to their arrival on the college campus. The perceived shared experience of overcoming the negative responses to the individual struggle in a post-racial society continues to form one of the circumstances in which the students begin to establish a community (Byars-Winston & Rogers, 2019; Nasir & Hand, 2016;2006; Stinson, 2017).

The African American studied experience must identify self-awareness through oneness in others' relationships in the subculture while coexisting independently from the dominant culture (Harper et al., 2018). Chavis (2012) learned that social learning theory allowed the learning process to succeed with African American participants because of the natural ease of subculture members receiving learning from their peers. Fraternity and sorority members appear to meet this criterion for self-efficacy through similar experiences as a PWI subculture. Chavis (2012) suggested that learning is more successful if the teacher's social learning adjusted experience for the learners' positive interpretation of the leadership attributes and mentorship.

Most studies labeled African American students' academic success as a homogenous experience detailing how they were severely unprepared for the collegiate experience (Harper et al., 2018). Harper et al. (2018) found that university officials considering multiple factors affecting minority students are successful. They are adamant about recruiting diverse African American students to reduce higher attrition rates (Harper et al., 2018). In previous research, Orta (2019) also discovered that evaluated factors affect minority fraternities and sororities without considering modern-day types of racism on campus. Orta (2019) found the accounts of racial insensitivities and the lack of encouragement for the cultural identity of minority students. In addition to studying the lived experiences, researchers should also evaluate the effects of

developing peer-mentor programs (Akinla et al., 2018; Arellano, L., 2020). Akinla et al. (2018) determined that peer-mentor programs should include personal and professional development, transitioning exercises, stress reduction techniques, and open discussions to help thwart attrition. They are using identified programs that have been effective for first-year minority students. Incorporated fraternity and sorority mentorship programs are like the undergraduate collegiate experience (Arellano, 2020). Suppose the participants identify the mentorship programs in fraternities and sororities as essential. In that case, this could also be why students identify a relationship with an organization as having an impact.

A high priority of attaining academic credentials has been a value that is highly regarded and encouraged by most African Americans resulting in inflated enrollment in colleges and universities since 1976 (Comeaux et al., 2020). The researchers determined that African American undergraduate degree recipients increased by 54% (Comeaux et al., 2020). Many Caucasian students received undergraduate degrees, showing that African American students lacked significant representation at PWIs in 1976 (Comeaux et al., 2020). In this scenario, some researchers have examined why barely represented African Americans chose to attend universities with low African American student percentages. Comeaux et al. (2020) learned that African Americans chose universities based on the cost of attending, the financial aid available, and the availability of their desired major.

The Issues Contributing to the Problem

Minority university students' failure to identify with a community that contains the concepts of modeling and leadership are factors in the attrition problem (Braxton, 2019; Dawson & Cuevas, 2020; Farr-Wharton et al., 2018). African American students have excelled academically, although the staff and faculty at their universities have failed to provide solutions

relevant to the minority segment of the population (Chambers & Walpole, 2017). Chambers and Walpole (2017) stated that African American organizations are often underrepresented in observing persistence due to modeling. Even in online campus environments using advanced technology, the rarely recorded African American academic experience excludes examples of establishing community or persistence (Oregon & Carmon-Johnson, 2018; Jacobsen, 2019).

Lack of Self-Awareness. Participants who have experiences lacking high self-awareness or empowerment can boost desires for educational persistence through resource groups (Goodman, 2015). Other studies approached membership development through social learning theory from the perspective of the social responsibility of the organization to its members, other students on campus, and the surrounding communities to act as mentors (Cann, 1952; Coleman, 2007; Hevel et al., 2018; Parks & Laybourn, 2016; Turk, 2012). Hevel et al. (2018) discovered that institutional characteristics such as geography, unorganized membership selection methods, and limited foundational tenets on social responsibility could profoundly impact collegiate organizational members. Upon joining the fraternity or sorority, highly engaged members gravitate to mentorship and leadership behaviors (Hevel et al., 2018). However, levels of enthusiasm diminish as the member nears graduation (Hevel et al., 2018). Students exhibit engagement and social responsibility by becoming a fraternity or sorority member than the levels of social responsibility engagement from students who are not members of any organization (Matney et al., 2016).

Lack of Self-Authoring Skills. By sharing everyday experiences through targeted resource groups, students can help each other develop higher self-authoring skills and increase the probability of persisting through graduation (Clark & Brooms, 2018). Clark and Brooms (2018) determined that some African American male students have difficulty visualizing

graduation's positive outcome through the lack of self-authoring skills. It is imaginable that faculty and staff could experience difficulties engaging students who have already presented self-assurance and self-confidence. Suppose study participants' fraternity and sorority membership perceived impact resulted in higher levels of self-assurance and self-confidence. It will also be essential to learn if the introduced methods to learn self-authoring skills increase self-assurance and self-confidence.

Dropout as an Issue. Dropout becomes a significant issue for students who fail to embrace their university's collegiate environment (Jacobsen, 2019). Jacobson discovered no desire for students to keep up with the presented coursework pace, especially when disconnected from the university's experiences. Family interaction, home environment, disadvantages of racial isolation, and methodological issues can be factors in the failed collegiate experience (Harper et al., 2018). The more profound exploration of the environmental factors contributing to dropout could lead to practice theories for consideration. Another consideration suggested by Harper et al. (2018) is the importance of a diverse university administration assembly in policy-making.

Negative Parental Influence on Students. Parents' and other family members' influence can also contribute to African American attrition at a PWI (Comeaux et al., 2020). The researchers explained that the high regard for higher education among parents and family members could pressure students to enroll at universities (Comeaux et al., 2020). The behavior is prevalent even if the students have no sincere motivational desire to pursue higher education. This issue could make it easier for the pressured student not to be motivated to persist at the university. Comeaux et al. (2020) learned that some African American students felt overwhelming pressure from parents and other family members to persist as a representative of their families. Parents positively influenced their desire to persist through graduation by

providing support and encouragement (Mitchall & Jaeger, 2018). Parents who provided clear expectations for academic achievement and proper course planning had children who successfully persisted through graduation (Mitchall & Jaeger, 2018). Parents who received the same automated texts from their children's university contributed to their success through increased engagement (Castleman & Page, 2017). Some parents also negatively influence their children's desire to persist through graduation by presenting discouraging possibilities for positive outcomes (Mitchall & Jaeger, 2018).

The Collegiate Environment

Students that identified their universities as having low minority representation and mounting racial tensions are in danger of not persisting at the university and need to establish a community (Garcia, 2019; O'Malley, 2019; Walker-DeVose et al., 2019). Garcia (2019) and O'Malley (2019) found that many study participants expressed multiple exposures to racial incidents and were affected by racial privilege attitudes. The evaluated African American member experience increases the understanding of the reported issues that may have led to establishing resource groups like fraternities and sororities (Walker-DeVose et al., 2019). Fraternity and Sorority members may also impact the collegiate experience as PWI students (Walker-DeVose et al., 2019). Members of African American fraternities and sororities can improve campus environments' negative perceptions through active engagement where social segregation is apparent (Walker-DeVose et al., 2019). Underrepresented African American students were highly engaged in organizations as an effective way to challenge the negative perceptions of their subculture (Jones & Reddick, 2017).

Evaluations of Successful Student Experiences. The rarely measured extreme complexity of African American student achievements at universities through participants'

collegiate experience leaves a gap in the literature (Harper et al., 2018). Harper et al. (2018) concluded that studies that capture student responses without race classifications would fail to capture the experiences of minority students as a community. “81.2% of Black undergraduates reported a commitment to persisting from 1 year to the next. Similarly, 84.9% indicated they were committed to completing their degree programs” (Harper et al., 2018, p.11). Pre-existing student experiences can be measured for preparedness for college and university studies and evaluated for what must be prevalent for academic success in their first year. The interactions with sororities and fraternities could strengthen the students’ academic experience for persistence.

Environments of Political and Social Oppression. Students also experienced issues on the college campus due to their problems with an environment they identified as being overabundantly filled with political and social oppression (McGuire, McTier, et al., 2020). McGuire, McTier, et al. (2020) identified these issues as primary motivations for establishing African American fraternities and sororities. The organizations were a community for the members to establish a political voice and action plans through solidarity (McGuire, McTier, et al., 2020). African American students leaving stressful environments arrived at universities' sociopolitical pressure (McGuire, McTier, et al., 2020). Their arrival into the stressful environment caused them to desperately seek a community of students with similar experiences (McGuire, McTier, et al., 2020). When the student’s campus is socially engaging, the potential of persisting is more significant (Museus et al., 2017).

Creating a Spiritual Environment. The behaviors of the marginalized African American students experiencing the college environment’s issues were no different for members of African American religious organizations on campus (McGuire, Sweet, et al., 2020). Members

decided to establish a community for the opportunity to have a Christian Approach to be like-minded, racial uplift, and pursuit of fair representation on their collegiate campus. The students who perceived a hostile collegiate environment needed a way to organize and find a way to work on the issues they faced and persist through the academic experience.

Peer-to-Peer Engagement. Peer organizations could be a successful outlet to improve the African American students' perceptions of the collegiate environment. Students that participated in an African American male initiative program, Black Male Leadership Collective (BMLC), viewed the collegiate environment as culturally rich (Druery & Brooms, 2019). Peer to Peer bonding is a process where students can establish accountability with one another, possibly leading to a commitment to leadership roles and persistence (McGowan, 2017). Students can change perceptions of college environment issues by considering other points of view through peer-to-peer engagement (McGowan, 2017). Suppose a student is a part of the presented program and negatively perceives the environment. In that case, other considerations may be a chance for a new visualization. Fraternity and sorority membership is diverse because students can gain insight from many perspectives (Hughey & Hernandez, 2013).

Similar Experiences of Caucasian Students as the Minority. There are similar comparative experiences with others in the minority population of their collegiate environments. Compared to African Americans' experiences at a PWI, the perceptions of enrolled HBCU Caucasian students' environments appear similar. Student affairs employees at a Mid-Atlantic HBCU were chosen as participants to share their perceptions of the efforts to provide outreach for the engagement of non-African American students on campus (Arroyo et al., 2017). The student affairs participant in the study by Rrovo et al. (2017) shared a story of a berated

Caucasian student asking a question to members of the university's fraternities and sororities at a town hall event.

The government enforced accreditation protocols and regulatory guidelines and initiated substantial public HBCUs and PWIs to recruit underrepresented students (Burnett, 2020). To promote a more inclusive environment, the university developed resource groups. Other programs helped the students engage in the university culture (Burnett, 2020). One unproven myth is that HBCUs provide curriculums exclusively for African Americans (Arroyo et al., 2017). Another unproven myth is that the HBCU is no place for non-African Americans to thrive (Arroyo et al., 2016). Predominately Caucasian fraternities and sororities exist at traditional HBCUs, such as West Virginia State University and Bluefield State University (Arroyo et al., 2017). In addition to the environment being more inclusive by establishing the different resource groups, non-African American students choose to attend and persist in graduating from the universities. Some non-African American participants have expressed negative perceptions of hypervisibility and exclusion within their HBCU campus environment (Arroyo et al., 2017).

Establishing Community

Minority students are more receptive to establishing a community at their university after exposure to organizations and programs that respect their culture (Huerta et al., 2018). Huerta et al. (2018) determined that minority students should be engaged with the organizations during the first summer orientation session and continued through the first few years of academic enrollment. Any organization that aids the formation of a community must include a lens of a comprehensive angled understanding of the diverse backgrounds of the prospective minority students (O'Connor, 2020). Minority students remain fully engaged with their places of origin while seeking similar university experiences and connections (Turner, 2020).

Culture

The culture of African Americans should be studied and understood for University officials to effectively create resources to aid persistence (Harper et al., 2018). Culture building has also become a method executed by university officials (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2020). An example is Spelman College's branding to encourage academic excellence messages to students from enrollment through persistence to graduation (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2020). Culture-building examples include New York state organizations (Knight-Manuel et al., 2019). The organizations instilled in the African American community that Blacks and Latinos are well prepared for higher education and should not hesitate to seek degrees from colleges and universities (Knight-Manuel et al., 2019).

Historical Organizational Commitments to Leadership, Mentorship, and Service

From each organization's inception, its founders' social reasons for establishment and leadership requirements are critical. Each organization appears to have requirements with either leadership or mentorship as criteria. The requirements also include requirements for academic success and exhibited community service.

Alpha Phi Alpha. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated was founded at Cornell University in 1906 (O'Malley, 2019). It was the first African American male intercollegiate organization. The seven founders served as an academic and social support organization for the African American men at Cornell (O'Malley, 2019). Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated leaders focused on initiatives for members to be politically active in combating social injustices and other inequities for African Americans (O'Malley, 2019).

