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BROTHERHOOD FOR LIFE?: DETERMINING EFFECTIVE COMMITMENT MECHANISMS
THAT PREDICT ALUMNI INVOLVEMENT IN FRATERNITIES

By

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Brotherhood for Life?: Determining Effective Commitment Mechanisms that Predict Alumni Involvement in Fraternities

Abstract: Scholars researching alumni engagement have principally focused on characteristic differences between donors and non-donors, as well as factors that may impact the decision to donate to an institution. However, giving is not the only form of alumni engagement, though hardly any scholarship explores this other side of the coin. In this study, I ask what aspects of respondents' undergraduate fraternity experiences can be linked to staying involved with their fraternity as alumni. Using original quantitative and qualitative data from a web-survey of 129 alumni representing 12 different fraternities from the University of Pennsylvania, I test various commitment mechanisms employed by fraternities to see how effectively they predict monetary, non-monetary, and composite alumni involvement with the respective fraternities. I find that about one-third of respondents self-identify as being involved with their fraternity though only a quarter claim to have contributed financially, leaving a sizable margin that solely participates non-monetarily. I further find that the degree of undergraduate involvement with the fraternity, proportion of fraternity members in respondents' core network, and inculcation of values-based expectations of membership were all positively associated with alumni involvement. Results suggest that fraternities and similar institutions can increase the likelihood that their members stay involved by affording members opportunities that draw upon the positively associated commitment mechanisms.

Introduction:

"This is your fulfillment of your lifetime commitment, contributing time, talent, advice, and financial support. Your duty is to stay involved as the other duties in your life will allow you, and not fall by the wayside. Strong alumni involvement is crucial to the Fraternity's success."

-Excerpt from the initiation ritual of Delta Upsilon Fraternity¹

Modern social fraternities² have been an integral component to American higher education since 1825 (Freeark, 1935: 9). Founded as voluntary associations among

¹ Delta Upsilon is the only national fraternity founded on transparency, so all of their rituals can be found on their national website.

² Here I am differentiating from service-based fraternities such as Alpha Phi Omega and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. While most fraternities espouse service to society as integral

collegiate men, they were established upon various ideals encompassing the betterment of their members and society as a whole (ibid: 8).³ These ideals might be measured by the impressive proportion of U.S. presidents, CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, and other notable men in top leadership positions who were involved in fraternities during their college years (Syrett, 2009: 105). While the statistics are laudable and commonly cited to highlight by metonymy the perks of fraternal life, the true test of brotherhood is not its product, I contend, but its tenacity to outlast one's tenure in college.

Fraternities often claim to be "brotherhoods for life,"⁴ yet few alumni stay involved with their organizations after graduation.⁵ What factors in the undergraduate experiences of fraternity men contribute to sustained involvement with their fraternity after college

² Here I am differentiating from service-based fraternities such as Alpha Phi Omega and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. While most fraternities espouse service to society as integral to their values, some make service their primary value and telos. I am also differentiating from professional and honorary fraternities, the former of which limit their membership to a certain discipline such as studies pursuing engineering or business and the latter of which select their membership based on academic accomplishment and do not principally operate as social entities. As Freeark noted long ago, "A person may be a member of a social fraternity, a professional fraternity an honorary fraternity, but he may not be a member of two social fraternities at the same time" (1935: 9).

³ Fraternities are by definition men's organizations and differ from their female counterpart, sororities, demonstrably in many ways including operational protocol, authority structure, and recruitment practices and standards. For a comparison of these institutional differences, see the constitutions of the National Interfraternity Council (NIC) and National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) available on their websites. However, some co-ed fraternities now exist and the first sororities were incorporated as fraternities before the term 'sorority' was introduced into Greek nomenclature. Additionally, the practices of fraternities and sororities that are members of special-interest national councils such as the National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC) may differ from those of historically Caucasian Greek organizations often euphemistically referred to as traditional social fraternities and sororities. An overview of these differences is beyond the scope of the current study.

⁴ For examples illustrating this claim, one need look no further than the rhetoric employed on any fraternity national website's "Why Join?" or similarly named sections.

⁵ An exception to this generalization is the "Divine Nine" – the first nine national historically Black Greek-letter organizations. The reasons for this will be touched on later in the paper.

and what does it mean to be involved? One common metric for tracking involvement used by universities and fraternity national offices is through financial donations since it is the most prevalent and objectively measurable form. The National Interfraternity Conference Foundation (NICF), the foundation-end of the trade association representing 74 national and international fraternities⁶, conducted research over the past 10 years and found that on average only five percent of a fraternity's alumni base makes an annual donation to the organization.⁷ Such a low percentage challenges the 'brotherhood for life' claim that functions as the cornerstone of fraternity ideology. Perhaps the precept is just normative ideology – wishful thinking on the part of each fraternity's Founders Fathers that is seldom followed in practice – or does the low percentage represent a failure on the part of fraternal institutions to adequately or meaningfully engage alumni. This paper explores an alternative supposition for the low percentage: alumni involvement will be contingent on how well the fraternity fosters a lasting affinity or identification with the organization. As the literature shows, involvement is often predicated on satisfaction with one's experiences and the degree that those experiences come to bear on or contribute to an individual's current identity (Nelson, 1998; Gaier, 2005). This makes identity construction and maintenance the core variables for exploring alumni involvement. The present paper investigates forms of these variables in the undergraduate experiences of fraternity men as

⁶ The NIC was founded in 1909 “to advocate for the needs of its member fraternities through enrichment of the fraternity experience; advancement and growth of the fraternity community; and enhancement of the educational mission of the host institutions.” For more information, see <http://www.nicindy.org/about-nic.html>. The NICF was founded in turn “to advance the sophistication and proficiency of fraternal foundations by fostering exceptional educational initiatives, operational standards, and industry collaboration. For more information, see <http://www.nicindy.org/nic-foundation.html>.

⁷ This information to my knowledge has not been formally published and comes from a personal correspondence with Dan Hartmann, Director of Development for the NICF via email on March 11, 2014.

they may correlate with the latter's sustained involvement with the fraternity as alumni in order to uncover which factors, if any, are most predictive of later involvement.

Such an investigation is important because of its surprising novelty. Despite the convention in the field of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs (FSA) to elicit fond memories in alumni as a tactic toward encouraging pecuniary donations (Burk, 2011), I have not encountered any study that has explored which aspects of the undergraduate experience – either positive or negative – impact whether fraternity men choose to stay involved with the organization after graduating. Even the literature on alumni donations to one's alma mater admits that little is known about the “characteristics and motivations of individuals” who are most likely to give (Monks, 2003: 121). Relevant studies have been limited to exploring donation patterns among alumni that establish nominal conclusions, such as Greeks⁸ are more likely to donate to their alma mater than non-Greeks (Harrison et al., 1995; Bruggink and Siddiqui, 1995) or what characteristics tend to differentiate alumni donors from non-donors (Taylor and Martin, 1995). Such limited scope conflates the experiences of alumni in a positive-negative binary (with it being assumed that all donors had good experiences, otherwise they would not donate), thereby discounting the content of a significant experience (or combinations thereof) that contributed toward forming strong ties toward the organization. While this research is helpful toward understanding why individuals join fraternities and the social-psychological role membership can have on personal development during college, none of the studies explore either the role that fraternity membership has on the lives of graduates nor what aspects of their fraternity experience garnered enough positive regard for the organization that they chose to stay

⁸ All mention of Greeks in this paper refers to members of fraternities or sororities.

involved after graduating.⁹ This project seeks to ameliorate this knowledge gap, as understanding how the particularities of fraternity experience relate to alumni involvement will contribute to our understanding of modern organizational ties in voluntary associations. It further seeks to concretize a definition of alumni involvement, as intelligible comparison between metrics becomes obfuscated when each aspires to measure or emphasize different criteria. The practical, “big picture” goal is not just to uncover the salient experiential factors and offer a more apropos metric for delimiting involvement, but rather to recommend directions for fraternities that might minimize attrition and maximize retention in their alumni involvement.

Literature and Scope

Researching the role of satisfaction with the undergraduate academic experience at a large state university on alumni involvement, Scott Gaier found that high satisfaction with academic experience increased the likelihood that alumni will participate with and give to the university (2005: 279). Building off the work of Vincent Tinto, who believed that a student’s integration into the campus community will affect his or her commitment to the same university (Tinto, 1993), Gaier explores the impact of “the college environment as a change agent” in influencing “student perception of the college experience” (2005: 280). He

⁹ I did find one exception: a study that investigates the impact of hazing, which will be discussed later in the present paper, on alumni involvement. While Rogers et al.’s article “Examining the Link between Pledging, Hazing, and Organizational Commitment among Members of a Black Greek Fraternity” is well intended and theoretically intriguing, the authors betray fatal methodological and ideological bias in framing their study, rendering the results unsound. If the authors had not established pledging and hazing as synonymous, as well as worded their survey questions less ambiguously, then their results would be more tenable. A methodologically sound iteration of this study would be helpful to substantiate its conclusions.

notes two primary systems, academic and social, that shape the college experience and argues that each should be studied individually so as to “identify the unique contributions each system makes to the college experience” (2005: 280). Covering the academic system, Gaier investigates the relationship between satisfaction with the undergraduate academic experience and the likelihood that alumni donate to or participate with the university while leaving the door open for a complementary study of the collegiate social system (2005: 279).

