

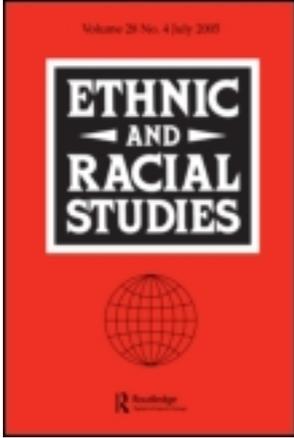
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Rashawn Ray

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Fraternity life at predominantly white universities in the US: the saliency of race

Rashawn Ray

(First submission June 2011; First published May 2012)

Abstract

Research comparing the experiences of black and white fraternities in the same university context has been relatively absent. Because black and white fraternities often face different normative institutional arrangements (e.g. community size, living arrangements and organizational structure), it is important to examine how these arrangements shape fraternity men's interactions with the broader student community, other Greek-letter organizations and university officials. Using data from an ethnographic study with fifty-two men in three white and four black fraternities at a predominantly white institution, this paper demonstrates that a large community size, private on-campus fraternity house, gender-specific Greek council and influential alumni afford white fraternity men the privilege of being held less accountable for their interactions with others. Due to the small black student and Greek communities and gender-neutral Greek council, black fraternity men are held more accountable for their interactions with others and become marked for their racial and fraternal identities. These findings have implications for the interactions blacks have in predominately white environments.

Keywords: Race; status; privilege; whiteness; fraternities; Greek-letter organizations.

At most universities across the United States, Greek-letter paraphernalia frequently showers campus lawns, classrooms and university centres (for an explanation of the Greek-letter system, see under 'Greek life at predominantly white institutions' below). Although many freshmen-women, and professors for that matter, cannot tell the differences between Greek-letter organizations (GLOs), two things are noticeable. They are segregated by race and gender. If a person pays even closer attention, it is also noticeable that Greek-letter row houses are

populated by white organizations and include very few African American fraternities and sororities, or black Greek-letter organizations (BGLOs). The centre of campus and a culture centre devoted to African American issues are where you will most likely find representations and symbols of BGLOs. It is further noticeable that black fraternities have substantially fewer members than white fraternities, which is partly a function of the small percentage of black students at predominantly white institutions.

Despite structural differences in community size, living arrangements and location on campus, studies comparing black and white fraternities at the same university to examine how these institutional arrangements shape their experiences have been almost non-existent. While there has been some important gender and sexuality research on the peer culture of fraternity life as a culprit in sexual exploitation (see Boswell and Spade 1996; Armstrong, Hamilton and Sweeney 2006), most of this research has included samples only of women and their experiences. It has also focused primarily on whites, assuming some form of structural equivalence across race. Another body of research has focused primarily on BGLOs (Kimbrough and Hutcheson 1998; Brown, Parks and Philips 2005; McClure 2006; Liazos and Ganz 2006; Hughey 2008, 2010; Ray 2011). This literature notes that white and black fraternities differ in educational and community objectives, membership intake processes and commitment after college. Although both of these literatures have been novel, we know little about how normative institutional arrangements structure racial differences in fraternity men's public and private interactions with other students, each other, and university officials.

Normative institutional arrangements 'are boundaries that shape social interactions and establish control over social environments' (Ray and Rosow 2010, pp. 525). At universities, normative institutional arrangements draw attention to the role structure plays in fraternity men's interactions with various others. Research on fraternity men's relations with women suggests that the normative institutional arrangements of higher education that structure how black and white fraternity men interact with women may also structure racial differences in interactions with university officials, other students and other GLOs. First, Stompler and Padavic (1997) investigate how women in black and white fraternity little sister programmes resist men's domination. Using forty in-depth interviews and participant observation on college campuses in the south east, they find that black little sisters were more successful at resisting by implementing collective forms of resistance compared to white little sisters and their individual resistance strategies. Stompler and Padavic (1997) conclude that the historical consequences of racism have led to more egalitarian opportunities (i.e. gender-neutral Greek council) for black women to