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated aspirants must be registered voters with a proven commitment to high moral character and academic success ("Membership. Alpha,"

2021). Members sponsor aspirants that meet the criteria for membership (“Membership, ” 2021). The engagement of individual members in the recruitment process provides an opportunity for mentorship and modeling leadership behavior. This engagement is related to the leader and student relationship exhibited in Bandura’s (1971) social learning theory.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. In 1908, nine female college students gathered in a dorm room at Howard University (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2021). They established Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2021). Since that year, the sorority has grown to have almost 300,000 members worldwide (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2021). Its members’ personal and professional development is significant for the sorority (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2021). As the founding leader of the sorority, Ethel Hedgeman noticed the marginalization of women on the Howard University campus. She wanted to create an organization that would support women through uplift and encouragement for excellence (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2021). Another key focus of the organization is the commitment to servant leadership. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority’s leadership encourages its members to support initiatives developed to combat global and domestic equality and equity issues.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated is an organization where its members develop culturally and professionally (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2021). The sorority members seek potential members dedicated to top service to all people globally. Potential members should exhibit high academic standards and have a history of high social and academic achievements (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2021). No aspirant that fails to uphold the moral and leadership standards represented by the organization will gain acceptance into the organization (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2021).

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated. In the early 1900s, African American students were 1% of the total student population at Indiana University (“History Kappa”, 2021,

January 22). African American Indiana University students were permitted to attend classes. However, African American students could not reside on campus, participate in contact sports, and not become fraternities or sororities. In 1911, Elder Watson Diggs, a transfer student from Howard University, gathered nine other African American students. Together they created the organization that became Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated (“History Kappa”, 2021, January 22). The African American students rarely encountered one another on campus. The bond through a fraternity helped them organize social gatherings and establish community. The students were supportive of one another. They focused on high Christian ideals and an unswerving dedication to achievement as an organization. Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. was highly influential in establishing the National Panhellenic council of all African American fraternities and sororities.

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated seeks collegiates and graduates committed to high social and academic standards (“History Kappa”, 2021, January 22). Aspirants must exhibit maturity and dedication to serving the community with an unswerving commitment to brotherhood. Members must be of high moral character (“History Kappa”, 2021, January 22). They should encourage one another to strive for the highest level of achievement in all individually chosen academic and professional fields. One program embedded in the training process is the leaders’ directive to train for leadership and programs focused on mentoring school-aged boys (“Guide Right”, 2021; “Kappa League”, 2021).

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated. Three Howard University students and their faculty advisor gathered inside the university’s science building to form Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated (Omega Psi Phi, 2020, July 25). It is the first African American fraternity founded at an HBCU (Omega Psi Phi, 2020, July 25). With a fraternal focus on

friendship, the founders established cardinal principles. Two of those four principles emphasized the importance of scholarship and uplift (Omega Psi Phi, 2020, July 25). The commitment to scholarship is one of the critical actions contributing to their academic success and leadership (Omega Psi Phi, 2020, July 25). Uplift is an indicator that mentorship may be encouraged by its members. During World War I, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity members fully supported its United States military members (Omega Psi Phi, 2020, December 18). Omega Psi Phi members also provide mentorship programs to male middle and high school students (Omega Psi Phi, 2020, December 18).

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. In 1913, 22 collegiate women established Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated at Howard University (“Founders. Delta”, 2020). The women were motivated by the fighting against the marginalization of women (“Founders. Delta”, 2020). They wanted to expand their service from the Howard University campus to the marches regarding women’s suffrage around the nation (“Founders. Delta”, 2020). The Delta Sigma Theta Sorority members sought to change negative perceptions of African Americans and all women (“Membership. Delta”, 2020).

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated. The growing list of fraternities and sororities founded at Howard University was Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated in 1914 (“History & Mission”, 2020). The organization's three founders focused on high ideals of Scholarship and Service (“History & Mission”, 2020). Inclusivity was also crucial to the founders of the organization. They encouraged its members to be an integral part of the community outside the university (“History & Mission”, 2020). Also, it was encouraged to be open to diverse membership without restrictions based on wealth or complexion (History & Mission, 2020). The organization is the first fraternity or sorority to have a constitutionally bound relationship with

another Organization (“History & Mission”, 2020). The members of Phi Beta Sigma assisted in forming their constitutionally bound sister organization, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated.

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated. Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated was the third sorority founded at Howard University. In 1920 five women founded the organization to support their constitutionally bound brothers of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated (“Our History”, 2020). The five women founded the organization during the financial pressures Americans were feeling from the Great Depression (“Our History”, 2020). The founders of the organization focused on top community service and economic advancement. Zeta Phi Beta was the first organization to establish a chapter in Africa and continues mentoring programs through auxiliary organizations for youths worldwide (“Our History”, 2020).

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated. Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated was the first African American sorority founded at a PWI (“Welcome”, 2020). It is also the first African American sorority to be founded off the campus of Howard University. In 1922, The seven founders created an organization for influential leaders to uplift the African American community (“Welcome”, 2020). The mission for leadership and the uplifting of the community is through the belief of being strong educators and leadership development programs (“Welcome”, 2020). Like the other African American sororities, Sigma Gamma Rho members have a mission to support women’s issues (“Welcome”, 2020).

Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Incorporated. More than 40 years after the founding of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated was the founding Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Incorporated in 1964 (“Support911”, 2020). The founders established the organization as full-time non-traditional students enrolled at Morgan State University later in life after serving in the military and starting families (“Support911”, 2020). The founders created an organization to

support their unique college experiences as mature students and similar leadership and academic excellence (“Support911”, 2020). The organization expanded to more than 300 chapters worldwide by first establishing interest groups as affiliates. They later allowed the affiliate groups to become expanded chapters of the organization.

The Gap in Related Literature

Collected data from high-achieving academically recognized black students who persisted through graduation at a PWI is not present (Harper et al., 2018). Explored African American student stresses for the causes of higher attrition rates for that segment of the university population could be available. Harper et al. (2018) reviewed the experienced racial stereotypes of African Americans. The study includes the participants’ responses to them at the PWI and the tactics used to produce proper behavioral responses to those racial stereotypes. The study’s relevance by Harper et al. (2018) to this study’s chosen topic is the implication of the possible correlation in African American achievers’ success with the psycho-emotional response to the negative stereotypes presented to them. There is limited information on African Americans’ collegiate success strategies and experiences and even more limited information on post-graduate outcomes (Harper & Newman, 2016).

Student Success Strategies

Fraternity and sorority members have successful methods of encouraging members to persist through incidents of microaggressions (Harper et al., 2018; Peters, 2018; Dawes, 2018). The methods include effective psycho-emotional responses to the number of presented stereotypes during academic studies at a PWI (Harper et al., 2018; Peters, 2018; Dawes, 2018). Data collected from successful African American students who persisted through graduation at the PWI may include success methods. Members of African American fraternities and sororities

may have a positive academic experience that results in high self-confidence (Bolman & Holmes, 2017; Plante & Halman, 2016). Bolman & Holmes (2017) determined that minority high self-confidence students graduate within four years. The high-achieving students have an increased grade point average (Bolman & Holmes (2017)). Lastly, the students report increased social interaction levels (Bolman & Holmes (2017)). Compassion scores were higher for sorority members who actively engaged in community activities (Plante & Halman, 2016).

Relational learning programs within fraternities and sororities effectively implement Bandura's social learning theory (Dawes, 2018). According to Dawes (2018), the average African American male college student finished 61 percent of his courses. In comparison, those in the mentorship programs within fraternities finished 82 percent. Members of fraternities and sororities from the proposed study may provide experiences of promoting higher self-confidence, higher compassion, and the implementation of relational learning programs as successful methods.

Successful Student Experiences

Membership in a fraternity or sorority affects critical thinking, a morally strong character, lifelong learning, and healthy mental well-being (Hevel et al., 2018; McGuire et al., 2020). The paradoxical relationship between the university and the fraternity or sorority has not thoroughly evaluated the effectiveness of membership in student academic success to promote persistence (Hevel et al., 2018). Suppose the responses by study participants display persistence through the educational experience. In that case, future research can evaluate the organization's impact on the development of persistence.

The examples of successful male leadership and solid Christian principles should be encouraged by the fraternity members in an environment that proves leadership is needed

(McGuire, McTier, et al., 2020). African American fraternities' and sororities' religious representation in the tenets for social learning theoretical examples exists (McGuire, McTier, et al., 2020). There is a need to discuss masculinity in fraternities and establish a community of like-minded students (Chambers, 2016; Chrisman, 2018; Parks & Laybourn, 2016, Pelzer, 2016). Hevel et al. (2018) identified the vital characteristics for establishing community and promoting student success. Fraternity members developed vital attributes for the collegiate experience's positive impact (McGuire, McTier et al., 2020). The study participants should provide examples of successful events and coded academic experiences for impact. Hopefully, these experiences will be exclusive to their membership in fraternities or sororities and separated from the possibility that the impact was related to some other resource group or opportunities provided at the university.

How the Proposed Study Can Be Used to Fill the Gap

The proposed study can fill the gap with participants' phenomenological data in this unique demographic group of students. The participants will identify the successful methods of the graduates. The participants may also provide actionable methods to prevent implementation into other non-fraternity and non-sorority African American resource groups. The participants identify successful leadership and mentorship processes synthesized through social learning theory. The experiences of being a fraternity and sorority member may have had no significant impact on the persistence to graduate. The study will be relevant due to the data gathered from University South graduates. Its uniqueness is the university's remote, southern location and camaraderie of the fraternity and sorority members perceived from the personal recollection of being a university student.

The Discovery of the Standard Successful Methods of Graduates

College fraternity and sorority research have reinforced negative behaviors (Hevel et al., 2018). The negative behaviors studied were hazing, alcohol abuse, and sexual crimes. Martin & Pascarella (2015) found no correlation between students' membership in the fraternities and sororities and poor academic outcomes. Student members of African American fraternities and sororities are engaged in the collegiate experience and exhibit increased pride through racial/ethnic identities (Coleman, 2007; McGuire, Sweet, et al., 2020; Turk, 2012). The participant members of fraternities and sororities that have persisted should provide data categorized for successful methods.

The African American student example of persistence has resulted from students in various university resource groups where they established community (Proctor et al., 2018; Bowman & Holmes, 2017). Proctor et al. (2018) discovered that the perception of establishing a positive collegiate experience is directly related to the support of the faculty members and the inclusion of the students as a recognized community (Proctor et al., 2018). Bowman & Holmes (2017) stated that more excellent college experiences and a recognized community support system are critical components to student success. Bowman & Holmes (2017) identified the student success source rooted in the membership in fraternities and sororities.

Student learning programs can use social learning theory methods (Bandura, 1971) to reduce dropouts and encourage persistence. Brooms (2018) discovered that university officials could use specialized interest groups and programs to reduce student dropout or transfer to other universities. The specialized interest groups and established programs will help combat university dropout problems. The statistics have shown that African American male college students failed persistence (Brooms, 2018; Harper & Newman, 2016). Brooms (2018) noted the

increase of African American male experiences within the last 15 years evaluate student learning programs, student engagement, and success rates. The resource groups such as fraternities and sororities and mentoring programs help reduce failed persistence (Harper & Newman, 2016).

Provide Potential Actions for Implementation

Cultural development occurs at early childhood levels through social interactions and continued education by those individuals (Vygotsky, 1962). Like cultural development, in social learning theory (Bandura, 1971), there is a requirement for repeated interaction for the learner to remain persistent in academic development. Suppose the presence of fraternities and sororities and the sponsorship of their on-campus programs could create a social environment that could breed the persistence and example of a great collegiate experience of success. Future research could include the cultural environment and its impact on student persistence for a positive collegiate experience.

Mentorship has become one of the most identified activities of many African American fraternities and sororities in members' assistance at a PWI (Hevel et al., 2018). There is the criticality of mentoring students significantly higher at risk for failure during the first year of attendance (McClure, 2006). Isolation and loneliness were high and affected the academic and collegiate experience (Braxton, 2019; Dawson & Cuevas, 2020).

The fraternity and sorority members' responsibility as role models was extended to other members to display exemplary behavior on campus (Hevel et al., 2018; Kimbrough, 1995). Implemented social learning theory (Bandura, 1971) showed that student fraternity members were fully aware of their leadership's impact on student success and academic achievement. Members exposed to modeled leadership's high expectations held more leadership positions after persisting through the undergraduate experience (Kimbrough, 1995; Mondisa, 2018). Future

studies for the research gap should include evaluating the leadership modeling on the African American members in fraternities and sororities and if leadership promotes a positive collegiate experience.