Gaier’s study is helpful for several reasons. Most notably, with the exception of a few studies (Newman and Petrosko, 2011; McDearmon, 2012), it eclipses previous studies that only focus on factors that impact alumni giving by acknowledging the significance of participation as part and parcel of alumni involvement. Second, the study notes that membership in extracurricular organizations – especially in the Greek system – can have a significant impact on alumni involvement and merits further research (2005: 285). As Gaier makes special note, alumni participation with the university is 78% more likely among Greeks, so it follows that one would expect Greeks themselves to have greater involvement with their own organizations. This substantial figure might be attributable to the Greek system affording its members a high degree of social integration, which John Braxton and colleagues define as the “extent of congruency between the individual student and the social system of a college or university” (1997: 111). This is to say that Greeks are more likely than non-Greeks to have socially fulfilling lives, as corroborated by a 2014 Gallup poll of college graduates (Busteed: 8). Third, Gaier’s study provides a parallel model against which I can measure the design and outcomes of my own study. His definition of alumni involvement, “giving and/or participating in a university-sponsored event within

the last three years,” provides a binary baseline that transcends the common reduction to the pecuniary dimension mentioned earlier (2005: 281).¹⁰

The present paper complements yet deviates from Gaier’s study in two important ways: first and most obviously, the present study pertains to one of the hallmark extracurricular activities of a college social system, Greek life, whereas Gaier’s study is confined to the academic system (2005: 280). Second, while Gaier’s research concerns the causes of a given effect (in his case, alumni giving and participation), the present study is more concerned with the effects of a given cause (commitment mechanisms within the fraternal system). This is a vital distinction to make, as searching for the causes of effects, what statistician Andrew Gelman calls *reverse causal inference* (2013: 2), is helpful in forming hypotheses and verifying existing models, but is problematic as an initial point of departure since it invites any imaginable potential explanation not controlled for in the study. Instead, searching for the effects of causes, what Gelman calls *forward causal questions*, involves exploring the effect of manipulating a given variable.

¹⁰ Involvement is a loaded term and tricky to measure since its scope depends on a variety of factors including who is asked, its value to a given institution and the data recorded in ledgers, and other possible delimitations. For instance, Gaier’s definition encompasses attending an alumni weekend event organized by the university but would not include meeting with fellow alumni at a bar to watch the university’s football team play a rival team. For this reason, I left involvement as a category open to interpretation by survey respondents so as not to alienate individuals who felt involved yet would have fallen outside of what might be considered a formal institutional definition. Doing so enabled me to account for various forms of involvement not found in related studies since fraternities afford numerous opportunities and varieties of involvement not germane to universities or most types of institutionalized voluntary association. Additionally, recognizing the novelty of this research, I included a category for respondents to name other forms of involvement not included in the thirteen I provided based on my experience working in fraternity and sorority affairs. This allowed me to distill respondents’ selections into categorical segments rather than imposing categories that I believed to be important.

To conceptualize this variable, I draw from Rosabeth Kanter's research of commitment mechanisms in utopian communities. While fraternities might not be as ideologically rigid as utopian communities, they are values-based organizations that foster group solidarity through corporatism, ritual, masculinity, and proprietorship (Clawson, 1989). To this extent, fraternities and utopian communities share many of the same types of commitment mechanisms that "bind personality systems to areas of social systems" (Kanter, 1968: 499). Kanter proposes that organizations are successful – understood in terms of their longevity vis-à-vis engendering member allegiance – based on how well they implement certain commitment mechanisms that positively affect members' experiences and orientations. Locating the problem of actors committing to a social system as a matter of social control, group cohesiveness, and member retention, she posits that a social system should be more successful to the degree that it engenders total commitment – understood as comprising *cognitive-continuance commitment* (commitment to social roles), *cathetic-cohesion commitment* (attachment to relationships), and *evaluative-control commitment* (commitment to norms). This tripartite social action theory approach informs the underlying basis for my core hypothesis: Fraternities will have greater alumni involvement to the degree that they enact commitment mechanisms designed to engender each type of commitment articulated by Kanter. In this case, I am defining success not in terms of the longevity of the organization but with respect to the proportion of members who stay involved after graduating. However, rather than reductively evaluate involvement according to a checklist of mechanisms – potentially over- or undervaluing the importance of one commitment type over another – I think it more prudent to hypothesize broadly: Members will be more likely to stay involved with their fraternity to the degree that they

identify with the organization. Or put differently, the more a fraternity member identifies with the organization, the more likely he is to stay involved.

To this extent, I am measuring identification both objectively by way of the occurrence and frequency that fraternity alumni experienced various commitment-mechanisms in Kanter's typology as well as subjectively by way of their feelings of belonging with respect to certain facets of their fraternal experiences. While the latter measure cannot be assumed to be dependable due to the unreliability of emotional memory, I draw upon it only to flesh out the results of my more objective measures. Both together and separately objective and subjective measures are tabulated against current involvement to reinforce the reliability of each.

Previous research that explores the impact of commitment mechanisms on involvement has focused on emotional attachment to a group (Paxton and Moody, 2003) as well as the quality of relationships formed between individuals and an institution (McDearmon, 2013). An individual's *organizational embeddedness*, or the extent that one's social ties are rooted in an organizational setting, encapsulates the interaction of numerous mechanisms that come to bear on one's involvement with an organization (Small, 2009: 229). In some cases, an association's age and established traditions have been linked to greater loyalty and involvement (Knoke, 1981). Further, writing in the context of members of Black Greek-Letter Organizations (BGLOs), Stephanie McClure draws on the work of Peter Blau in asserting that "the social location and character of an individual's integration will influence that individual's view of the world and his or her place in it" (2011: 296). Each of these frames explores commitment mechanisms as the impetus behind involvement, though only McClure's study applies the concept to Greek organizations. The

current paper expands on the role that emotional attachment and social integration have on shaping organizational embeddedness by testing their impact on residual involvement long after leaving the institutional setting and temporal attrition.

Indeed, commitment mechanisms can affect friendship networks, sense of belonging, and other factors that in turn impact current involvement. Yet this is not to say that other factors do not come to bear on involvement, for individual experiences, dispositions, and unlooked for variables can all to some degree impact one's decision to remain involved. Even so, some causes are more prevalent than others, so it is those causes that the present paper explores.

At the intersection of organizational sociology, identity development, and social network theory, this project is embedded in a larger question: Without the institutionalized interaction of actors in an organizational setting, to what degree does removing the setting of *embedded interaction* diminish interactions between members of the organization – in terms of both frequency and strength of ties (Small, 2009: 15)? Building on Mario Small's variegated concept of organizational embeddedness, which he adapted from Mark Granovetter's concept of the same name (1973), I define embedded interaction as social intercourse between actors that occurs due to and within a shared institutional setting. What factors contribute to sustaining ties following removal from the setting of embedded interaction? At stake in these questions is the task of maintenance – both of strong ties and personal identity – and the controllable and precarious factors that contribute to each as mediated by personal values and priorities. This project marks the first of what I hope will be a number of cumulative steps toward answering these larger questions.

Method, Design, and Sample

To address these questions, I sent a web survey to 1,228 alumni from the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) who belonged to one of twelve fraternities. Sororities were excluded from the study since they have vastly different *modi operandi* and authority structures than fraternities that would preclude apt aggregation of data between the two. Of two waves of 1,228 emails sent, 139 bounced due to invalid or outdated email addresses, 168 respondents began the survey, and 129 respondents finished it, yielding a low response rate of 12%. Although the number of completions was lower than expected and could have been increased by broadening the scope of the sample as discussed below, time constraints required that I maintain my sample size for the present study. Such a sample implies that I cannot make generalizations from my findings (beyond the inherent limitation of only applying to Penn students), but can only highlight patterns in the data that suggest possible statistical significance.