be on a similar playing field as black men in collegiate settings. Second, using data from a study of black and white fraternity men at a Midwestern university, Ray and Rosow (2010) find that, in opposition to the cool pose, black men are more likely to invoke romantic approaches towards women, while white men are more likely to invoke sexually objectifying approaches. They conclude that the small size of the black community at predominantly white institutions force black men to be held more accountable for their treatment of women. Ray and Rosow (2010) further highlight the differences in living arrangements between black and white fraternities. They state: 'There is a historical legacy of racial discrimination, both within and external to the university, that has traditionally precluded black fraternities and sororities from gaining equal access to economic resources such as Greek houses and large alumni endowments' (Ray and Rosow 2010, p. 526).

So a key question becomes: how do normative institutional arrangements structure black and white fraternities' interactions with the broader student community, GLOs and university officials? Using interview and participant observation data from a nine-month ethnographic study, this paper finds that normative institutional arrangements allow white fraternity men to circumvent university rules and be held less accountable than black fraternity men for how they interact with others. Building on a growing body of research on interpretations of race and status relations (Hughey 2008), the racialization of personal and role identities (Gayles 2006; Warde 2008; Ray and Rosow 2012) and hegemonic whiteness (Lewis 2004; Hughey 2011), normative institutional arrangements as an analytic concept identify social contexts (large racial community versus small racial community, gender-segregated Greek council versus gender-neutral Greek council) where individuals are more or less able to acquire status benefits from privileged roles.

Greek life at predominantly white institutions

Secretive organizations such as fraternities have long been of interest to scholars (Simmel 1906). Despite this interest, research has neglected how structural arrangements underlie racial and status inequality among these organizations. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) imply that researchers have had difficulty gaining entry to secretive groups such as fraternities. This comparison of black and white fraternities in the same institutional context offers a platform to offset this shortcoming.

American universities have a diverse array of student organizations (e.g. government, honour societies, discipline-based, service) that cater to the interests of the student body. Greek fraternities and sororities are normally high-status organizations on campus (Ray

and Rosow 2010, 2012). Collegiate GLOs are mostly located in the US and Canada. Members of GLOs are usually members of the student government and honour societies and at the forefront of event planning for undergraduate students (Brown, Parks, and Philips 2005). They are frequently some of the most recognizable student leaders on campus, have higher grades than other students and higher graduation rates (Kimbrough and Hutcheson 1998). Collectively, they represent one of the largest networks of volunteers in the US, perform 10 million hours of volunteer service annually and manage and own roughly \$3 billion in campus housing. Descriptive statistics on GLOs show that 48 per cent of US presidents, 40 per cent of US Supreme Court justices, 42 per cent of US senators, 30 per cent of US congressmen/women and 30 per cent of Fortune 500 executives have been members of GLOs (see Hughey 2010).

GLOs at a particular university are differentiated by councils and are normally segregated by race and gender. The Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC) is normally comprised of predominantly white fraternities. Predominantly white sororities are normally part of the Pan-Hellenic Council (PHC). The National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), the governing body over BGLOs, is composed of five historically black fraternities and four historically black sororities. Scholars highlight that the organizational structure of the white Greek system promotes a systemic racial and gender divide and establishes a precedent that black and white fraternities and sororities do not have to interact with each other organizationally (Hughey 2010). Due to discrimination and unjust treatment, black students at predominantly white institutions are less integrated into the larger student community than white students (Allen 1992; Massey *et al.* 2003). Most research on blacks in education focuses primarily on academic achievement and often ignores the larger social organization of collegiate life, especially the Greek community, and the role it plays as a buffer or enhancer of inequality.