Membership in a Greek-oriented organization could positively affect its members (O'Malley, 2019; Strack et al., 2018; Walker et al., 2015). Hevel et al. (2018) noted the importance of members' selection effects with higher standards and leadership to have high satisfaction with the collegiate experience and degree persistence. The fraternity members' shared experiences and achievement goals to establish a community standard for tenacity through graduation and leadership positions after matriculation. The leadership example also measures a fraternity or sorority's impact on their collegiate experience.

Engagement in the first year is critical for promoting a positive collegiate experience and academic success (Barbera et al., 2020). The possibility of establishing community, introducing various resource groups such as fraternities and sororities, and modeling leadership should be a part of the initial exposure for African American students at a PWI (Carthell et al., 2020). Social activism is an identified method for students to become engaged during their first year (Jones & Reddick, 2017). Jones and Reddick agreed that African American students would become engaged in their collegiate community when racial and social inequalities require time, dedication, and resolution. African American fraternities and sororities could provide the students the foundation for the obligation to a common cause.

Through the social learning theory analysis (Bandura, 1971), the examined participant experiences will indicate programs to help reduce dropout and encourage persistence. The programs identified should be established to combat dropout problems at universities where the statistics have shown African American college students (Brooms, 2018; Carthell et al., 2020).

The study of the fraternity and sorority members' interrelationships should be a data-driven approach (Sridharan et al., 2016). The next step is considering data from the participants' interviews through perceptions of their worldview through social learning theory. Researchers generally treat the participants' experiences as homogeneous. A heterogeneous phenomenological study of African American graduates is needed (Sridharan et al., 2016). Sridharan et al. (2016) discovered that many studies had researchers who assumed that participants' interventions were exposed, which caused participants to experience those interventions similarly.

The filled gap analyzes the participants' perceptions of fraternity and sorority leadership and mentorship as a method to persist through the academic experience to graduate from the university without dropping out or transferring. The rarity of the provided information by members of the African American fraternities and sororities through social learning theory is optimal for the research. A contrast to the multiple studies that examine fraternity and sorority life on the college campus as toxic affiliations with sexual victimization, sexual exploitation, elitist attitudes, hazing infractions, and the abuse of alcohol and drugs (Parks & Hooker, 2020).

What is Currently Known in the Related Literature

The assumption of homogeneity of the African American male is considered a significant factor in the failures in persistence at the university level (Hughes et al., 2019). The student's unique experiences and circumstances led to their arrival at the PWI (Hughes et al., 2019). The shared perceived experience of overcoming the negative responses to the individual struggle in a post-racial society continues to form one of the circumstances in which the students begin to establish a community (Byars-Winston & Rogers, 2019; Nasir & Hand, 2016;2006; Stinson, 2017). Mentorship programs should include personal and professional development,

transitioning exercises, stress reduction techniques, and open discussions to help thwart attrition (Akinla et al., 2018). Rarely recorded research on African American attrition is understood for establishing community or persistence (Oregon & Carmon-Johnson, 2018; Jacobsen, 2019).

African American fraternity and sorority members can improve campus environments' negative perceptions through active engagement in the communities where social segregation is apparent. (Walker-DeVose et al., 2019). There has been an extensive effort to research the African American male for predictors of success and persistence with many urban male participants (Wood & Newman, 2017). Wood and Newman discovered that the higher engagement levels were due to the African American male faculty establishing a mentor relationship with the enrolled African American students.

What is Not Known in the Related Literature

The detailed exploration of stress indicators of higher attrition rates for African American segment of the university population is relatively unknown (Harper, 2015). In a study of Black male college achievers and resistant responses to stereotypes at predominantly White colleges (PWI) and universities, Harper et al. (2018) provided details of how the African American study participants persisted through incidents of microaggressions and other campus issues. Peters (2018) studied native women who expressed feelings of isolation at their PWI and formed a sorority to establish a community. Dawes (2018) found that African American males that are members of fraternities are encouraged to succeed. There should be an understanding of the effectiveness of fraternities and sororities in promoting persistence and academic success (Hevel et al., 2018). Fraternity and sorority membership positively affects critical thinking, strong character, lifelong learning, and healthy well-being (Hevel et al., 2018; McGuire, Sweet, et al., 2020).

Summary

This literature review synthesized information related to the university campus's African American fraternities and sororities. The researcher identified the theory of social learning (Bandura, 1971) as the leading theory within the theoretical framework. Also included are discussions of the origination, major theorists, leadership, mentorship, how the topic relates to the theory, and theoretical advancements. The related literature section includes the issues contributing to the problem, the college environment, community establishment, culture, and the historical organizational commitments to leadership and mentorship. The researcher identified gaps in the related literature as the limited number of studies focusing on student success strategies and successful student experiences. The researcher discussed the gap within the literature sections on what is known, what is not known, and how the proposed study can fill the gap.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to learn if the perceived experiences of African American members of NPHC fraternities and sororities at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) impacted their collegiate experience and helped them persist through to graduation. This chapter aims to introduce the research methodology for this qualitative phenomenological study. Using this approach, a more profound comprehension of the members' perceived experiences at a PWI was present. Another benefit of this approach was learning if their membership motivated them to remain in school until they received an undergraduate degree from their university. Bandura's (1971) social learning theory's referenced applicability was relevant to this study's foundation. The included design, research questions, setting, participants, procedures, researcher role, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical concerns are essential chapter components.

Design

Using a hermeneutic phenomenological research design, the researcher studied the phenomenon of post-collegiate African American fraternity and sorority members from the same PWI. The approach included collecting data from the participants in a natural setting to encourage their shared perceived experiences for proper analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher chose the study to be qualitative because collecting the perceptions of the fraternity and sorority members on the impact of their organizations on their persistence was invaluable to understanding the phenomenology. The study's general design was phenomenological because it synthesized all collected common themes through interviews with a conceptual link (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants were African American members of African American fraternities

and sororities that graduated from the same PWI. After enrolling as a freshman, each participant graduated from the PWI.

The researcher conducted a hermeneutical phenomenological study. According to Moustakas (1994), a hermeneutical phenomenological study encourages participants to focus on their lived experiences. The researcher was required to interpret the data for the meaning of that lived experience. The rationalized hermeneutical process for this study participants' interpretations of the fraternity or sorority perceptions of impact framed their explanation of their undergraduate collegiate experiences and roles in their persistence. There are sections on the descriptive summary of the design, design appropriateness, and why the design was selected.

Descriptive Summary of the Major Components of the Design

Moustakas (1994) defined phenomenology as how a participant perceives, knows, or is aware of personal experiences. Researchers gather participants' lived experiences within a phenomenon and interpret the provided data for the participants' place in the world as a goal of phenomenological research (Neubauer et al., 2019). Moustakas (1994) stated that phenomenological research design can be one of the five available models: Hermeneutics, Ethnography, Grounded Theory, Heuristic Research, and Empirical. Transcendental phenomenological research contains components popularized by Clark Moustakas (1994). The design's core components were act, consciousness, perception, intersubjective validity, and intentional experience (Moustakas, 1994). The transcendental phenomenological research explores the participants' experiences described by Moustakas (1994) and is not transpersonal in heuristic inquiry (Mihalache, 2019).

Why This Design is Appropriate

The study's purpose of being phenomenological was because the participants were African American graduates of the same southern university. The chosen participants shared their perceived experiences as African American fraternity or sorority members. Participants shared their perceptions of what was true (Hart, 2020). The questioned participants determined if their perceived experiences were motivators to persist through graduation. Moustakas (1994) implemented noema and noesis to interpret and analyze participants' perceived experiences. The research gap was related to the limited exploration of positive methods to combat African American college student attrition at PWIs. The experiences helped the potential clarification of issues related to the problem. They were related to how McGhie (2017) determined that researchers of various quantitative studies have identified some problems that may have caused attrition during the initial undergraduate study year. If the organizations were perceived to have coaching and mentorship models, a correlation to persist is possible (Duncan, 2020). It was essential to have a well-organized phenomenological study to further the topic's knowledge (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018).

The Reason the Design Was Selected

The phenomenological research approach followed the intuition, intentionality, intersubjectivity components, and methodology of transcendental phenomenology research presented by Moustakas (1994). The type of phenomenological study to be conducted was hermeneutical. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a phenomenological study is hermeneutical when participants are encouraged to focus on their lived experiences. The researcher was required to interpret the data for the meaning of that lived experience. The rationalized hermeneutical process for this study as the participants' interpretations of the

fraternity or sorority perceptions of impact could frame their explanation of their undergraduate collegiate experiences and roles in their persistence. Participants shared common perceptions through the hermeneutical process and gained collective strength in determining survival and persistence methods (Nielsen et al., 2019). The objectives were to interpret and assign meaning to the participants' perceptions of their experiences using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Pupo, 2019). Established intentionality was defined by the presence of noema and noesis (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological study researcher must understand the participant's experiences as an efficient and effective data collection instrument (Brisola & Cury, 2016).

Research Questions

The following were the research questions guiding this study:

Central Question

What is the perceived impact of membership in African American fraternities and sororities on its members' collegiate experience and persistence through graduation from a PWI?

Sub-Question One

What were the observed characteristics of the organization and internal programs that attracted the participants to pursue membership?

Sub-Question Two

How has the perceived impact of membership in an African American fraternity or sorority encouraged the member to remain engaged in mentorship programs for currently enrolled undergraduates?

Setting

The researcher chose the setting of a PWI in a small southern town for the study. For this

study, a small town in a predominantly Caucasian town or city where the population, not including the university student population, is less than 20,000 residents (World Factbook CIA, 2020). The researcher considered the participants' characteristics and the college fraternity and sorority environment as crucial factors in choosing a setting (Rehman et al., 2020). The PWI chosen for the setting was referenced in this study using the pseudonym University South. University South has a student population of 17,265, where 83% of the students are Caucasian, and 3% are African American (College Scorecard, 2020).

University South has active African American fraternities and sororities. The reason that University South was selected as the setting is because of the thriving African American fraternity and sorority community, where the African American student population is significantly less than the Caucasian student body. In 2017 at University South, The percentage of African American graduates was 2.91% of the total student population compared to the admissions of 3.48% of African American students (Data USA, 2020). University South has a Chief Diversity Officer and a Division of Student Support Services responsible for providing first-generation first- and second-year student programs.

Participants

The participants of this study were from a purposive type of sampling. The rationale was that each of the 12 participants is a college graduate of University South and joined an African American fraternity or sorority while being an undergraduate student (Ames et al., 2019). By using purposive sampling, the expectation was that all the participants that have experiences in this phenomenon offered an array of interpretations of the problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mobily & Morris, 2018). The researcher used purposive criterion sampling to identify the participants that meet the specific criterion of being undergraduate degree holders from

University South (Bowman & Holmes, 2017; Palinkas et al., 2015). The participants also were African American fraternity or sorority members. According to Loughery et al. (2017), peer leadership is an indicator of success. Participants were chosen participants who appeared to exhibit fraternity and sorority leadership qualities such as excellent self-management and the ability to foster change (Banks & Archibald, 2020; Hevel et al., 2018; Loughery et al., 2017; Routon & Walker, 2016).

The participants' demographics were African American male and female members of African America fraternities and sororities who joined while being students at University South. To collect data, the researcher interviewed participants. The selected participants for interviews were six females and six males. The potential pool of participants was selected from a personal list of African American graduates that have remained in contact after graduation.

Procedures

The researcher received the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct the study (see Appendix A). The researcher wrote the detailed plans for the qualitative study, including the participants' proposed interactions and treatment, then submitted the documentation to the local Institutional Review Board (Babb et al., 2017; Henrikson et al., 2019; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2016). Upon receiving the approval to conduct the research, the researcher contacted the 12 participants from the researcher's contact list to request the completion of a pre-interview survey (see Appendix B). The researcher surveyed potential participants to verify graduation status, membership in one of the African American fraternities or sororities, and a rating of membership's overall experiences (see Appendix C). The researcher included questions on any recent engagement experiences with the university's undergraduate students and the frequency of returning to the school for homecoming and other special events.

The 12 participants chose to continue participation. Participants who verbally confirmed interest in continuing the study received a consent form to be completed electronically and submitted before the interview (see Appendix D). The researcher included data collection methods and the disclosure of the intent to record interviews for transcription on the consent form.

All interviews with the participants were scheduled and completed by web conferencing. Each recorded web conferencing session with the participant for the interview was archived. Each scheduled interview was a single interview (see Appendix E). The participants did not know the identities of other participants in the study. Each interview started with the recitation of the statement of privacy considerations for the participant. The statement of privacy included the intention of recording the session for transcription. The participant received a copy of the transcript of the interview. They were allowed to add additional thoughts or comments to what was already provided.

The data analysis procedures included reviewing all the recordings from the interview. The review of recordings allowed for categorizing the data into groups of similar responses. The recordings were also self-transcribed as an official record of the responses from each participant.