I chose Penn partly because of its rich Greek history (the oldest continually running Greek system in the country – it stayed operational during the World Wars unlike on most other campuses) and partly because of the dominant presence of Greek life on campus (over twenty-five percent of the undergraduate student population). Additionally, having previously worked in Penn’s Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life (OFSL), my experience with the Greek community has lent me insight into the student culture¹¹ of Penn as well as

¹¹ It is possible that student culture itself plays a significant role in predicting alumni involvement. While a number of studies have examined individual factors in the undergraduate experience that associate with donating to the university as alumni such as a rise in athletic and academic prestige (Holmes, 2009), receiving need- and merit-based financial aid (Siegfried et al., 2000), and various types of “observable” factors in individual experiences such as coursework in major studying aboard (Monks, 2003), none have explored these factors holistically as comprising a unique student culture. Although all of

unique characteristics of each chapter that informed both how I worded survey questions and how I segmented my data into thematically similar categories. At the time of this writing, Penn has thirty-six currently active fraternities – that is, those that are not suspended for disciplinary reasons – from which I selected twelve as my sample. These twelve were chosen on the basis of the Greek Director having alumni directories for each that had been updated in the past five years. This convenience sample suggested that more email addresses would be up-to-date than with other fraternities on record, thus encouraging a higher response rate. The twelve chapters vary in the average size of their memberships from small (13-25), mid-size (26-55), and large (56+).¹² The sample was delimited to alumni who graduated between five and fifteen years ago to minimize the chances of respondents still having connections to students at Penn from while they were in college, as such a variable may have impacted their decision to stay involved. This precaution was important because this study explores alumni involvement during years after college when core social networks tend to contain fewer college friendships (Small et al., 2014: 18). Additionally, this timeframe suggests consistency of the internal culture of the organization, so differences in data from respondents of the same fraternity are unlikely to stem from an infrastructural modification that a sample going back to the 1970s might illuminate given significant social and juridical changes during the 1980s (Syrett, 2011).¹³

these studies suggest that satisfaction with one's undergraduate experience is the biggest predictor of alumni donations, exploring this at the student culture level would be a worthy direction for future research.

¹² These ranges are not standardized designations but were established to represent the approximate fraternity membership sizes that I observed during my time at Penn.

¹³ The other logistical boon of focusing on an university like Penn instead of going through Alumni Affairs of various fraternity headquarters is that the sample from Penn is more

likely to engage alumni who have not stayed involved with the fraternity. There are several potential reasons for this:

1) Universities have entire offices dedicated to alumni affairs and maintaining the connection alumni have with the university whereas fraternities tend to have one to several volunteer staff overseeing all alumni affairs, so the former suggests more complete contact information. Part of the reason for this is that undergraduate students are the principal constituents for which fraternities exist, so the vast majority of a fraternity's human and financial capital is allocated toward undergraduates. (For a contrast of the stakeholders of a university system, see *A Guide to College and University Budgeting: Foundations for Institutional Effectiveness* by Larry Goldstein.)

2) Studies have shown that college graduates tend to feel greater allegiance to their alma mater than and often because of the clubs and organizations that they joined while there (Simmel, 1955: 149; Bruggink and Siddiqui, 1995; Gaier, 2005), suggesting that alumni are more likely to respond to their alma mater soliciting them than their fraternity. This suggestion is warranted by the following observation:

3) College graduates are more likely to want to be kept abreast of developments and events concerning their alma mater whereas fraternity members may think of their fraternity experience as something they did during college and ended at graduation, so the latter may be less likely to respond to a solicitation from an organization that may no longer have much if any bearing on their lives and present identity. This notion is supported by the previously mentioned low percentage of alumni who donate to their fraternity and the much higher percentage of alumni that donate to their alma mater (upwards of 60%). For more nuanced coverage of the latter, see *The Alumni Factor's* chapter on alumni giving: <https://www.alumnifactor.com/node/5854>.

4) Many fraternity members feel more of a connection to their local chapter than to the national organization, so their involvement at the local level may not register on the national organization's radar especially if the latter assessed involvement by a metric of contributions to itself. At the undergraduate level, the national office and its staff are often viewed as the proverbial 'Big Brother' that threatens their fun and holds them to higher standards of conduct, often fostering social distance between fraternity members and the imagined parent of the imagined community.

As such, especially given the last reason, going through Penn promised to minimize the nonresponse bias of excluding alumni no longer involved with their fraternity. My data proved this to be true, as only twice as many respondents said they were not currently involved with their fraternity as those who said they are still involved. If I went through national headquarters, I would likely receive a lesser response rate as well as a disproportionate sample of alumni who remain involved as suggested by the previously mentioned NICF finding of 5% of alumni staying involved. Minimizing nonresponse bias is important because it allowed me to run regressions comparing the undergraduate experiences of alumni who remain involved against those who do not.

The survey instrument consisted of 61 open and closed questions that were binary, multiple choice, and scalar. Questions testing the independent variable of factors in respondents' undergraduate experiences asked about respondents' experiences during the process they undertook to become a member of their fraternity as well as experiences as a full member, including types and degrees of involvement in various activities. These two segments represent the core dimensions comprising commitment-mechanisms or fostering attachment to the organization. Questions testing the dependent variable of current involvement allowed respondents to select from thirteen specified categories as well as input their own self-interpreted form of involvement if it was not included in the selection. In addition to asking about past experiences and present involvement with the fraternity, I also asked about the composition of respondents' core social networks while in college and currently as alumni. This was important because, as the conventional wisdom among Greeks goes, people join people – not organizations.¹⁴ However, people can become identified with the institutional context in which the relationship between alters exists (Small, 2009: 5), so one might expect a fraternity member's level of involvement to correlate with the number of strong ties he maintains with fellow fraternity members in his core social network.

Variables

My dependent variable for this study asked respondents thirteen questions on whether or not they have been involved with their fraternity in specific ways within the

¹⁴ Though not found in extant scholarship, this maxim can be found in the recruitment material of numerous fraternities. A simple Google search of the phrase provides an apt illustration.

past year. I divided these questions into those pertaining to monetary and participatory involvement, as the literature suggests that past experience does not correlate equally between them (Gaier, 2005: 284). Of the thirteen questions, three pertained to different types of monetary donations (henceforth “alumni giving”) including donating to one’s undergraduate chapter, national organizational, and philanthropic or educational foundation;¹⁵ and ten pertained to different types of participatory involvement (henceforth “alumni participation”) such as advising the chapter leadership, mentoring younger members, and attending chapter and alumni events (see Table 1). Independent variables were analyzed against each category of involvement separately as well as compositely to test for differences.

Table 1
Dependent variable definitions and summary statistics

| Variable | Description | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|-------------------|---|--------|-----------|
| Total Involvement | 1 if respondent selected any form of alumni involvement | 0.3333 | 0.4732 |
| Giving | 1 if respondent selected any form of monetary donation | 0.186 | 0.3907 |
| Participation | 1 if respondent selected and form of participation | 0.2558 | 0.4382 |

Additionally, independent variables were tested against the dependent variable “non-involvement,” collected from respondents who marked “none of the above” to listed forms of current involvement. Of the 129 respondents who completed the survey, only 43 (33%) selected at least one type of current involvement. This makes the 86 respondents

¹⁵ Each fraternity has a foundation for which its members raise money to support causes such as research in muscular dystrophy, prostate cancer, and other noble causes. Because foundations are 501(c)3 non-profit organizations, contributions to them are tax-deductible, thus encouraging contributions.

who said they are not currently involved with the fraternity an important segment against which to test the viability of independent variables that appear statistically significant. In this vein, independent variables that negatively associate with non-involvement were tested for positive association with involvement.

The first type of independent variables measured were those that pertain to objective facts of respondents' undergraduate experiences and in some cases their frequency. This was to establish the relatively objective connection between the occurrence of various facets of the respondents' experience and his later involvement in his fraternity. Questions were also asked about the impressions retained and felt significance of various parts of respondents' experience, but since emotional memory is unreliable, responses to these questions are used only to corroborate more objective findings.

The second type of independent variable measured pertained to the process respondents underwent in order to join their fraternities (henceforth "new member education"). New member education is designed to teach prospective members the history and traditions of the fraternity, facilitate bonding between aspirants and in some cases full members, and otherwise cultivate a sense of belonging to and identification with the fraternity. Many people associate this process with hazing, a term notorious for its variegated and nebulous definitions depending on which party is asked. In social network terms, hazing constitutes institutional coercion, a form of negative social capital in which people are forced to forego individual rights in the interest of the collective (Small, 2009: 188). For these reasons, as well as not wishing to alienate my respondents or otherwise

make them feel uncomfortable,¹⁶ I did not ask them if they experienced hazing. However, I did ask them if they experienced certain practices that might be considered hazing as part of their new member education process. While the relationship between new member education and undergraduate involvement is often spurious and the former hardly predictive of the latter (Jones, 2004; Rogers et al., 2012), it is possible that certain commitment-mechanisms during new member education may come to bear on the emotional attachment of alumni, leading them to stay involved with the fraternity in various ways as Kanter would argue (1968). I tabulate these different mechanisms against alumni involvement to test for any statistical significance.