Research on BGLOs suggests that being a member of a GLO carries a different meaning for blacks than it does for whites given the plight of the black community, historical reasons that BGLOs were founded and the affluence of BGLO members (Brown, Parks and Philips 2005). In the early 1900s, very few blacks were allowed to attend predominantly white institutions. If they did, it was often after they had obtained a degree from a historically black college or university. BGLOs were founded as a response to the discrimination and alienation black students experienced on campus and in their daily lives. BGLOs were founded from 1906 through 1922, with one being founded in 1963. Three organizations were founded at predominantly white institutions, while five organizations were founded at historically black colleges or universities (Brown, Parks and Philips 2005). BGLOs also have alumni chapters consisting of college graduates who became members either as

undergraduates or later in life. BGLOs have also founded chapters in the Caribbean, Africa, Europe and Asia. It is no coincidence that some of the most influential and celebrated African American leaders – Martin Luther King Jr., W. E. B. Du Bois, Rosa Parks and Maya Angelou – became members of BGLOs. In this regard, BGLOs represent a substantial percentage of the black middle class and are viewed, in many ways, as staples of the black community.

Aligning with Du Bois's (1903) talented tenth theory, black fraternity men may perceive an obligation to uphold a certain legacy and represent the black community in a positive light. In addition to the historical meaning these organizations provide for blacks, racial differences in fraternity men's experiences may be due to the smaller size of the black Greek community and the fewer number of black students at predominantly white institutions (Ray and Rosow 2010,2012). At most state schools, one white fraternity is typically double the size of all black fraternities combined. The smaller community size may lead to black fraternity men having more frequent interactions where they are identified as fraternity men. Members of white fraternities may have the privilege of choosing to interact like other college students when not wearing paraphernalia. Blacks, on the other hand, may be viewed as fraternity men not just by other black Greeks but by all black students, even when not wearing their fraternity letters. Therefore, white fraternity men, compared to black fraternity men, may be able to govern themselves in a less conscious manner when interacting with others. I examine these possibilities with the data described below.

The Fraternity Project

The Fraternity Project was funded by the Kinsey Institute and the Center for the Study of the College Fraternity. The Fraternity Project is a nine month ethnographic study consisting of interviews, surveys, and ethnographic observations with 52 black and white fraternity men conducted by a black and white male research team from spring 2005 through fall 2005. Twenty-eight men are from four black fraternities and twenty-four men are from three white fraternities. Two focus group interviews were conducted (one black, one white) consisting of six white men and eight black men who were also among the fifty-two men from the study. The premise was to collect data about fraternity men's perceptions, attitudes, interactions and behaviours on topics including race and status interactions and romantic and sexual relations.

Study site

The study site was a predominantly 'white university' with 30,000 undergraduates and roughly 10,000 graduate students, which I call

State University (SU). SU is characterized by *U.S. News and World Report* as selective in its undergraduate admissions, while having many graduate and professional programmes ranked in the top tier. Regarding the Greek system, approximately 20 per cent of white students are members, while 10 per cent of black students are members. There are about twenty-five white fraternities with approximately 100 members per fraternity. This totals over 2,500 members in the white fraternity system. Black fraternities are substantially smaller. There are only five black fraternities each with about ten members. This totals to slightly over fifty members in the entire black Greek system. All the white fraternities had a Greek house on campus property, while none of the black fraternities had a house. These patterns are similar to those at other state schools in the US.

Sample selection

The researchers used purposive sampling to select the fraternities for this study. Fraternities were selected based on their status on campus. Members of sororities and fraternities, students in sociology classes, informants in Greek affairs and the Assistant Dean of Students ranked fraternities based on popularity, academic and philanthropic events and athletic prowess. Three white fraternities were consistently ranked in the top five on all lists. These three fraternities were included in the study.

As mentioned previously, there are only five black fraternities. Membership in any of these organizations conveys a certain high status, particularly at SU where the black population is 4 per cent. However, there are status differences (based on founding date and location) among BGLOs. Therefore, members from the first four black fraternities, founded from 1906 to 1914, were interviewed. Researchers also oversampled the oldest fraternity, the one founded on the campus of the study and high-ranking members to better correspond to the white sample.

Methodology

Participants were recruited by e-mailing the presidents of the targeted fraternities to see if researchers could make an announcement at chapter meetings, invite members to participate and leave flyers about the study. Snowball sampling was also utilized.