The Researcher's Role

As the study's human instrument, there was a personal commitment to detail in collecting the data from the participants' interviews. Some participants were enrolled at University South while the researcher was a student. The researcher relied on the detailed transcriptions for analysis instead of field notes with personal perceptions through bias and assumptions due to the primary data collection method through interviews with the participants.

The researcher learned the proper methodology for conducting research. The training included extensive coursework at Liberty University through courses that instructors provided education on the foundation of qualitative research methodology. The researcher conducted recorded interviews of all the chosen participants. The researcher analyzed transcripts to include relevant data in this research document.

Data Collection

The data collection of the phenomenological perceptions of the members of the fraternities and sororities was invaluable. The data collection methods described by Miles et al. (2014) were utilized. The collection methods were document analysis, a pre-interview survey, and interviews. The data collection included the consideration of any limitations that existed through the availability of documents for analysis, the web conferencing process, and the participants' responses through survey data collection. The research study's general design was phenomenological because it synthesized all participants' common themes through interviews with a conceptual link (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The consistent theme between the participants was that they were all African American members of African American fraternities and sororities at the same PWI. Each participant graduated from the PWI that they started as a freshman and persisted through graduation.

The collection method followed the seven requirements suggested by Moustakas (1994). The method included the identification of a topic of research and a related socially important research question; a thorough review of the literature; the plan to include researchers that are a good fit for the topic; transparent dissemination of the nature of the research and objectives to the chosen researchers; the development of concise and relevant open-ended questions for interviews

for the participants; Organizing and conducting the recorded interviews with the participants; and the proper organization and analysis of the data (Moustakas, 1994).

Document Analysis

The specific documents used for document analysis were archived University South yearbooks, videos, and local fraternity and sorority websites. The yearbook contained details of each fraternity and sorority membership and photographs of the organization's critical projects and initiatives during that school year. Analyzing yearbooks gauged the roster of members in each organization and their activity level on campus and throughout the community. The school yearbooks corresponded with the enrollment years of the participants at the university. The yearbooks are from the universities' online archives of documents.

Pre-interview Survey

The pre-interview survey was sent to participants to receive information on their continued engagement with the undergraduates of University South. The researcher contacted Alumni from PWIs to pilot the survey to complete the survey. The study's focus was explained in an email to the selected alumni. The instructions to complete and submit the survey were detailed. Upon receiving the survey, the researcher completed the pilot survey process's evaluation before releasing the survey to potential participants.

The researcher reviewed the survey responses for analysis and inclusion in the results recorded for the study. According to Thomas (2017), communication with study participants is a great way to clarify its purpose.

The following are standardized open-ended questions used for data collection:

1. How do you remain engaged with the undergraduate African American students at University South through your fraternity or sorority chapter?

2. Please describe your perceived academic experiences at University South.
3. As an undergraduate fraternity or sorority member, what was perceived as impactful in your motivation for persisting?

Interviews

Interviews were crucial to the successful data collection strategies for this study. Each participant was requested to provide a telephone interview for the stated purpose. By gathering pertinent information on the participants' perceptions, the researcher also had to remember the purpose of gathering and analyzing the data to discover a common theme within the phenomenon (Miles et al., 2014). They considered three analysis phases for an effective data collection and analysis strategy (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

The following are standardized open-ended questions used for data collection:

1. Please begin the interview by providing your undergraduate major and hometown as an undergraduate.
2. Please describe any experiences you have encountered with African American fraternity and sorority members before becoming a University South student.
3. If the encounters with African American fraternity and sorority members in your life before attending University South were positively impactful, please describe the perceived positive impact.
4. What was the reason you decided to attend University South as a freshman?
5. What was your familiarity with the social and academic culture at University South prior to your enrollment?
6. Please describe your perception of the academic and social culture of University South during your freshman year.

7. How did you become acclimated to the social aspects of being a college student at University South?
8. What was your initial perception of the African American fraternities and sororities at University South?
9. Please share an experience of an encounter with the African American fraternities or sororities as a nonmember at University South.
10. What made you decide to become a member of your African American fraternity or Sorority at University South?
11. What was the perceived impact of becoming a member of your organization on your academic success at University South?
12. Please describe any internal programs for your organization that promoted academic success for its members.
13. What perceived impact did the programs have on your academic success?
14. What from your perceived experiences as a member of your organization do you attribute to building a community at University South and still makes you feel engaged with the university?
15. What are some of the current activities as a member of your organization connected to University South?
16. As the final question, what would have been your academic and social outcome at University South if you were not a member of your organization?

Questions one through three were to establish the prior knowledge of African American fraternities and sororities before enrollment at University South. The questions were also required to understand the participants' ability to identify community individuals. The

individuals may have had a perceived impact on them. They could potentially carry the experience into a successful undergraduate experience (Fruht & Chan, 2018). Suppose the individuals from the community were in African American fraternities and sororities. In that case, it was possible that their modeling could influence seeking membership in the organization.

Each question was formulated based on the gender of the participant. For example, male questions contain the word fraternity as a means for membership. Females will be asked explicitly about sororities. The researcher interpreted if any biases existed in the participant towards the organizations' impact on their experiences at University South.

Questions four through seven were a help to the researcher to receive information on the participant's perceptions of the social and academic culture at University South after enrollment. Based on the participant's environment, there could have been a highly negative perception of University South's social culture upon arrival. First-year African Americans failed to establish a community and integrate into the University culture if they perceived encounters as toxic (Harper et al., 2018). The particular focus was on the earlier years before joining their organization. This segment of questions aimed to understand the culture's perception and if a need to join the organization exists.

Questions eight through 13 invited the participant to expand on their years as a member of their organization. The impact of mentorship programs within African American fraternities and sororities model positive behavior can lead to student success (Kimbrough, 1995). In this section of questions, the participant had the opportunity to confirm if their membership has these programs and expand on the perceived impact. Several questions were asked to the participants to encourage the discussion of the organizations' motivational culture and its impact on its membership and academic success. The researcher transitioned questions to focus on the

participant's engagement with the university through the descriptions of internal programs and the organization's relationship to the university culture.

Questions 14 through 16 were related to the impact of the organizational membership at University South that encourages engagement with the organization. The critical Senior year of African American students can be positive for the member of African American fraternities and sororities if the engagement is high (Hevel et al., 2018). The information to further determine the participant's view of impact and if the organization's perceived impact was one of the significant drivers of academic success at the university.

Data Analysis

The data analysis order was consistent with the process of preparation, organizing, and reporting as the three primary phases of data analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Pseudonyms for the participants were for the ethical consideration of the data analyzed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The primary data source for analysis was transcripts, following the data analysis spiral activities presented by Creswell and Poth (2018). The used strategies were for analytic outcomes. Moustakas's (1994) steps were used to analyze each transcript of the recorded participant interviews. The steps for analysis were: grouping the experiences of the participants in themed categories related to the research; the construction of invariants through the testing of the gathered data for requirements for the identification of horizontalization; grouping the invariants into clusters; finalizing the invariants after additional analysis; create individual structural descriptions for each of the individual textual experience; create individual structural descriptions for each of the imaginative individual textual experience; describe the essence of the experience of the participants of the study (Moustakas, 1994).

The process of identifying any recognizable themes occurred. After identifying the themes, the parts of the interviews were placed in groups from synthesis. The themes were related to perceived experiences, recognizing successful programs, and the impact on the members' collegiate experience and persistence. Next, the themes were placed into clusters after additional analysis of themes and impact. After the second analysis, the perceived experiences and interpreted data were available to create the structural descriptions. Lastly, all the gathered descriptions were included to finalize a written description of the structural descriptions' fundamental nature.

The effective balance of data collection and data analysis through rigor was the foundation needed to develop proper coding (Maher et al., 2018). Inductive coding was used to analyze the exploratory data containing the participant's perceptions of impact (Cassell, & Bishop, 2019). As the coding was developed, the transcripts were categorized into established categories. This provided a straightforward system to reference the transcripts.

Trustworthiness

This chapter establishes trustworthiness sections on credibility, dependability and conformability, and transferability. The term of the section was defined for its meaning related to the study and the participants' expectations. The trustworthiness section includes explanations of credibility, dependability, and transferability.

Credibility

Member checks were used to ensure the credibility for the study. The participants were allowed to review their input to the study. This process was a good practice that increased the researcher's likelihood of establishing credibility (Thomas, 2017). A distributed copy of the transcript was available to the participant for the opportunity to add additional commentary.

Dependability and Confirmability

For each participant, the study was conducted using the same procedural steps. The uniform design and procedures were essential to establish dependability and confirmability. Steps to ensure that communication strategies were uniform and provided in a manner to build a trusting relationship, the full transparency of all concepts that will be prevalent and embedded within the study, parameters of the processing of contextualized data are set, and ensuring that the participants accept the concept are completed (Nyirenda et al., 2020).

Transferability

Recommended transparency existed between external concepts and the data analyzed in this study, executing transferability as suggested through research (Gill et al., 2018). Gill et al. (2018) maintained checklists to determine guidelines that formulate guiding principles for collecting and analyzing the various forms of data. The executed techniques' quality from the derived expectation of creating that study is at a high level of trustworthiness.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were considered for this research. All stored, recorded interviews were on digital media that is password protected and encrypted. The interview recordings were used for this study and remained locked by the researcher for archival purposes. The researcher used pseudonyms representing any references or narratives provided through the transcript interview data to protect the participants' confidentiality. The participants' confidentiality was protected by not disclosing their identities to anyone verbally or in writing. The stored password-protected digital media containing the interviews were stored in a lockbox with the only access granted to the researcher. There were backups of the digital media to another location in a lockbox with only access granted to the researcher. Any accidentally discovered personally

identifiable information initiates implemented procedures to eliminate the personally identifiable information.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to learn if the perceived experiences as African American members of African American fraternities and sororities at a PWI impacted their collegiate experience and helped them persist through graduation. The chosen research methodology was a qualitative phenomenological study. The methodology was beneficial and provided a deeper comprehension of the members' perceived experiences within the PWI organization. Another benefit of this approach was to learn how their participants' membership motivated them to remain in school until receiving an undergraduate degree from University South, where African Americans were underrepresented in the total population, and Attrition was elevated. The design, research questions, setting, participants, procedures, the researcher's role, data collection and analysis, and ethical concerns were essential chapter components. Following this chapter's methodology are significant results for analyzing results in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to learn if the perceived experiences of African American members of African American fraternities and sororities at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) impacted their collegiate experience and helped them to persist through to graduation. This chapter has detailed descriptions of the participants, the qualitative study results, and the chapter summary. Data is presented in themes that were generated from the data collection process. The process included document analysis, pre-interview surveys, and individual interviews.

Participants

There were 12 participants that agreed to participate in this qualitative study (see Table 1). They are all African American graduates of University South. All participants were undergraduate members of an African American fraternity or sorority. The selected participants appeared to exhibit fraternity and sorority leadership qualities such as excellent self-management and the ability to foster change. Each participant answered pre-interview questions and then was asked to complete an interview to describe their personal experiences. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym as a confidentiality measure.

Table 1

Participant, Gender, Organization, University, Hometown

Participant	Gender	Organization	Hometown
Della	Female	Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.	Gastonia, NC
Donte	Male	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Mocksville, NC
Danielle	Female	Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.	Statesville, NC
Donovan	Male	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Winston Salem, NC
Denise	Female	Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.	Statesville, NC
Darlene	Female	Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.	Salisbury, NC
Dallas	Male	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Gastonia, NC
Donald	Male	Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.	Stoneville, NC
Davita	Female	Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.	Gastonia, NC
Darius	Male	Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Gastonia, NC
Diane	Female	Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.	Gastonia, NC
David	Male	Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	Charlotte, NC

Della

Della is an African American female from Gastonia, North Carolina. She is the oldest of her siblings. Della lived in an upper-middle-class neighborhood. Her hometown experiences were ethnically and socioeconomically diverse. Della explained how her experiences at University South were not that different from her hometown experiences. She said, “The academic culture, it was kind of like the same when I was back in the hometown. It just was more [people]. It was just bigger.”

As an undergraduate student at University South, she became a Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated member. Della began her collegiate studies at an HBCU in North Carolina. She transferred to University South as a Freshman and persisted through to graduation. University South was Della's first choice. She always planned to use her credits from the HBCU to transfer to University South. Della started at University South, declaring Hospitality as her major. She later changed her major to Food and Nutrition and remained in the program until earning her undergraduate degree.

Donte

Donte's background is significantly different from most of the participants. He is an African American male from a rural community outside Mocksville, North Carolina. Donte described himself as a dairy farmer. He helped his grandmother maintain the farm until seeking higher education to move into a new vocation. He described his hometown as having a vast economic gap between farmers. Affluent farmers owned large acres of land, and farmers like him and his family were considered lower middle class.