It was likewise important to measure the proportion of fraternity members in respondents' core social networks while in college and currently as alumni against collegiate and current alumni involvement, as "[a] fraternity enlarges the number of intimate friendships of its members" (Freemark, 1935: 16). Individuals in social systems are not islands unto themselves, so an individual's attachment to and involvement with a given social system should correspond to the proportion of close ties to alters within the same system (Burt, 1987) and the continuous mutual benefit of sustaining those ties (Lawler and Yoon, 1996). As institutions, fraternities exemplify what Mario Small calls effective brokers, "organizations that, through multiple mechanisms, tie people to other people, to other organizations, and to the resources of both" (2009: 5). Further, a previous study has linked alumni involvement with the number of other known alumni who are involved (Okunade

¹⁶ In addition to this concern, previous studies have identified a variation of Stockholm Syndrome in which fraternity members who were hazed refuse to incriminate those who hazed them or their organization. Simmel would refer to this as part of a "code of honor" (1964: 163). For empirical though ideologically biased exploration of this phenomenon, see Sean Rogers et al.'s article "Examining the Link Between Pledging, Hazing, and Organizational Commitment among Members of a Black Greek Fraternity."

and Berl, 1997), so having close ties with more fraternity members should indicate a greater likelihood of alumni involvement.

Finally, qualitative analysis was incorporated to flesh out the findings. The survey contained eight open-ended questions to gauge the retroactively perceived effect of several commitment-mechanisms on respondents, what was remembered most fondly as well as most rewarding from respondents' experiences, what ways respondents continue to support their fraternity, and what would respondents change about their fraternity experience. Responses to these questions were counted and segmented between respondents who remain involved and those who do not in order to test for any congruence of the results before being applied to the quantitative analysis.

Results and Findings

Friendship Networks and Undergraduate Involvement

"I miss the camaraderie and knowing that we all supported one another. It's something that can't be bought or imitated."

In looking for associations between current involvement and the independent variables tested, I found current involvement to be highly associated with having more friends in the fraternity, corroborating previous studies. As Small notes, "how much people gain from their networks depends fundamentally on the organizations in which those networks are embedded" (2009: vi). It follows that an individual is unlikely to stay involved with an association to which he has no strong personal ties (Small, 2014). Thus, it became important to investigate what factors in the undergraduate experiences of respondents correlate with having more close friends in the fraternity as alumni.

While respondents' average number of close friends in the fraternity dropped by 1.5 from college (mean = 3.29) to currently (mean = 1.77) (see Figure 2.1 and Table 2.2), likely as a function of decreased organizational embeddedness (Small, 2009: 14) as well as physical and social distance associated with post-graduate life (Tognoli, 2003), respondents who maintained strong ties with other members after college were 1.4 times more likely to stay involved with fraternal affairs than respondents with fewer strong ties to other members after college (corr coeff = 0.3367). This is to say that for every additional close friend in the fraternity that an alumnus had, he was 1.4 times more likely to still be involved in some capacity ($t = 2.61$; $P = 0.009$). Running a logistic regression for the number of close friends as alumni compared to likelihood for giving (corr coeff = 0.3427) and participating (corr coeff = 0.3381) yielded an increase in the odds of donating 1.4 times for each additional close friend in the fraternity ($P = 0.023$) as well as for participating ($P = 0.014$) (Figure 2.3). This suggests that the fraternity members who stay in touch with their close fraternity friends are more likely to stay involved in fraternal affairs whereas fraternity members who lose touch are less likely to remain involved.¹⁷ As one respondent stated, exemplifying many other responses, "I am not nearly as close now with my non-fraternity friends from college as I am with the ones from my chapter." The key to increasing alumni participation, it would seem, would be to introduce or strengthen existing mechanisms that sustain the relationships cultivated during college.

¹⁷ It is also likely, based on renewed organizational embeddedness, that fraternity members who stay involved are more likely to stay in touch with their close fraternity brothers.

Figure 2.1
Core network stability of close fraternity friends in college compared to currently as alumni

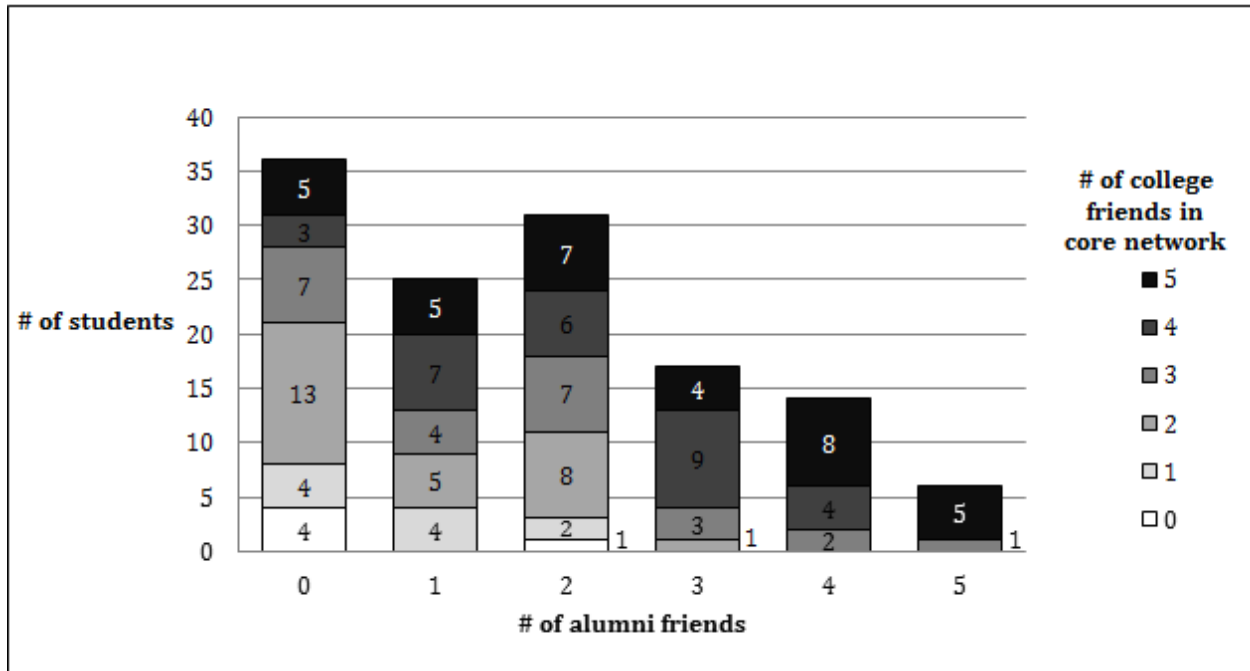
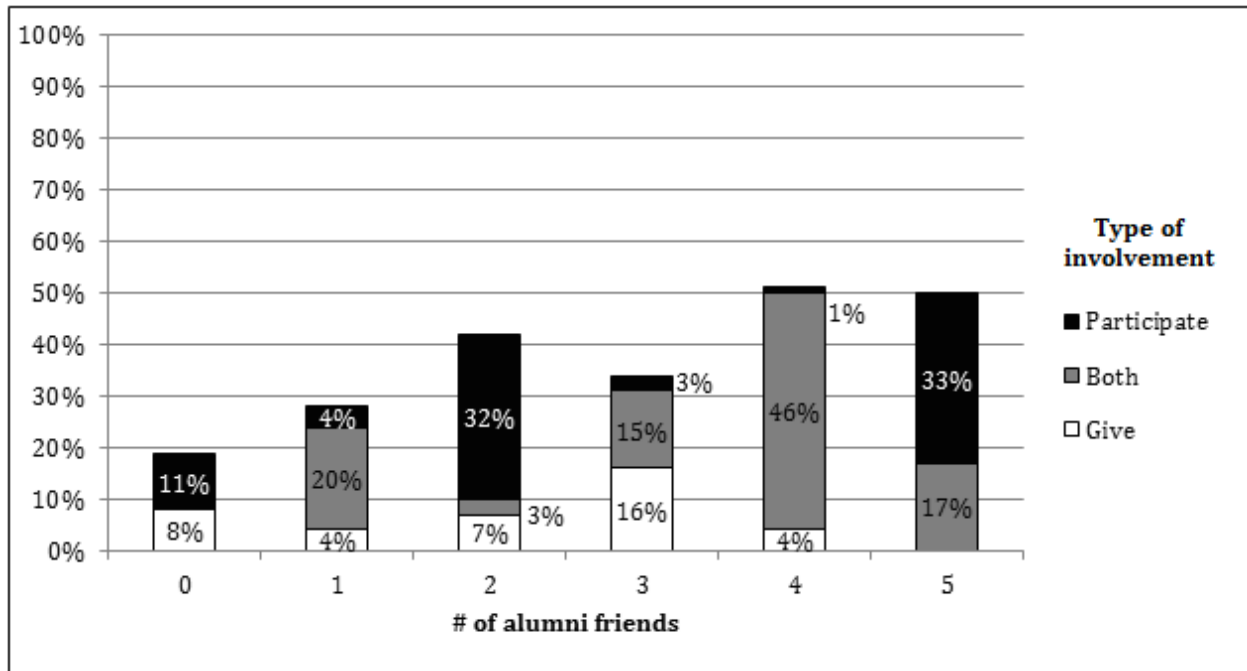


Table 2.2
Relationship between the number of top five friends respondents had in the fraternity in college to current number of top five friends respondents have as alumni

| College Friends | Alumni Friends | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------|-------|
| | Mean | Std. Dev. | Freq. |
| 0 | 1.4 | 0.8944 | 5 |
| 1 | 1.8 | 0.7888 | 10 |
| 2 | 1.8888 | 0.974 | 27 |
| 3 | 2.6666 | 1.4646 | 24 |
| 4 | 3.1379 | 1.2457 | 29 |
| 5 | 3.5882 | 1.6899 | 34 |
| Total | 2.7692 | 1.538 | 129 |

Figure 2.3
 Percentage of current involvement per number of close fraternity friends



Of the 43 respondents who claimed to currently be involved, 24 (55%) stated that they donated to the fraternity in some manner in the past year and 33 (76%) said they participated with the fraternity in some manner in the same time frame. These findings contradict Gaier's study that suggests that a greater likelihood of donating over participating may stem from the relative ease of giving as opposed to participating (2005: 284). As he notes, "a donation could be put in the mail [or made electronically in under a minute] whereas participating in an event require[s] more time, energy, effort, and proximity" (2005: 284). However, this finding could be explained due to a much smaller sample size compared to Gaier's study.

Looking at the results in another way, tabulating each figure yields a mean of 0.48 for giving, which indicates that about half of the respondents who participated also donated to the fraternity in some way. The tabulation likewise yielded a mean of 0.66 for

participating, which indicates that about two-thirds of respondents who donated also participated with the fraternity in some way (corr coeff = 2.3372) (See Table 3 for the cross-tab). These findings align more with the literature, as Nelson indicates (1988: 113), that alumni who donate are more likely to participate with the institution as well. Such an indication suggests that donors would be the most avid population to solicit for participatory involvement opportunities.

Table 3
Alumni who give and participate

| Giving | Participating | | Total |
|--------|---------------|-----|-------|
| | No | Yes | |
| No | 88 | 17 | 105 |
| Yes | 8 | 16 | 24 |
| Total | 96 | 33 | 129 |

When comparing the likelihood of current involvement to the number of fraternal close friends respondents had in college, no statistical significance was found. Since having more close friends in the fraternity during college was found to be associated with having more close friends in the fraternity after college but not associated with higher likelihood of alumni involvement, other factors outside of members' social network retention must be considered.

Past involvement at the collegiate level in the fraternity's affairs may be a sound indicator of present involvement as other studies have shown (Nelson, 1984: 113; Taylor et al., 1995: 299). On a continuous scale, respondents who selected somewhat, very, and high level of undergraduate involvement with the chapter's affairs were more likely to be involved currently. For each increment in which a respondent said he was involved with overarching chapter planning, his odds of being involved increase by 1.3 (t = 2.18; P = 0.03)

as opposed to respondents who were not involved with overarching chapter planning. These odds increase to 1.6 for giving ($t = 2.42$; $P = 0.016$) and 1.57 for participating ($t = 2.69$; $P = 0.007$). Similarly, for each increment in which a respondent said he was involved with organizing chapter events, his odds of being involved increase by 1.5 ($t = 2.39$; $P = 0.017$). When adjusted for giving, the odds increase by 1.9 ($t = 2.69$; $P = 0.007$). In fact, the odds of alumni involvement grow for each incremental increase in the level of involvement for committee membership, attending social events or mixers, attending community service events, attending new member education events as a full member, attending chapter meetings, and engaging in fraternity discussion over email, Facebook, or other group listserv or message board.

When examining factors that allowed for respondents to interact with fraternity members from other chapters while in college, respondents who attended regional or national fraternity conventions, went on road trips to visit other chapters, or participated in inter-chapter communication in college correlated positively with alumni participation ($t = 2.17$; $P = 0.03$). It is possible that these activities, which involve exposing members to and interacting with fraternity members from other chapters, broadened these respondents' scope of what the fraternity is (Syrett, 2009: 99), thereby contributing to a stronger tie, commitment, and ultimately sense of duty (Durkheim, 1984: 64). Such experiences help facilitate what Alejandro Portes, borrowing a term from James Coleman, calls *social closure*, or "the degree to which a particular collectivity forms a group at all, as opposed to a mere aggregate of individuals" (1993: 1332). As fraternal advocate C. H. Freeark exhorted, "The mere knowledge of a common membership in a college fraternity will convert two total strangers into intimate friends almost instantly" (1935: 15). This consubstantiality, or

identification with another through shared commonality that does not deny the distinctness of both parties (Burke, 1969: 21), is a hallmark of the imagined community of a fraternity.¹⁸ In the case of road trips and attending conventions, such behaviors reify the fabled “nationwide brotherhood” promised to members upon joining. In many ways a fraternity comprises Benedict Anderson’s understanding of a nation: “conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship... [a] fraternity that makes it possible... for so many... people [to pursue] such limited imaginings” (1991: 7). Such limited imaginings in this case are the shared ideals and values for which each fraternity was brought into existence, making members of the same fraternity consubstantial with one another.

Of the types of organizational embeddedness tested, living with other members was not found to be statistically significant. This may be due to cohabitation being mandatory to fill the quota of rooms in a fraternity house rather than cohabitation by choice – an expressive gesture of affinity or attachment. Likewise, of the 71% of survey respondents who reported serving an officer position in their fraternity, such an experiential factor did not prove to be statistically significant in predicting alumni involvement. This may be due to the officer position not being defined or its role quantified or qualified as to what it entailed or how many hours per week it demanded of respondents. It is not uncommon, especially in larger Greek organizations, to create numerous ancillary positions so as to divvy up responsibilities between a larger set of actors (Delta Phi Epsilon, 2008).¹⁹ In theory, this allows more members of the chapter to take ownership, forces collaboration

¹⁸ Here I am referencing Benedict Anderson’s term for a community in which its members do not engage in daily face-to-face interaction but instead take for granted the presumed existence of their members (1991: 6).

¹⁹ The Excellence Model is premised on the idea that inviting more members to take part in the organization’s operations will increase individual member commitment to and involvement with the organization (Delta Phi Epsilon, 2008: 4).

between members, and eliminates the “free rider” problem often associated with larger organizations. Eliminating free riders, or those who fail to contribute to the group, increases the average level of commitment in the group, resulting in “high levels of consensus [as well as] high degree of resource mobilization” (Stark and Neilson, 2005: 90-1). It follows that smaller chapter size should correlate with less free riders and therefore greater sense of ownership. My results found this inference to be true, as tabulating the average chapter size of respondents with current involvement demonstrated that smaller chapters saw more involvement than larger ones (see Table 4).

Table 4
Total alumni involved by average chapter size

| Chapter Size | Total Involvement | | |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------|-------|
| | Mean | Std. Dev. | Freq. |
| 13-25 | 0.4483 | 0.5061 | 29 |
| 26-40 | 0.3333 | 0.4771 | 42 |
| 41-55 | 0.2728 | 0.4523 | 33 |
| 56+ | 0.28 | 0.4583 | 25 |
| Total | 0.3333 | 0.4732 | 129 |

For each officer position, I asked respondents to include which officer role(s) they assumed during college. Adjusting for semantic differences unique to some organizations’ nomenclature, each type of officer role was normalized to look for patterns. Of each type of position, I suspected that the role of chapter president would associate highly with current involvement since the position is normally associated with high ownership of the chapter and network centrality (Paxton and Moody, 2003: 36) (see Table 5). As expected, respondents who were chapter president in college were more likely to still be involved than respondents who held other officer positions. The latter, in turn, were more likely to

be involved than respondents who held no officer position in their fraternity at all. One can safely infer that taking on leadership roles within an organization contributes to a degree of identification with that organization, thereby increasing the likelihood of sustained involvement.

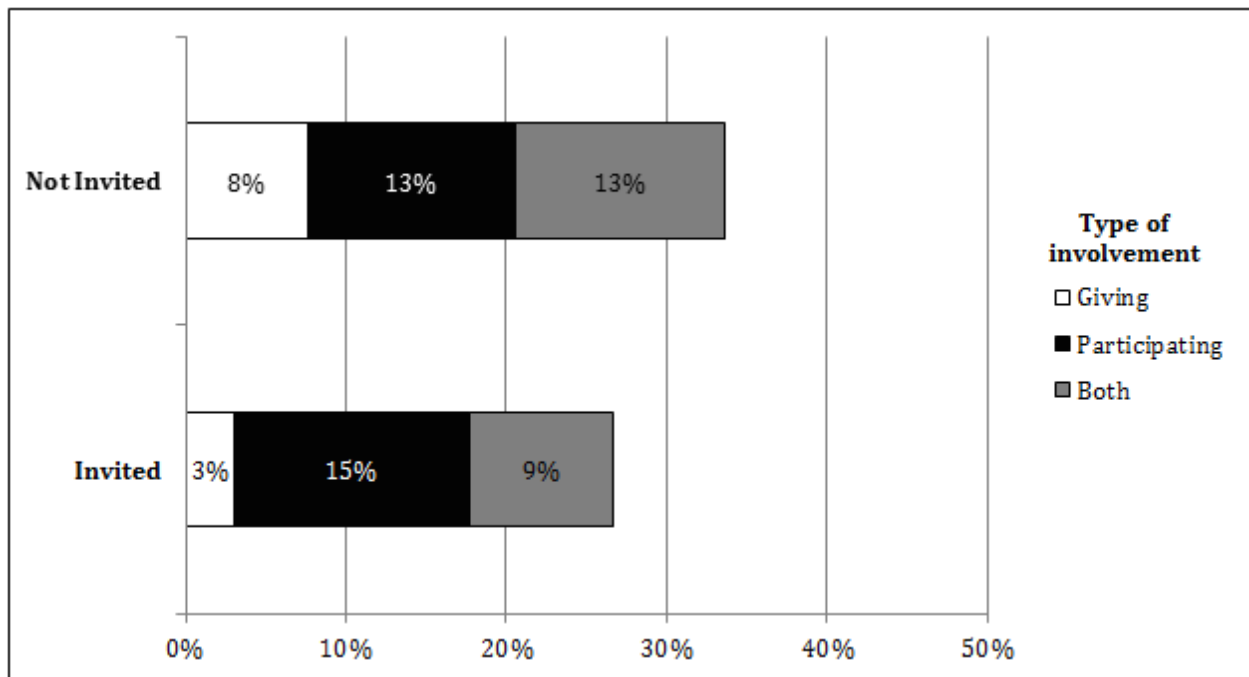
Table 5
Relationship between fraternity presidency or other officer position in college and current alumni involvement