Donte became a Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated member as an undergraduate student at University South. His major was Printing Production Management. He explained that the major is like programs at other universities that offer Graphic Design as a major. Donte remained in the same degree program until receiving his degree. Although expressing his lack of exposure, he felt that making good grades in school was easy for him. He said, "I never really had the study that hard. You know, 'cause I pretty much try to stay current on everything."

Danielle

Danielle is an African American female from the North Carolina town of Statesville. She was a Criminal Justice major with a double minor in Sociology and Psychology. Danielle shared

why she chose her major and University South. She said, “They had a good Criminal Justice Department. At the time that I enrolled, the university was the cheapest public university in North Carolina.” Danielle is very active in family activities and the community. She is also very active in her Sorority. Danielle is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

Donovan

Donovan is also the oldest of his siblings. He became an undergraduate member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated while at University South. Donovan is from Winston Salem, North Carolina. He is one of the few participants from a major city. Donovan attended another PWI in North Carolina before transferring to University South as a Freshman. Donovan majored in Accounting and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration.

Donovan’s mother worked at an HBCU. His experiences socially were primarily with African Americans. Donovan’s family frequented the events held at the HBCU and other events that organizations within his community sponsored. He submersed himself into the African American cultural experience at University South. One of Donovan’s academic regrets at University South was not competing on the academic level. He shared, “I never thought of myself as competing academically there, I just thought I was going to get a degree, but I wasn't really competing.”

Denise

Denise is also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and identified Statesville, North Carolina, as her hometown. Denise attended University South as a student-athlete. She initially attended the university as a recruit. Denise was also exposed to collegiate life as a young child through the experiences of extended family members who earned their

undergraduate degrees. She shared, “I have two uncles that are members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated. They both attended HBCUs, and I also have an uncle that is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated.” Denise was one of the first of her immediate family members to attend a PWI.

Denise majored in Criminal Justice with a minor in sociology. Upon graduating from University South, she moved to a large city and remained engaged with the university and her sorority. As a high school student, her social and academic experiences were like her social and academic experiences at University South.

Darlene

Darlene is an African American female from Salisbury, North Carolina. Her parents were college educators and frequently exposed her to the academic culture. Darlene’s earlier social experiences were on the campus of an HBCU. She said, “My father taught at Livingstone College, which is a Historically Black College or University, two blocks from where I lived. So I basically grew up there.” She chose to attend University South and quickly spent social time advocating for the African American community.

Darlene became a Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated member as an undergraduate at University South. Darlene was also very active in University South's spiritual activities and the surrounding community's churches. She credits her solid spiritual upbringing for her strong will to serve the community. Darlene’s major was Communication Disorders.

Dallas

Dallas is originally from Mount Holly, North Carolina. He also lived in Gastonia, North Carolina, before attending University South. Dallas chose Gastonia, North Carolina, as his hometown. He described himself as being very familiar with living in a small town. Dallas

graduated after receiving his degrees in two undergraduate majors. His first major was Interpersonal/Organizational Communications with a minor in Theatre Arts. His second major was Theatre Performance.

While a student at University South, Dallas became a Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated member. His hometown social and academic experiences were like the culture at University South. His high school had a predominantly Caucasian student population. He was comfortable attending University South as his chosen university due to his high school and hometown experiences. He explained, “It wasn't too big [the university], but it wasn't too small either, and that it looks familiar. They said that the class sizes are probably gonna be about 30 people or so.”

Donald

Donald was also very familiar with the small-town experience. He is from Stoneville, North Carolina. Donald's father is a preacher. His social experiences before attending University South were at his father's church. Donald was an Elementary Education Major with minors in Spanish and Psychology. He shared, “I came to University South on a teaching fellow scholarship, so I foremost was there to go into the teaching/education profession.” Donald is also a gifted musician and participated in the music ministry at his hometown church and the Gospel Choir at University South.

Donald is a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated. He was not exposed to many collegiate experiences prior to attending University South. His hometown is predominantly Caucasian populated. Other than experiences within his church or with immediate family, there were limited experiences within predominantly African American environments.

Davita

Davita is an African American female from Gastonia, North Carolina. She is a self-described innovator and community activist. Davita seeks opportunities for change and assembles individuals to begin the process. She became Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated member while attending University South. She was also the president of several other organizations while attending the university. Davita appears proud to discuss her membership in her sorority and how her membership has motivated her to succeed. She said, “You have your own motivation. And then you're coupled with other young women in your Greek organization with their motivation to succeed.” Davita was a Journalism Major at University South.

Darrius

Darrius is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated. He is originally from Winston Salem, North Carolina. His hometown is one of the major cities in North Carolina, and his social experiences were primarily African American. Darrius has two older brothers that attended University South prior to his enrollment. His major was Business Administration. Darrius received a Bachelor of Science degree.

He frequently attended events at the HBCU in his hometown. He also was exposed to African American fraternity life through his older brothers' membership in Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated. He was eager to attend University South to follow an academic path like the path of his older siblings. Darrius was also attracted to the aesthetics of the University South campus. He said, “I ran track as well in high school and would always go to University South for track meets, which they had up there, and it was a beautiful place.”

Diane

Diane was a student-athlete from Gastonia, North Carolina. Her high school had a predominantly Caucasian student population. She described her high school experiences as her collegiate academic and social experiences. She has an older sibling that was also a student-athlete in college. Her older sister attended a different PWI and was a member of an African American sorority. Diane was a Business major with a concentration in Marketing. She describes herself as an extreme introvert. She credits being introverted and a sorority member for helping her academically. She shared, “After I joined, we kind of stayed in the same dorm, and I think that was helpful because it really gave you somebody that you could talk to about your academic studies.”

David

David is from Charlotte, North Carolina. David was a Criminal Justice major with a minor in Sociology. David’s hometown was the largest of all the participant’s hometowns. Although his hometown was the largest, he had no remembered exposure to African American fraternity or sorority members. He shared that he learned of the different organizations while being a University South. David started at University South as a student-athlete. After his first year as a student, he stopped participating in athletics and focused more on academic and social experiences. David maintained his grades by wanting to join his fraternity and remain active. He said, “I hunkered down and actually had the highest single-semester GPA my entire four-year career. But I was motivated by my desire to join the fraternity.”

Results

A pilot study included an African American female that graduated from a PWI and is a member of an NPHC sorority. Participants completed pre-interview surveys and interviews after

the researcher completed the pilot study and received approval from Liberty University's IRB. The data were collected, recorded, and transcribed. The transcribed data were analyzed to develop themes, subthemes, and codes. The six themes identified from the collected data include: (a) identified hometown mentors, (b) hometown leadership examples, (c) Exposure to Fraternity/Sorority life prior to enrollment, (d) Accountability (e) Elevated goals for Personal Achievement, and (f) Personal Community Responsibility.

Pilot Study

The interview questions were ordered to address three key areas: (a) experiences prior to enrollment, (b) experiences as a student, and (c) engagement after graduation. The focus of the pilot study was to determine if the questions had a continuous flow. Another focus was on the ease of technology use. There were no technical issues with using Microsoft Teams to conduct the interview. The pilot participant is an African American female who attended a PWI with a low African American population. She is also a member of one of the African American sororities. She joined the sorority while enrolled at the university as an undergraduate.

Experiences Prior to Enrollment

As the interview questions were asked and answered during the pilot study, notes were taken to monitor the interview flow. Close attention was placed on moderating the interview as a fluid conversation. This approach avoided having a format with an asked question, an answered question, and then repeating the start and stop pattern. The pilot participant quickly answered the questions that addressed the hometown experiences. When reminiscing about family memories, the pilot participant was comfortable sharing more information than initially asked.

Experiences as a Student

The transition to the part of the interview dedicated to the experiences as a student was seamless. The pilot participant voluntarily added details to the answers to the current question, leading to content in the next question. The pilot participant focused on the mentors and leadership experiences as a student.

Engagement After Graduation

The transition to discuss the pilot participant's engagement with the undergraduate students at their university was also seamless. The responses of the pilot participant's undergraduate experiences included memories of what life after graduation was imagined to be. She continued engagement with the undergraduate students after graduation. Her engagement was limited due to the sorority protocols. After receiving IRA approval to conduct this study, the next step was to collect data from pre-interview surveys and the interviews of participants.

Theme Development

The 12 participants provided answers to the pre-interview survey. The questions served a dual purpose. The first purpose was to provide additional details on the participant's perspective as an African American fraternity or sorority member. The other purpose was to give the participant an example of the types of questions for the interview. The intent was to expect the interview process to be more conversational.

The video recordings concluded after the participants responded to the pre-interview survey and the interview. The interviews conducted online using Microsoft Teams for teleconferencing were recorded, transcribed, and saved as Microsoft Word documents. The transcribed documents were analyzed for common themes that emerged from the interview data.

The common themes and subthemes were highlighted. The codes were developed from the themes and subthemes.

The six themes identified from the collected data include: (a) identified hometown mentors, (b) hometown leadership examples, (c) exposure to fraternity/sorority life prior to enrollment, (d) accountability (e) elevated goals for personal achievement, and (f) personal community responsibility. Some corresponding subthemes and codes are present in the corresponding table (see Table 2).

Table 2*Themes, Subtheme, and Codes*

Theme	Subtheme	Codes
Identified Hometown Mentors	Family Members	Work Ethic
		Family Cohesion
		Values
	Teachers	Choosing College
		Community Outreach
		Accountability
Community Leaders	Identifying Community Needs	
	Encouragement to be active	
Hometown Leadership Examples	Parents/Grandparents and other family members	Demonstrated Leadership
		Structure
		Support from Parental Leaders
	Coaches	Support from parents and other family members
		Building relationships with students
		Demonstrated examples of successful graduates of Colleges/Universities

		encouraging success in athletics and academics
	Fraternity/Sorority Members	Teachers Community Leaders
Exposure to Fraternity Sorority life prior to enrollment	Family Members	Siblings as members Parents as members Parents as Educators at College/University Encouraging Membership and Academic performance
	Fraternity/Sorority Programs	Social Etiquette Leadership programs College/University Scholarship programs
Accountability	First-Generation Students	Responsibility Representation
	Following/Setting the example for Siblings	Positive Image Demonstrate Success

	Obligation to other Fraternity/Sorority Members and Ideals	Internal Programs Academic Requirements Organizational Reputation (Not representing Badly) Organizational Historical Significance
Elevated goals for Personal Achievement	Aspirations to attend college Academic Success Graduation Determination	Desire for personal growth Means to leave hometown environment Motivation to maintain required GPA University Programs Student Support Services/LAP Obligation to Follow through Rejection of Failure
Personal Community Responsibility	Identified the need for change in the social culture.	

Identified the need for
assistance in the
surrounding community.

Identified Hometown Mentors

Mentorship is a significant learning opportunity for the university, academic and vocational choices. Many participants named hometown mentors influential in their pursuit of higher education. Some hometown mentors were family members, teachers, and other community leaders. One common thing throughout the perceived experiences was the appreciation of the hometown mentors' commitment to encouraging their success and leadership development. They appeared to learn from their mentorship.

Family Members

Older family members made sure that they modeled vocational and academic success. The family member that acted as a mentor to Donte was his uncle. His uncle provided advice on business etiquette during his high school years to prepare him for his college years and the beginning of his career after college. Donte recalled how his uncles detailed the need for two business suits to have a professional experience. Donte stated, "My uncles, who are also very involved with my upbringing, always talked about making sure you have at least two nice suits."

Teachers

Several participants identified teachers as mentors that help them to develop leadership skills. The mentors also helped them to make decisions on the university to attend. Davita fondly remembered a teacher that was influential in her life. Davita remembered a teacher that influenced her to be fashionable and open to extracurricular academic resources. She stated, "I

thought she had a strong personality, but she also had, like, this motherly thing about her, she was fashionable, and I looked up to her.” Davita also expressed gratitude to her former teacher for helping her find some valuable extracurricular activities. She remembered, “She helped me sign up for programs through Davidson College. It was a summer program, and for whatever reason, she fought for me to be in that program.”

Community Leaders

Participants recalled that community leaders stressed the importance of making mature decisions. Participants noted Pastors and other church leaders as influential mentors. Donald’s father was the church pastor in his small rural community. The Pastor mentored him for all his formative years, just like many other citizens from his hometown. His mentorship was respected by many. His advice on move-in day at his undergraduate university resonated with him. It reminded him that he was privileged to be provided an opportunity for higher education. Donald said, “I will never forget my dad telling me when I unloaded my stuff at the residence hall standing, said, ‘Son, these will be the best four years of your life; I want you to make the most of it.’”

Hometown Leadership Examples

Early exposure to hometown leaders demonstrates the potential for positive outcomes. Several participants modeled their leadership styles after hometown leaders. Some of the hometown leaders recognized in participant interviews were Parents/Grandparents, other family members, and Coaches.