| | Total Involvement | Giving | Participating | Freq. |
|---------------|-------------------|--------|---------------|-------|
| President | 0.375 | 0.25 | 0.312 | 16 |
| Other Officer | 0.362 | 0.207 | 0.297 | 75 |
| Non-officers | 0.263 | 0.132 | 0.178 | 38 |

A common tactic for soliciting alumni involvement is what colloquially might be called the “hook them while they are young” strategy. While a parallel illustration can be elicited from the tobacco industry (Ling and Glantz, 2002), in the fraternity world, deferred recruitment, the practice of making freshmen wait until second semester before they are eligible to join a fraternity, has been a relatively recent phenomenon. Conventional recruitment practices involve first-semester freshman joining fraternities within the first few weeks of setting foot on campus, though recently higher education has begun to standardize a deferred recruitment model. In theory this allows freshmen to make more informed decisions about which fraternity they join, if any, instead of gravitating toward one of the first they are exposed to during their Orientation Week. Similarly to the first-semester recruitment tactic, several national officers responsible for alumni affairs in their organizations shared with me that the way to get undergraduates to stay active as alumni is to make them feel like they are already part of the alumni community before they officially graduate – extending or transitioning their organizational embeddedness outside of the

physical confines of the collegiate setting. The idea is to foster a sense of belonging as a natural evolution from the bounded solidarity of collegiate ties. Of the 34 respondents (26.5% of total) who said they were invited to a fraternity alumni-only event as undergraduates, only 10 claimed to be currently involved (see Figure 6). A logistic regression indicated that being invited to an alumni-only event in college, while not statistically significant with any form of fraternity involvement, associated negatively with alumni involvement (coeff = -0.358). Although this finding was surprising, it suggests that perhaps fraternities do not do enough to foster embedded interaction amongst alumni, thereby allowing strong ties to the organization to atrophy through neglect. A larger sample would be needed to corroborate this implication.

Figure 6
Relationship between being invited to an alumni-only event in college and alumni involvement



In contrast to this trend, Black Greek-Letter Organizations (BGLOs) tend to succeed in alumni engagement through intentional integration of their alumni chapters with collegiate chapters, cultural expectation of staying involved after graduation, and other factors that contribute to the sustained involvement of their members (Hernandez, 2008). Indeed, BGLOs are organizationally structured very differently than historically White fraternities in that they provide structured opportunities for their alumni/ae members to perform community service, interact with undergraduate chapters and their members, and otherwise facilitate fraternalism (Hernandez, 2008: 256). Most of the active members of BGLOs in fact belong to graduate chapters rather than undergraduate ones (Giddings, 1988).²⁰ This categorical difference in human capital has consequences for resource mobilization as well as ascribed social purpose when compared to historically White Greek organizations, often precluding apt comparison between the two (Berkowitz and Padavic, 1999).²¹ Regrettably, none of the twelve fraternities solicited for my survey were BGLOs due to Penn's OFSL not having updated directories for the BGLOs on campus. While a number of studies have compared various differences between historically Black and White fraternities, none that I have found have examined the cultural differences and commitment-mechanisms with respect to their impact on member retention as alumni.

²⁰ To put this majority membership in perspective, as Hernandez does (2008: 253), 80% of the active membership of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. are alumni members ("Membership"), as is 86% of the active membership of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. (Leaks, 2013: 9).

²¹ One of the possible reasons for this difference in organizational structures may be that BGLOs emerged in part and developed as social movements predating the civil rights era, thereby consecrating them with transcendental social purpose that encouraged sustained involvement. Historically White fraternities, by contrast, did not mature with the same imperative, thereby depreciating the necessity for sustained involvement. The culture that each created likely has informed their institutional structures to this day.

Replication of this study among BGLOs would yield invaluable data for comparison and informing best practices across Greek organizations.

The Significance of Ritual

Fraternity rituals are designed, aside from any context-specific efficacy, to reinforce the bonds that tie actors to each other and the organization facilitating their embedded interaction (Jones, 2004: 52). They “reveal values, which are sociocultural facts” and are “precisely a mechanism that periodically converts the obligatory into the desirable” (Turner, 1967: 44, 30). One would expect then, all things being equal, that increased frequency of participation in formal fraternity ritual should correlate with stronger ties to the organization. My data indicated this hypothesis to be partially true: Participating in formal fraternity ritual at least once a week during college showed a marginal increase in the number of fraternity members respondents count among their close friends, though not at a statistically significant level (see Figure 6.1). It also showed a slight association with donating to the chapter (11 respondents as opposed to 8). Such a marginal difference between involvement and ritual frequency was found in nearly every category of current involvement. However, when tabulated for non-involvement, those who partook in ritual at least once a week were found to be more likely not to be involved (see Figure 6.2). Tabulating for my other categorical dependent variables found similar results: respondents who partook in ritual at least once a week were slightly less likely to be involved in any form of alumni involvement (20 over 22) as well as for participatory involvement in particular (15 over 18). However, they were slightly more likely to be involved with giving (14 over 10). Running a logistic regression to test for significance found it lacking ($t = 0.61$; $P = 0.544$). While the predilection for giving may be attributed to its ease as opposed to

participating as previously discussed, the finding is nevertheless significant and would require a larger sample to corroborate.

Figure 6.1
Relationship between frequency of participation in ritual and number of close fraternal friends in core network

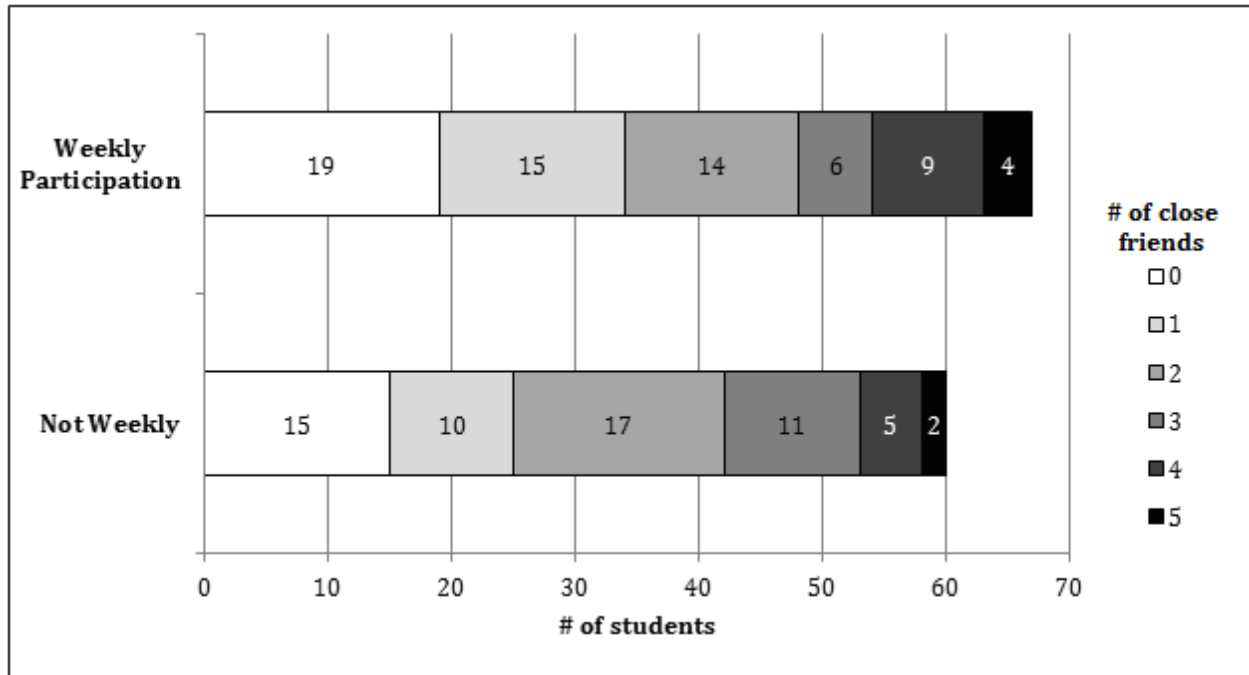
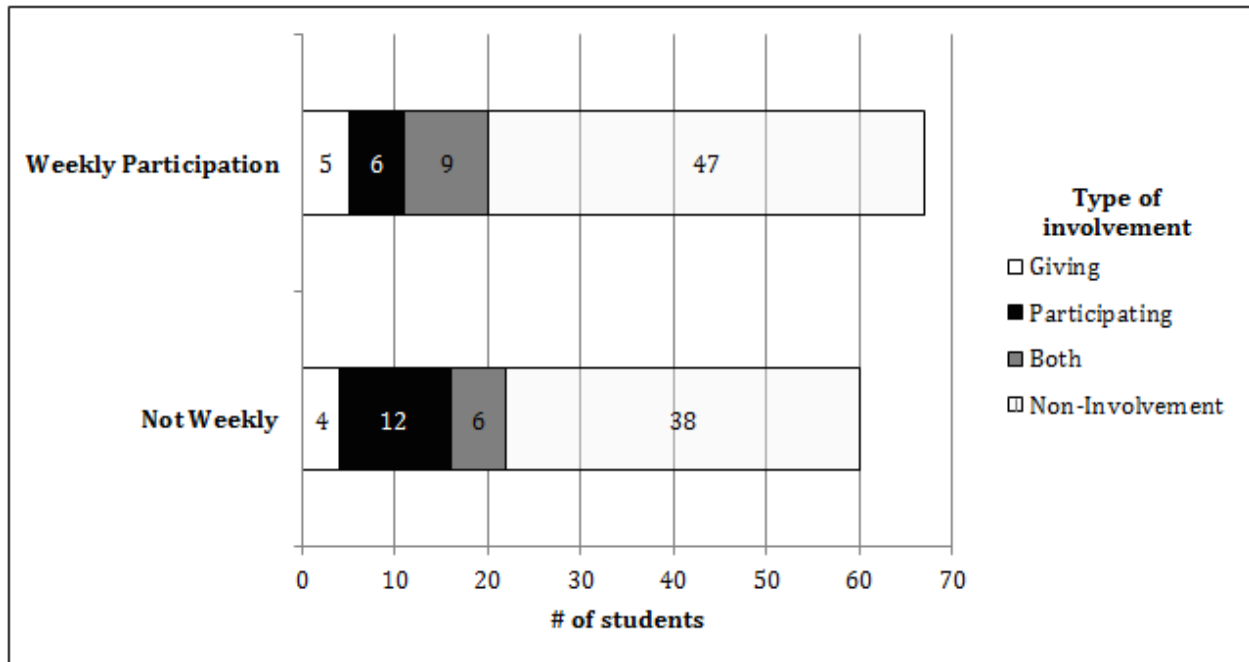


Figure 6.2
 Relationship between frequency of participation in ritual and alumni involvement

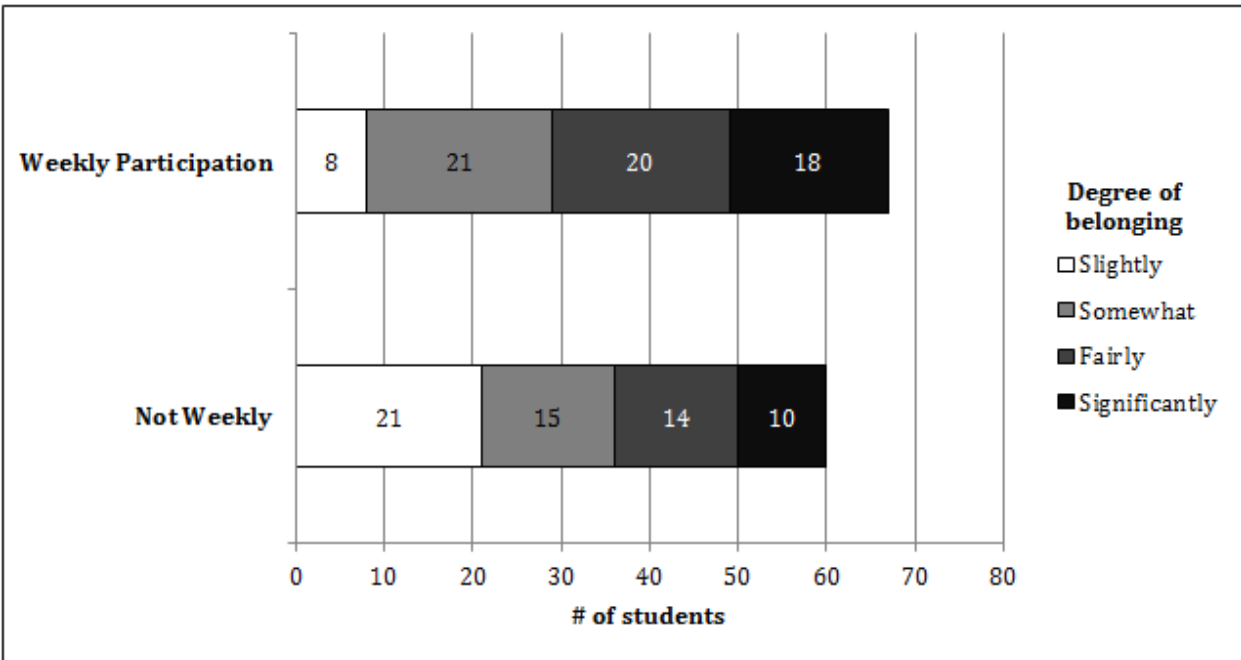


However, despite the frequency with which respondents participated in ritual, the datum gives no indication of the content of the ritual, as some forms of ritual may be more evocative, resonant, or otherwise efficacious than others. Likewise, in the case of respondents who reported partaking in ritual at least once a week, for instance, we have no way of knowing if the frequency of a ritual perceived to be especially powerful was experienced weekly or if it was interspersed with more frequent though less powerful weekly rituals.

Degree of Belonging

To offset this dearth of information, I asked respondents how much participating in formal fraternity ritual contributed to their feeling a sense of belonging to their fraternity (see Figure 7). The more frequently respondents partook in fraternity ritual, the more likely they were to attribute higher significance to doing so.

Figure 7
 Relationship between frequency of participation in ritual
 and sense of belonging to the fraternity from it



These findings suggest that the sense of belonging respondents feel from participating in formal fraternity ritual is impactful of later involvement as alumni. Fraternities could leverage this information by incorporating more formal ritual at their alumni events, as it may help reinforce members' ties to the organization and subsequently lead to a greater likelihood of alumni involvement.

Ritual is also an integral aspect of the new member education process. One could argue, as Victor Turner does (1967: 106, 110), that each intentional act during a ritual is directed toward achieving a desired outcome. This outcome, aside from its overt purpose relative to the specific context of the ritual, is to foster solidarity between participants in the ritual and to buttress participants' ties to the organization. Individuals who experience

traditional pledging²² or new member education “are put through a training that is designed to teach them discipline, obedience, respect for those in authority, good manners, organizational duties and responsibilities” (Freeark, 1935: 12). While most Greek-letter organizations do not share the content of their ritual with the non-initiated²³, the history of fraternal institutions as drawing from military practices (Anson and Marchenasi, 1991 [1879]: 9) and in some cases splitting off from one another suggests common practices in the same way that the synoptic gospels can be traced back to Mark and an alleged ‘Q Source’ (Streeter, 1926).

Congruity between New Member Education and Alumni Involvement

Of the survey questions that asked about the occurrence of certain commitment-mechanisms during new member education (mentioned below), no activities were statistically significant for alumni involvement. Of the 86 respondents (65% of total) who said everyone in their group had to tell their story during new member education (an “interstructural” tactic for facilitating comradeship; see Turner, 1967: 101), the proportion of respondents who are currently involved was not found to be statistically significant. The results are the same for respondents who said they experienced a suppression of personal identity toward assimilating the group’s identity (see also Turner for an examination of passivity and malleability of neophytes to their instructors; 1967: 101), which was experienced by 30 respondents (22.5%). Likewise, respondents who were told they are

²² The Fraternity Movement has been transitioning away from the term ‘pledging’ since it carries a pejorative social connotation of hazing, yet changing what something is called does not necessarily change what it is.