Parents/Grandparents and Other Family Members

Various hometown family members modeled leadership to participants. Donte expressed how his Grandmother demonstrated leadership as the owner of the household and dairy farm

where he grew up. There was also the example provided by Donald, where his father was a community leader as the town's well-known Pastor. Darlene also remembered how her father was a local leader in Salisbury, North Carolina as a well-known educator. She said, "My father taught at an HBCU, which is a Historically Black College or University, which was two blocks from where I lived. So, I grew up basically on campus." Della had a similar experience with family members that were visible leaders in the community. Her Aunts were musically inclined, members of one of the African American sororities. They helped her model her leadership style after them. She said, "My aunts were strong decades ago and are still involved in AKA today."

Coaches

Coaches were prominent examples of leadership for several of the participants. Coaches organized their sports players and showed students how to apply some of the focus for athletic success in academic settings. Some coaches also linked leadership with membership in African American fraternities and sororities. Darlene recognized a university coach as a leader and wanted to make a good impression on him. Darlene said, "The head coach at the time [at Salisbury State University] was a member of our church, and so when he found out that I crossed [became a member of the sorority], he was really happy." Another participant, Denise, already connected with a university coach who soon became a memorable leader in her life. She said, "We had a legendary coach who's now inducted into the Hall of Fame for track and field. He stayed on campus, so I got a chance to walk around and had campus visits."

Exposure to Fraternity and Sorority Life Prior to Enrollment

Exposure to African American Fraternity and Sorority life prior to enrollment helps new students identify their importance to the university culture. Many participants had exposure to fraternity and sorority life before enrollment at the university. Several participants recalled their

exposure to the organizations through family members of the organizations—others credit fraternity and sorority-sponsored programs for their exposure to African American fraternities and sororities.

Family Members

The participants that mentioned their exposure to fraternities and sororities through family members also expressed their respect and admiration for that family member. They spoke of the mentor and leadership experiences with those family members. Dallas smiled proudly when speaking of his older cousin. He explained how visiting him and noticing all of his Kappa Alpha Psi paraphernalia intrigue him. Dallas also explained why his cousin was so respected. He spoke of how much of an influence he was on his decision to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated. He stated, “It's one of those things I want to tell him. ‘Thank you.’ Didn't even do anything but just be there, be himself, and at the right time because I always had that reference of the organization.”

Fraternity/Sorority Programs

Sometimes the exposure to the fraternities and sororities prior to enrollment occurred from participation in organization-sponsored events. Darlene’s mother was a Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated member, frequently enrolling her in sorority-sponsored scholarship programs. She recalled the different programs she participated in that were sponsored by her mother’s sorority. Darlene explained the programs she participated in, “The Kitty cotillion was like the elementary age. And then it was called something else for older girls. And then I became a Delta Teen.” She also remembered her perceptions of fraternities and sororities. She said, “Each organization had its niche, you know, even within, it's the kind of service projects and the types of fundraising that they did to support their programming or their initiatives.”

Donovan also spoke of programs for young African American males sponsored by Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated. He remembered the fraternity program's importance for developing the community's youth. He stated, "We started early with the Guide Right [program] for young African American males. It focuses on academics. It focuses on everything that will prepare you to be a successful man." Donovan explained how some of the segments of the program were on social etiquette and academic success strategies.

Accountability

Students feel responsible for succeeding when they are obligated to represent their family or community as first-generation students, following the example of siblings, or representing the fraternity or sorority. The participants expressed the accountability to be successful for all those reasons. It appeared to be self-imposed pressure to represent higher ideals and elevated responsibility.

First-Generation Students

As first-generation students, it appears to be an innate desire to succeed on behalf of the family members that supported them in attending a college or university. The challenges were unique for some participants as they had no frame of reference for the collegiate experience expectations. Danielle spoke of her reasons for being dedicated and accountable for her academic success. She explained that her first motivation for accountability was due to financial concerns. She said, "I didn't want to put an undue [financial] burden on my mom." Danielle also learned from the experiences of cousins attending University South before her enrollment. Speaking with them made her feel like University South was the type of university where she could thrive. She shared, "They also talked about their positive academic experiences. So, by them talking about their past academic experiences allowed me to become interested."

Donald's father was a local church pastor and retired from the military. Donald expressed that he knew the military would be his expected path if he were unsuccessful at University South. He said, "If I failed, I was going into the military. My father was Army military police and went to Vietnam, and that's all he was, was pro-Army." Donald shared that a career in the military is what his father wanted him to pursue initially. Donald expressed that he had personal accountability to succeed at University South to follow his desire to be a college graduate.

Following/Setting the example for Siblings

Older siblings and other family members who have modeled persistence through enrollment to graduation inspired some participants to have personal accountability for persisting through to graduation. Darius did not question whether he would attend a college or university. He was accountable for enrolling at the same university as his older siblings and persisted. He said, "My brothers, two enrolled before me, my oldest brothers, and so that kind of gave me another outlook on it [school], and then when I came to the school, you know, it just kind of fit my personality."

Obligation to other Fraternity/Sorority Members and Ideals

Many participants spoke of the emphasis the fraternities and sororities placed on high academic standards and the commitment to service. Their obligation to those ideals and standards also motivated them to achieve academically. Denise expressed her feelings of being committed to the work of her sorority and obligated to succeed academically for herself and her sorority sisters. She said, "We help each other. If somebody is slacking, you find resources for her." Denise also recalled that she was not always strong at academics. However, the encouragement of her sorority sisters made her feel accountable to them and succeed. She

shared, “They encouraged me. That helped me when I was going through things, and those things meant a lot to me. That's what helped me make it at University South.”

Elevated goals for Personal Achievement

Students develop leadership skills to persist due to their desire to reach the goal of graduating. Some participants were the first in their families to attend a college or university. There was a lofty goal for personal achievement to be an example that higher education is achievable.

Aspirations to attend college

Participants that had no exposure to college and university life chose higher education to have more significant job opportunities. Donald remembered his first exposure to the collegiate experience being a popular television sitcom depicting African American college life at an HBCU. Watching the television show fueled his desire to enroll in college for his personal achievement goals. He recalled, “We didn't have those types of organizations connected to our high schools, so anything that I learned, I learned in the *A Different World* [Television Show] generation and watching, you know, *The Cosby Show* and *A Different World*.” Donald grew up in a small town where he did not know many college graduates.

Academic Success

Academic success was one of the priorities for the participants of the study. A motivating factor for academic success for Darrius was the recollection of a notification that he received that he was doubtful to graduate from his university due to an early assessment. He continued to work hard to graduate, motivated by his refusal to let the assessment prediction of his failure be accurate. Donte also had elevated goals for personal achievement. He knew that if he were not academically successful, he would lose his chance to obtain his degree and have a career away

from the dairy farm. He said, “I was always told that the first two semesters are usually the foundation for the rest of your college career; I just was forcing myself to get good grades my first year.”

Graduation Determination

Through the lofty goals for personal achievement, some participants visualized the only outcome as graduation. Some were motivated by their desire to achieve academically. Donte's determination was not to return to his life as a dairy farmer. He quipped, “I'm a country boy. So you know, coming up where I was born and raised in my family, you know, you just take whatever you get involved with, and you make sure you end it wholeheartedly.”

Darius' determination to graduate resulted from his responsibility to model academic success like his siblings. He stated, “I want to make sure, you know, because we were the first three in our family to go, that we all made it through the system.”

Personal Community Responsibility

Persistence also occurs when the student recognizes the need for change in the university culture or the surrounding community. The student motivated by the need for change remains engaged at the university, fostering change and completing each semester academically until graduation. Several participants identified a personal community responsibility to students on campus and the surrounding community.

Identifying the Need for a Change in the University's Social Culture.

The participants spoke of the alienation felt in classes at the university. Due to the low number of African Americans at the university, many of the participants recalled experiences of being the only African American students in their classes. It felt like they had an obligation to educate their peers on important movements as African Americans. Donovan remembers one of

his first experiences as a student at the university. He felt that it was his responsibility to elevate the social culture. He remembered being the only African American student in one of his classes and the pressure he felt to represent all African Americans. The pressure came from a discussion about the verdict in the trial of O.J. Simpson. and shared, "I'm the only Black person in the class, and I felt like I was supposed to say something for all the Black people in the world."

Identifying the Need for Assistance in the Surrounding Community.

As a student, participants also recognized the need to assist the residents of the surrounding community. They worked with the members of their organizations to use their time throughout their undergraduate years to uplift and provide service as needed. Darlene recalled her responsibility to serve the community. She also remembered not missing the opportunity to serve the community while being a sorority member. She shared, "I think we had taken advantage of those opportunities to serve and lead." She explained how taking those opportunities to be a leader in the community helped her develop her perspective. She said, "So, you know, being able to serve [the community] is giving me a diverse perspective in my thinking. Even in the way that I, you know, approach things and do things now serving in the ministry." Darrius also was committed to working in the community. He said, "I like to do a lot of things in the neighborhood, help the community, work with kids, and so it was just something that kind of was really my biggest things to do."

Outlier Data and Findings

One unexpected theme found in the findings was that some participants did not seek membership in a fraternity because of high academic and leadership reasons. Their motivation to join was due to the social significance of the organization on campus. Although this was the motivating factor, the emphasis on persistence to graduate was still present in the collected data.

Seeking an Increase in Social Capital

One of the participants had no exposure to fraternities and sororities. When he arrived on campus, he could not differentiate them from one another. He expressed that he was unaware of their community programs or initiatives and only noticed their social reputation on campus. During a visit with some of his female friends in their dormitory, he learned about the fraternities they felt had the most attractive guys. Donte remembered one of his initial reasons for choosing his fraternity. He said, "I hear them say, 'He looks good,' he's cute, he's fine,' and you know, and I'm like, 'Okay, the girls that I like, like the guys in this fraternity, and that's who they were checking out.'" After receiving information about the fraternities from his female friends, he chose to explore membership. He said, "I really didn't know the difference, you know, between the fraternities, and as far as the colors and the stereotypes. But I just knew the girls that I was attracted to, like the Kappas."

No Personal Motivation to Persist

A participant expressed that initially, she was not motivated to excel in the academic experience. She was enrolled just to find her way because her parents expected it. When asked what her academic outcome would have been if she were not a sorority member, Della explained that she may have withdrawn from the university and not graduated. She said, "I probably wouldn't have made good grades. But then, I might have stayed focused. Cause I came in focusing to get my degree, but other than that, I might not have." She expressed that her real motivation for remaining in school was that she had no desire to return home. She continued by stating, "I mean, you know, It's not anywhere else to go, and I wasn't trying to go back home, and I didn't want to be in Charlotte."

Research Question Responses

In this section are answers to the research questions of the study of African American graduates of University South that graduated from University South. The themes developed from the interviews and used to answer the research questions. Six themes emerged from the collected data: (a) identified hometown mentors, (b) hometown leadership examples, (c) exposure to fraternity/sorority life prior to enrollment, (d) accountability, (e) elevated goals for personal achievement, and (f) personal community responsibility. Some corresponding subthemes and codes were also present. The quotes of the participants are applied to the appropriate research question.

Central Research Question

What is the perceived impact of membership in African American fraternities and sororities on its members' collegiate experience and persistence through graduation from a PWI? The participants expressed how being a member of their organization around other leaders encouraged them to persist academically. As members, they had exposure to leadership attributes like those they observed from their hometown leadership examples.

Hometown Leadership Examples

The participants frequently mentioned hometown leadership examples when explaining why they initially chose to join their organization. Hometown leadership examples developed as an emerging theme. The initial encounters with the hometown leaders, also members of African American fraternities or sororities, framed their perceptions of leadership. They motivated them to join organizations with members that would encourage leadership and academic success. Davita named her high school teacher, a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, and a significant influence on her, as the reason she wanted to join the same sorority. Other

participants had similar stories of hometown leadership examples that caused them to join their organizations and seek those similar types of individuals to influence them to persist. Several participants explained that after becoming members, the association and influence of these members motivated them to persist.

Accountability

Personal accountability from the obligation to the fraternity or sorority ideals and other members emerged as a theme. Some participants found inspiration in the academic standards emphasized within their organization. Diane explained that her sorority had a GPA requirement to participate in any of the activities for its members. Diane said, “So, you didn't want to be the one person that was like, you know, hanging out with everybody, and you couldn't go to the business meetings because you didn't have the, you know, the right GPA.” Danielle felt accountable for her grades and actions because of the long-standing history of her sorority’s founders and prominent members.

Sub-Question One

What were the characteristics of the organization and internal programs that attracted the participants to pursue membership? Each African American fraternity and sorority has a distinct characteristic that attracts the participants to pursue membership. Dallas recalled his impression of the University South Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity members. Dallas expressed how happy he was that the fraternity his cousin was a member of was on the campus at University South. He expressed his elation at how approachable the chapter members were and how they reminded him of his favorite cousin. Speaking on their approachable characteristics, he said, “You know, I'm hanging out with them. It made me comfortable enough [to ask questions about the fraternity], like you know, with my cousin.”

Prior Exposure to Fraternity and Sorority Life

Prior exposure to Fraternity and sorority life emerged as a theme of participants as they formulated their perceptions of organizational characteristics. Some of the participants expressed their experiences with awards programs within organizations. Diane said, “There were awards, you know, for academic success and recognition in our business meetings, not just at the chapter level, but at the regional and national level.” Members of the various organizations would speak about the academic accolades that their chapter has received. Members would also proudly name the prominent members of their fraternities or sororities in their organizations. When discussing the prominent members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Denise said, “You have to look at the women who have been a part of this organization, whether it's Rosa Parks, Maya Angelo, Coretta Scott King, Felicia Rashad and then some of the women who came before me at University South.”

Identified Hometown Mentors

Another theme developed from the participant's data was the identification of hometown mentors. The characteristics of the hometown mentors that were members of NPHC fraternities and sororities helped form the perception of those characteristics of the members of the organizations at University South. A few participants witnessed their hometown mentors' fraternity and sorority involvement. They sought organizations that had members with similar characteristics. Danielle expressed how she was impressed by the characteristics of the sorority her relative joined. She said, “I was just intrigued by what they do, not so much by the colors and the [Greek] letters, and the [hand] sign that represents who they are, but just some of the things that they've done.”

Sub-Question Two

How has the perceived impact of membership in an African American fraternity or sorority encouraged the member to remain engaged in mentorship programs for currently enrolled undergraduates? Several participants are still highly engaged with the undergraduate members of their fraternity or sorority. David is the chapter advisor for the University South chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi, Fraternity, Inc. He remains engaged in helping guide the undergraduates in activities the fraternity's international headquarters encouraged. David said, "My job, of course, as the advisor is to give the brothers on campus advice on how to operate the chapter." He also explained that those responsibilities include teaching the protocols of conducting business within the fraternity.

Donald is not a chapter advisor but provides financial and digital community support for the undergraduate chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated at University South. Donald said, "I keep up with my financial status, though that's always important to make sure that we remain active financially." The members of his chapter remain in communication with the undergraduate fraternity members through social media. He shared, "Many of the people within our organizations still stay together with GroupMe, and we have a small committee that's coming together."

Elevated Goals for Personal Achievement

Donte, David, Diane, and Danielle all spoke about how they could easily maintain their grades. They were motivated to achieve and persist. David felt the responsibility to achieve because of the fraternity's emphasis on honorable achievement. Donte also expressed this fraternal obligation as a motivator to persist. Diane was modeled high achievement by her sister. The latter was a college graduate and an African American sorority member. Danielle was an

elected official in her sorority and credited her heightened goals for personal achievement to help her persist. She said, “Being an officer allowed me to, you know, be more involved in leadership, and I think sometimes when you're involved with leadership activities, and you're doing programming with your organization, it does help elevate you in the academic arena.”

Personal Community Responsibilities

Davita, Darlene, and Danielle were the most vocal on their community responsibilities and the impact on their remaining engaged with the members of their sorority at University South. They both expressed that they are very active in the communities where they currently live. They also said that they have remained available for any assistance they can provide to the members of their sorority at University South.

Davita expressed how she mentors her undergraduate sorority sisters when allowed. She explained that the international governing body of the sorority inhibits certain forms of contact with the undergraduate members without permission. She said, “I'm very proud of our undergraduate students because they still do outreach through charity on campus. A lot of the time, through those particular programs, they will contact us.”

Darlene shared that her commitment to the community is one of the reasons that she is available to her sorority sisters from her undergraduate chapter at University South. She has helped them coordinate and produce a special event to introduce new members. She said, “When we find out they're getting ready to do presentations. You know we will have representation. We make sure we have representation for them.” Darlene is also a spiritual leader for her sorority and is frequently called upon for events on the international level of her sorority to lead devotions and prayers.

Danielle expressed a sincere commitment to the community at University South. She has remained in contact with the sorority members as permitted. There are certain restrictions on graduate interactions with undergraduate members. She said, “We can make donations to the undergraduate chapter. We can go to homecoming to help elevate them in programming for Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.”

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to learn if the perceived experiences of African American members of African American fraternities and sororities at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) impacted their collegiate experience and helped them to persist through to graduation. This chapter contained detailed descriptions of each participant and the qualitative study results. Data was presented in themes that were generated from the data collection process. The six themes identified from the collected data include: (a) identified hometown mentors, (b) hometown leadership examples, (c) exposure to fraternity sorority life prior to enrollment, (d) accountability, (e) elevated goals for personal achievement, and (f) personal community responsibility. The study's conclusion developed from the completed process that included document analysis, pre-interview surveys, and individual interviews.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to learn if the perceived experiences of African American members of African American fraternities and sororities at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) impacted their collegiate experience and helped them to persist through to graduation. In this chapter, the interpretations and ideas related to the findings within the study exist for further discussion. The five discussion subsections within this chapter are: (a) interpretation of findings, (b) implications for policy and practice, (c) theoretical and methodological implications, (d) limitations and delimitations, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of Findings

The six themes identified from the collected data include: (a) identified hometown mentors, (b) hometown leadership examples, (c) exposure to fraternity/sorority life prior to enrollment, (d) accountability (e) elevated goals for personal achievement, and (f) personal community responsibility.

The first theme identified was the identification of hometown mentors. As the participants answered the interview questions, they readily named individuals from their hometowns who acted as mentors. Some of the participants identified family members that acted as mentors. A few of the participants identified teachers and coaches. The hometown mentors helped most of the participants choose University South for enrollment. Other mentors introduced participants to organizations that could help them achieve academic and social success.

The second theme was the recollection of hometown leadership examples. The participants identified people from the community that acted as examples of leadership. They did not have a mentorship relationship with the individuals. The hometown leadership examples demonstrated that their successes made academic achievement and success possible. The hometown community leaders were high school and college educators, professional coaches, and pastors from the community.

The third theme was accounts of exposure to fraternity and sorority life prior to enrollment. Several participants were familiar with fraternities and sororities from attending events at local universities. By frequenting the campuses, they could attend events sponsored by different organizations. Seven participants had family members in one of the NPHC fraternities or sororities. They began to formulate positive perceptions of fraternity and sorority life through observations of their family members.

The fourth theme was accountability. Four participants provided examples of their past commitment to maintaining high academic standards. Two participants provided specific examples of wanting to achieve high grades academically because of their relationship with organizational members and the responsibility of representing their fraternity or sorority.

The fifth theme was elevated goals for personal achievement. Ten participants found motivation through their personal goals of achievement. Several of them were familiar with the sororities and fraternities and gravitated toward them because of the organization's reputation for representing high moral standards and academic achievement. The social standards were also attractive to each participant who claimed to have elevated goals for personal achievement.

The last theme identified was personal community responsibility. Four participants explained how the members of their sororities advocated that those members should be active in

serving the students at their universities. They also expressed that they worked hard with their sorority sisters to find ways to serve the people off-campus in the surrounding communities. Some examples included support of community charities and organizations and volunteering at community churches and schools.

Woven throughout all the personal accounts of the participants were the inclusion of mentorship and leadership examples. In summary of the thematic findings, several interpretations emerged. The summary of thematic findings include: (a) models of leadership, (b) mentorship programs are effective, (c) and organizational membership increases personal accountability.

Summary of Thematic Findings

When participants' individual experiences were evaluated, although diverse, they each appeared to build a community from learning through mentorship and models of leadership (Bandura, 1971). Several interpretations formed from the six themes within the collected data. Overall, the participants spoke of actions resulting from exposure to mentors or leaders in the interviews. Several participants identified hometown mentorship and leadership experiences. Participants also identified experiences of exposure to Fraternity and Sorority life prior to enrollment. They told stories of being accountable for their collegiate experiences and persistence. This discovery led to elevated personal achievement goals and a commitment to serving the community. The summary of thematic findings includes: (a) Models of leadership demonstrate success, (b) mentorship programs are effective, (c) and organizational membership increases personal accountability.

Models of Leadership Demonstrate Success. Education, leadership development, and strong bonds within relationships with others that share a cultural identity are what successful

African American leaders have attributed to their success (Sims & Carter, 2019; Sales et al., 2019;2020;). The study participants from University South also identified leadership models as examples to follow. Diane followed the same student path she identified as a leader by joining the same sorority and emulating her perceived positive attributes. She shared, “I remember seeing them on the yard [University South campus] for the first time, and I remember one person in particular that, [who was] like the 6th grade teacher [she admired], she just like caught my eye.” She explained that she had to consider membership in whatever organization this student was a member of. She was Diane’s role model. She said, “You know, how she carried herself. Just, you know, everything about her said, ‘that's who I want to be when I grow up.’”

Mentorship Programs are Effective. Leadership programs and mentorship between members of organizations enhanced their members’ academics and leadership attributes (Armstrong & Jackson, 2017). Within the phenomenon of African American students at a PWI where representation is low, there appears to be a desire of students to seek mentors to help navigate the social culture of the university. Donovan recalled his attempts to become acclimated to the social culture of University South and find mentors to help navigate the culture. He stated, “So, my first semester there, I joined the Men’s Service Club, which is just as it as a titled, a service organization for Black men up there at University South.” He explained that it seemed one of the fastest ways to become engaged within the culture when he learned of the organization.

Organizational Membership Increases Personal Accountability. Students will choose to be academically successful when they have a positive relationship with a mentor (Docherty, Gullan, & Phillips, 2018). Students may choose to become members of a fraternity or sorority because of the modeled leadership behavior of current members (Castellanos et al., 2016). The

participants of this study also developed personal academic accountability while being students at University South. Danielle described her experiences with personal academic accountability as a member of her sorority. She stated,

Some of my academic experiences as being a part of the organization of an African American sorority allowed me to be more involved in leadership, and I think sometimes when you're involved with leadership activities, and you are doing programming with your organization [other members], it does help elevate you in the academic arena. So, it does give you that motivation to work harder.

Discussion

This section aims to elaborate on the study's findings from the perspective of the consideration of developed themes. Empirical and theoretical sources support the interpretations of the findings. Data from the study is used to continue the discussion. Included in the discussion section are the five significant subsections: (a) Interpretation of Findings; (b) Implications for Policy or Practice; (c) Theoretical and Empirical Implications; (d) Limitations and Delimitations; and (e) Recommendations for Future Research.

Implications for Practice

This section will contain recommendations for implications for practice. The implications developed after analyzing the data from this study of African American fraternity and sorority members who graduated from University South resulted in the recommended implementation of practices for the future.

When engaging the African American population at universities with a low population of African Americans, such as University South, there may be opportunities to develop other African American-focused organizations that appeal to leadership and academic success. The

participants of this study spoke of other organizations on the University South campus that were attractive to them. The organizations mentioned as examples were the Black student Association, Men's Service Club, and The Black Gospel Choir. Dallas shared how these organizations were valuable in his collegiate experience. He said, "So as a part of the Men's Service Club, that's getting out and doing community service, doing great things, is what else I mean. I was also in the Glee Club." Dallas also expressed the importance of participating in social activities to remain engaged. He shared, "You've got to get out and get involved, you've got to, you know, whether it's house parties or functions, or just getting together with your friends, or whatever, you create your own fun to get together."

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This section's content contains the theoretical and empirical implications of the study. The theory used to guide this study was Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971). The participants in this study expressed how the mentorship and leadership of the organization members helped them persist academically. The participants' motivations also derived from establishing a community with other African Americans. The African American population at University South was deficient.

Theoretical

The study's theoretical significance was to analyze the participants' perceived experiences related to Bandura's (1971) social learning theory. In this group, African American fraternities or sororities are resource groups whose members have mentorship and leadership opportunities. Resource groups are available for members to have a sense of belonging and community building (Brooms, 2018). Resource groups are organizations or programs that encourage students to succeed academically (Brooms, 2018). The participants in this study

consistently expressed influences on being academically successful by modeled behaviors of other members of their fraternities and sororities. Members' leadership and mentorship experiences develop through community service and peer interactions (Cheung et al., 2020; Garcia, 2020; Pearce et al., 2016).

Leadership and Mentorship in Social Learning Theory. As suggested in the study by Armstrong and Jackson (2017), leadership and mentorship were qualities the study participants chose to encourage their members to adopt. Before their membership, several participants identified a student who was a fraternity or sorority member to emulate their behaviors. The participants worked with fraternity and sorority members to observe peer leadership as a transparent and effective method to engage their experiences on campus and connect student leadership principles with core tenants of leadership practices (Friedel et al., 2017).