²³ The very secretive nature of fraternal ritual may “contribute to a brother’s sense of identity within the fraternity and his sense of brotherhood” (Rhoads, 1995: 320). For a critical examination of the relationship between secrecy, intimacy, and belonging, see Beryl Bellman’s article “The Paradox of Secrecy.”

better than non-members by virtue of their association with the organization (see Turner on “inoculating” against the categorical other; 1967: 97), was not statistically significant for occurring either during new member education or as a full member. Neither was criticizing respondents while undergoing new member education or as full members for putting their own needs before those of the fraternity (as Turner also suggests as occurring in deference to a perceived “common good,” 1967: 100), although previous scholarship on fraternities asserts, “If one’s conduct is such as to give offense or to violate the code of the student body, a mild form of ostracism will bring the offender into line” (Freeark, 1935: 14). Not surprisingly, although a majority of respondents (62%) reported that their fraternity removed privileges associated with membership when an individual failed to uphold his fraternal responsibilities, this mechanism was also not statistically significant on impacting alumni involvement. However, the only commitment-mechanism transpiring during new member education found to be statistically significant on alumni involvement was the inculcation of new values to which fraternity members were expected to adhere (see Turner on adopting a new value system as constituting an ontological change, 1967: 102). Respondents who were introduced to new values during new member education (66 who were over 61 who were not) are twice as likely to donate as those who were not ($t = 2.08$; $P = 0.037$). However, participation was not statistically significant. If introduced to new values as a member (48 who were over 78 who were not), however, respondents had 1.95 odds of being involved as alumni ($t = 1.77$; $P = 0.077$). For giving, the odds increase to 2.47 ($t = 1.96$; $P = 0.050$), and for participating the odds also are not statistically significant (odds = 1.1, $t = 0.29$; $P = 0.774$).

These findings are important for understanding the impact of new member education on lifetime involvement. Independent of any possible statistical significance associated with fraternal collegiate involvement since the regressions account for that, the only activity during new member education found to be impactful is the inculcation of and adherence to new values ascribed to fraternal institutions. It is no wonder then that the fraternal movement has oscillated toward “living your values,” as indicated by the emergent prominence of industry maxims like “you are always wearing your letters” (Sullivan, 2010) and the increased variety and prevalence of programs and workshops designed toward educating undergraduate fraternity and sorority members toward the same end. In an impact survey taken by attendees 3-18 months after “graduation” from one of these programs, the Undergraduate Inter-Fraternity Institute (UIFI), hosted by the National Inter-Fraternity Conference (NIC), the vast majority of respondents self-reported having “used specific lessons from UIFI in [their] fraternal experience,” seeing “continued personal growth in [themselves] because of UIFI,” and being able to “point to 1 change in [their] chapter, council, or community that would not have occurred without UIFI” (UIFI Impact Survey). Such results and the increasingly institutionalized emphasis on values-based educational programming speak to the importance of fraternities not only teaching their members their values but holding them to the values, for such a commitment-mechanism seems to be a salient predictor of alumni involvement.

Conclusion

In exploring various commitment mechanisms in the undergraduate experiences of fraternity members that might correlate with involvement with the fraternity as alumni, I

found that the degree of involvement in the fraternity as an undergraduate, the proportion of fraternity members in one's core social network, and inculcation of a value system were positively associated with alumni involvement. Additionally, I found that the new member education process tends to be an ineffective mechanism for predicting alumni involvement, a construct that I concretized summarily as constituting all the ways alumni believe themselves to be involved with their organization. Dismissing such self-definition risks alienating members when such identification could be leveraged to involve alumni in ways more meaningful to the organization. By way of conclusion, I outline some implications of these findings and suggestions for further research.

Returning to Kanter's typology of commitment-mechanisms, cathetic-cohesion commitment, which pertains to attachment to social relationships, seems to be effective in predicting alumni involvement. The more fraternity members had other fraternity members among their closest friends in college, the more likely they were to have fraternity members among their closest friends as alumni, which carries a positive association with alumni involvement. Likewise, cognitive-continuance commitment, or identification with social roles, seems to be an even stronger predictor of alumni involvement if factoring for giving specifically but also for total involvement. The more respondents were involved in various aspects of undergraduate fraternal operations, the more likely they were to be involved in various ways as alumni. Lastly, evaluative-control commitment, or internalizing organizational values and norms, was predictive of alumni involvement both at the new member education and full member level. Respondents who reported being introduced to value-based criteria tended to be more involved as alumni than those who did not. While it should not be surprising that all three forms of

commitment were found to be present in respondents who are involved with their fraternities, it is surprising that the three most statistically significant factors in alumni involvement comprise one of each.

To understand the consequences of this occurrence, Kanter discusses the implications that different kinds of commitment have on the social system itself and not just the individuals within it (1968: 501). Cathectic-cohesion commitment, or the number of strong ties members have within the organization, should indicate that members with more ties are more likely to stick together as a group. While my questionnaire did not ask how many of respondents' closest fraternal friends in college are the same as currently, doing so would likely demonstrate some retention of the core social network. Cognitive-continuance commitment, or degree of undergraduate involvement, should associate with member retention and low attrition over time. And evaluative-control commitment, or the values members internalize, should indicate less challenges to the group's authority. Social systems that employ all three types of commitment, which she calls *total commitment* – which is functionally similar to Erving Goffman's concept of the "total institution" that encompasses all facets of a person's life (1961) – should be more likely to retain members than social systems that do not. This notion was recently confirmed by a Gallup Education study of hundreds of organizations: fully engaged customers or constituents will invest more and stay longer than those who are less engaged (Busteed, 2014: 4-5).

Kanter interprets the relationship of each form of commitment as a kind of "scale similar to that which may be proposed for the development of morality in children; the child first obeys social system demands because of rewards and punishments, then because of emotional attachment to others, and finally in terms of an internalized moral code"

(1968: 501). Applying the scale to fraternities, we might say that respondents are introduced to social roles during their time in new member education and as full members. In these roles, they form emotional attachments to others members through the solidarity of their experiences, tribulations, and social exchanges. Finally, having internalized the values of the organization, they carry out its 'brotherhood for life' creed and other tenets to which they swore to uphold in their initiation oaths. If the order of the process is correct, then this is what should be expected if the process is ritually executed as designed. Yet from the data collected, no one fraternity seemed to predict alumni involvement more than the next in any statistically significant way. But what fails to be true in practice does not invalidate the theory: perhaps the research design itself is flawed.

While fraternities spend most of their resources on membership services, or efforts to attract, recruit, and retain collegiate members, their design falters at failing to adequately transition collegiate members into alumni in a meaningful way as well as provide alumni meaningful avenues for remaining involved. During such a liminal period in which fraternity members are at the cusp of being whisked from their organizational embeddedness, the opportunity is ripe to redefine what it means to be involved that members can repurpose their involvement and remain embedded in the organization. They can still be involved, just in a different way.

Although many fraternities do have mechanisms for senior transitioning and alumni engagement, their lack of efficacy as evidenced by the abysmally low proportion of alumni who stay involved – even adjusting for my metric – leaves much room for improvement. Of the three commitment-mechanisms discovered to be the most efficacious, each can be amended to cater especially to alumni. Cathetic-cohesion commitment is easy, for that

involves organizing fraternity events that refresh members' sense of organizational embeddedness through embedded interaction with close alters. As respondents affirmed time and again in the open-ended questions, the relationships they formed with fellow members of their fraternities was the most memorable facet of their experience. Such brokering can continue at the alumni level with minimal effort from the organization (Small, 2009: 21). Cognitive-continuance commitment is a bit trickier, for that would entail knowing the roles alumni assumed in college and providing them opportunities to resume those roles in a modified sense. This could take the form of, for example, an alumnus who was treasurer becoming the adviser to the current treasurer or serving as treasurer of a regional alumni association. More creative adaptations are needed to leverage this form of commitment. As one respondent explained, his fraternity "provide[d] a means to do charity, [attend] philanthropic and university events that, if not part of a group, members may not have otherwise found the energy or enthusiasm to join [sic]." The lack of engagement due to depreciated organizational embeddedness might be ameliorated simply by affording a new avenue for engagement within the organizational context. Lastly, with evaluative-control commitment, fraternities could provide educational opportunities for alumni that elicit the values that members were taught during new member education and as a full member. If UIFI and similar programs have proven to be superbly successful in their goal of getting attendees to reflect critically on and live their values, then there must be a way to adapt such programs within reason for alumni. As Nelson has suggested, if continuing to educate alumni about their alma mater and its operations proves fruitful for increasing alumni support, then doing the same with respect to fraternity developments in

the form of newsletters, webinars, and other media should prove a worthwhile direction for fraternities to explore more deliberately (1988: 112).

Future studies would do well to focus on multicultural Greek-letter organizations – especially BGLOs – as the current study is unfortunately limited by the fact that nearly 82% of respondents self-identified as Caucasian. Because cultural Greek-letter organizations have differently situated histories and practices, replicating this study with them exclusively or together with modern social fraternities may yield demonstrably different results. Additionally, conducting this study among sororities would likewise be a worthwhile avenue for further research, as their different organizational and operational structure yet similar *esprit de corps* would promise fascinating contrast.

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