Leadership. The participants eventually joined the same fraternity or sorority as their identified model and became leaders within their organization. Leadership and mentorship are essential characteristics for African American fraternity and sorority members (Castellanos et al., 2016). The participants of this study also recognized the importance of leadership within fraternities and sororities as the foundation for understanding the practice of modeling positive behavior (Armstrong & Jackson, 2017). A couple of participants considered going to college because of what they saw on television (Slak et al., 2020). They became exposed to the leadership attributes of African American fraternity and sorority members through mainstream depictions of the organizational culture in television shows (Hughey & Hernandez, 2013).

Mentorship. The participants also became mentors for members of their organizations that joined after them. The peer method of demonstrating positive behaviors and promoting high academic mentorship used by the participants parallels the method used by peers to demonstrate

behavior personalized for peer learners' success in the literature (Chiu et al., 2019). The organizational mentors were relatable to the participants in the role of the learner (Belmore, 2019). The study participants expressed gratitude to their mentors for providing positive personal and professional guidance (Belmore, 2019). These positive interactions between the mentors and the participants were perceived indicators of the mentored fraternity and sorority members' potential successful outcomes (Docherty et al., 2018).

Social Responsibility. Most of the participants presented their feelings of social responsibility. Like the study by Banks and Archibald (2020), as fraternity and sorority members, the participants fostered a collegiate environment with a foundation in social responsibility. The belief was that routine reinforcement of values based on core leadership and mentorship would generate the development of positive perceptions.

Maintaining the Worldview. The worldview of fraternity and sorority members should continue to encourage scholarship, leadership, perseverance, and community uplift (Parks, & Laybourn, 2016). Like the participants in the study by Parks and Laybourn (2016), several participants aspired to continue their leadership and mentorship beyond colleges and universities. The participants successfully remained engaged as a conduit between their alumni chapters to their undergraduate chapters at University South. Building a community through high ideals continues to be a cultural necessity for the collective goals of defeating institutions of social injustice (Parks, & Laybourn, 2016). The participants are familiar with the culture and the worldview of African American fraternity and sorority members at University South and continued training for leadership and mentorship as a survival mechanism for its members to persist.

Empirical

The study's empirical significance was the opportunity to receive the actual perceptions of the impact on the African American fraternity and sorority members through their unfiltered experiences as undergraduates at the chosen university for the study. Reviewing some factors that may have impacted the African American student on the PWI was essential. There was the consideration of significant reasons related to community and perceived impact (Strack et al., 2018). Students identified a relationship with organization members as forming a supportive community that could promote persistence through graduation (Strack et al., 2018).

Issues Contributing to the problem. A factor from the literature of other studies contributing to attrition is the minority university students' difficulty in finding a community that contains the concepts of modeling and leadership (Braxton, 2019; Dawson & Cuevas, 2020; Farr-Wharton et al., 2018). The study participants also shared their experiences of difficulty locating multiple options of social communities for African American students at University South. Through their lofty personal goals for achievement, many of the participants persisted with the help of other organizational members. This persistence is demonstrated in studies where African American students have excelled academically, although the staff and faculty at their universities have failed to provide solutions relevant to the minority segment of the population (Chambers and Walpole, 2017).

The Collegiate Environment. The study participants also explained that they were aware of the collegiate environment at University South prior to enrollment. The low population of African American students was like the percentages of African Americans at some of the participants' hometowns and high schools. None of the participants expressed memories of any racial tensions while a student at University South; as exhibited in the studies on students that

identified their universities as having low minority representation and mounting racial tensions as a danger of not persisting at the university (Garcia, 2019; O'Malley, 2019; Walker-DeVose et al., 2019). The study participants also said they became highly engaged in other service organizations to avoid isolation. Their engagement is like the underrepresented African American students in the study by Jones and Reddick (2017) that were active in organizations as an effective way to challenge the negative perceptions of their subculture.

Establishing Community. The participants shared examples of why it was necessary to establish a community. Minority students are more receptive to establishing a community at their university after exposure to organizations and programs that respect their culture (Huerta et al., 2018). The participants mentioned University South campus organizations such as the Black Student Association, Black Student Gospel Choir, and the Men's Service Club as available organizations to join a community explicitly established to celebrate their culture.

Commitments to Leadership, Mentorship, and Service. The participants view their organizations as critical for their members and the community. The criticality is like the founders' social reasons for the organizational establishment and leadership requirements. Each organization's criterion appears to have leadership or mentorship requirements. Several participants detailed the requirements for academic success and availability for community service. As members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, several participants emphasized their organizational commitment to leadership. The leadership commitments are consistent with one significant value of the sorority for its members' to be provided personal and professional development (Alpha Kappa Alpha, 2021). Other participants spoke on spiritual uplift, scholarship, and mentorship as values promoted by their organizations. The Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated participants elaborated on achievement and spirituality. The

comments on achievement were consistent with the literature explaining that the organization's founders focused on high Christian ideals and an unswerving dedication to achievement as an organization (“History Kappa”, 2021, January 22).

Limitations and Delimitations

There were some limitations and delimitations identified in the study. There were a few limitations of the study that were uncontrollable. The limitations were related to world events, participation, and technology issues. The delimitations occurred from purposeful decisions for the boundaries of the study. The delimitations included gender, ethnicity, and geographical location. The study was hermeneutic phenomenology.

Limitations

The world event responsible for one of the study's limitations was the heightened concerns of the Pandemic related to COVID 19. Most localities required social distancing and isolation in the form of quarantine. This limitation required all interviews to be conducted using a technical teleconferencing solution instead of in person. The platform used was Microsoft Teams. This limitation led to the following limitation, which was technology issues.

Some of the participants were not familiar with the Microsoft Teams platform. They needed assistance accepting the invitation for the interview. Some participants needed assistance locating the invitation in their emails and the process of joining the meeting. Another technical limitation was the differences in using the computer application versus the mobile application version. The user experience is different and required additional instructions to use the camera and enable audio.

The last limitation was participation limitations. The initial response of potential participants of the study was positive. Scheduling for most of the interviews was simple. Each

participant received an invitation with a proposed date. The participants accepted the meeting invitation with the proposed date. A couple of the participants had to reschedule due to scheduling conflicts. One potential participant declined to participate without accepting an invitation to participate in the interview portion of the study.

Delimitations

The purposive selection of the participants required each participant to be over the age of 18. The participants were required to be African American graduates from University South that were also members of an African American fraternity or sorority. For this phenomenon, it was important for the study to be hermeneutic to interpret and record the participants' experiences as graduates from University South. The participants were carefully selected based on the size of their hometowns and the potential exposure to African American fraternities and sororities prior to enrollment at University South.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations for future research were developed using the study findings and considering the limitations and delimitations placed on the study. The recommendations are for studies with adjustments to the populations of participants. The change of geographical location should also be an option for future research.

Other Populations at University South

To further compare the undergraduate student experiences, it is recommended to conduct future research on African American graduates of University South as non-members of African American fraternities or sororities. As University South graduates, non-members of the African American fraternities and sororities also persisted. The interviews should be recorded for the

collection of data. The data should be analyzed to identify what motivated the participants to persist and motivated them from mentorship and leadership examples.

The Same Population at other PWIs

Most of the participants of this study expressed that their membership in an African American fraternity or sorority enhanced their collegiate experience and motivated them to persist to graduation. The same delimiters could be used for future studies at other PWIs from different geographical locations. The geographical locations could vary based on the population of the cities where the PWI is located. The demographics of the city could also be under consideration. The study could be repeated at other southern universities. It could also be compared to the same population at northern universities. Comparisons could also be based on African American graduates from PWIs on the east and west coast.

The Same Population at HBCUs

It is also recommended that the research be conducted at HBCUs. The population would still be African American graduates that were members of fraternities or sororities. The analysis of the interview data would be based on membership and leadership impact on the participants and if it motivated them to persist. Conducting the study at an HBCU would potentially eliminate the issue of isolation based on race and ethnicity. Most of the students at the HBCU would be African American. Building a community based on isolation by race would no longer be a factor. This future study may provide data that would show different reasons that the participants decided to become members of their fraternity or sorority and its impact on persistence.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of African American fraternity and sorority members at a Public White Institution

(PWI) and its impact on collegiate experiences and persistence. For consideration of a previous study on student motivation and persistence, the overall rate of African American participants graduating from college was a low rate of 31.76% (Ashraf et al., 2018). Extra-curricular organizations can be a resource to engage first-year students to remain enrolled at a PWI (De Zeeuw et al., 2021). Many of this study participants expressed a perceived positive impact of membership in African American fraternities and sororities on their collegiate experience and persistence through graduation. As noted in the writings of Armstrong & Jackson (2017), leadership programs and mentorship between members of organizations enhanced their members' academic prowess and leadership qualities. Mentor groups and other social organizations would benefit African American students who need to establish a community at PWIs (McGuire, Sweet, et al., 2020). Educational institutions should encourage open environments of inclusion to have a more successful rate of closing the achievement and attrition gaps within the student population (Lumadi, 2019).

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APPENDIX or APPENDICES**APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER**

January 28, 2022

Darrick Claiborne Matthew Ozolnieks

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY20-21-990 The Perceived Impact of Membership in African American Fraternities and Sororities on The Collegiate Experience and Persistence at A Predominantly White Institution: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Darrick Claiborne, Matthew Ozolnieks:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: January 28, 2022. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely, G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research, Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT SOLICITATION LETTER

Dear Graduate:

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting phenomenological qualitative research as part of a doctoral degree requirement. The purpose of my research is to learn if the perceived impact of membership in African American fraternities and sororities on the collegiate experience and persistence at a Predominately White Institution (PWI). I am inviting you to join my study.

Participants must be African American graduates from a Predominately White Institution (PWI). The Participants must also have been members of an African American fraternity or sorority while enrolled. Participants will be asked to complete a pre-selection survey. Selected participants will also be asked to participate in an interview to discuss undergraduate experiences. The estimated time commitment for completion should be approximately 45 minutes to one hour. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please reply to this message by email or a direct social media message.

Sincerely,

Darrick Claiborne

Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

APPENDIX C: PRE-INTERVIEW SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. How do you remain engaged with the undergraduate African American students at University South through your fraternity or sorority chapter?
2. Please describe your perceived academic experiences at University South.
3. As an undergraduate fraternity or sorority member, what was perceived as impactful in your motivation for persisting?

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

The Perceived Impact of Membership in African American Fraternities and Sororities on The Collegiate Experience and Persistence at A Predominately White Institution: A Phenomenological Study

Darrick Claiborne
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research of the perceived impact of membership in African American fraternities and sororities on the collegiate experience and persistence at a Predominately White Institution (PWI). You were selected as a possible participant because you graduated from a PWI. You were a member of one of the African American fraternities or sororities while an undergraduate. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Darrick Claiborne, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to learn of the perceived impact of membership in African American fraternities and sororities on its members' collegiate experience and persistence through graduation at a PWI?

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participants will be asked to complete a pre-selection survey. The survey will be sent by email. The Participant will be asked to reply by email with the responses to the survey questions.
2. Selected participants will also be asked to participate in an interview to discuss undergraduate experiences. The estimated time commitment for completion should be approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The interviews will be online through video teleconferencing and will be recorded. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records

will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure that participants who have been interviewed will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Appalachian State University. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately. They will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Darrick Claiborne. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Matthew Ozolnieks, Ed.D., Committee Chair.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher[s], **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please begin the interview by providing your undergraduate major and hometown as an undergraduate.
2. Please describe any experiences you have encountered with African American fraternity and sorority members before becoming a University South student.
3. If the encounters with African American fraternity and sorority members in your life before attending University South were positively impactful, please describe the perceived positive impact.
4. What was the reason that you decided to attend University South as a freshman?
5. What was your familiarity with the social and academic culture at University South prior to your enrollment?
6. Please describe your perception of the academic and social culture of University South during your freshman year.
7. How did you become acclimated to the social aspects of being a college student at University South?
8. What was your initial perception of the African American fraternities and sororities at University South?
9. Please share an experience of an encounter with the African American fraternities or sororities as a nonmember at University South.
10. What made you decide to become a member of your African American fraternity or Sorority at University South?
11. What was the perceived impact of becoming a member of your organization on your academic success at University South?

12. Please describe any internal programs for your organization that promoted academic success for its members.
13. What perceived impact did the programs have on your academic success?
14. What from your perceived experiences as a member of your organization do you attribute to building a community at University South and still makes you feel engaged with the university?
15. What are some of the current activities as a member of your organization connected to University South?
16. As the final question, what would have been your academic and social outcome at University South if you were not a member of your organization?