The ethnographic observations were collected during the spring 2005 and fall 2005 semesters. Fraternity men were observed in many settings including Greek houses, rented houses, apartments, dorms, organization meetings, social, educational, community service and philanthropic events, athletic competitions, step shows, classrooms and parties. Researchers aimed to collect data that painted a holistic

picture of these men's Greek-related lives. They frequently spent days at a time with one respondent to see how he interacted in different settings with different groups of people.

In addition to the observations, thirty in-depth interviews (fifteen black and fifteen white) lasting roughly two-and-a-half hours and twenty-two informal interviews were conducted. The in-depth interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed using pseudonyms to ensure personal and organizational anonymity. At the end of each interview, respondents were asked to complete a survey that included questions on sociodemographics and family background. Two focus group interviews (one with a black fraternity and one with a white fraternity) were conducted after the individual interviews were completed to clarify themes that surfaced during the interviews. For each interview and field note excerpt, words relating to race, role meaning, privilege, consciousness and intergroup relations were coded by categorizing respondents based on race and organizational affiliation. After establishing patterns in the coding, I searched these data again looking for examples that confirmed and contradicted emerging patterns. The propositions were refined or eliminated to explain negative cases.

Characteristics of the men in the study

The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 24. This study aimed to sample men who had been in their organizations for the same amount of time (two years). Most white men became fraternity members as freshmen, whereas most black men became members as sophomores or juniors. Due to these different recruitment styles, the average age of the black men sampled is 21 and most are juniors or seniors. The average age of the corresponding white men is 20 and most of them are sophomores. Therefore, researchers conducted interviews with older white men and younger black men to supplement these differences. These interviews elicited similar results to the total sample. White men's average student grade point average is 3.31 compared to 2.92 on a 4.0 scale for black men. A majority of the white men live in fraternity houses whereas none of the black men does. Black men are more religious and more likely to be in committed relationships. White men report being upper middle class, while black men report being lower middle class.

Results

Interactions with student community

The size of the racial communities at SU and the living arrangements of fraternity men structure interactions with other students. The percentage of white students on campus is nearly 90. This means that

approximately 27,000 of the 30,000 undergraduate students are white. This dynamic gives white fraternity men the ability to blend in with the larger student community and more or less choose when to make their fraternal identity known. This benefit also increases the probability that white fraternity men can function in social space as individuals, instead of being marked for their fraternal affiliation and fall victim to group-level stereotypes.

Two statements by Paul, who is a 20-year-old sophomore majoring in biology, demonstrate this finding. First, Paul stated the following about fraternity paraphernalia, rules and behaviour: 'So okay there are rules, like when you're pledging you know now that you're a brother you have to behave this way if you're wearing letters or anything? You're not supposed to be like fucking shit up on campus.' Paul's statement implies that if white fraternity men want to behave badly, they simply have to not wear paraphernalia to remove fraternity liability. Second, Paul discussed the response of a fraternity brother's girlfriend when he 'hooked up' with one of her pledge sisters. A pledge sister, similar to a pledge brother, is a person who became a Greek member during the same initiation class. Paul said that his fraternity brother's girlfriend stated, 'This is my pledge sister! Are you an idiot? Couldn't you like make out with somebody else? I'm not going to find out about it with *30,000 people!*' This response by the girlfriend illuminates the importance of community size as a mechanism that shows the importance of normative institutional arrangements. Her response implies that there are so many other women on campus that her boyfriend has access to that if he hooked up with someone not in her sorority it may be a limited probability of her finding out.

In addition to having a large community size to alleviate some of the visibility that white fraternity men may otherwise undergo, they also have large fraternity houses to separate themselves from other students. For white fraternities 'the house' symbolizes status, exclusivity and power. The houses of these three fraternities are geographically close to local bars and restaurants, on a main street that most students pass daily and away from other fraternity houses, thus allowing them to maintain social boundaries more efficiently than other fraternities. The houses are fifty-room mansions with large common areas, game rooms and dining halls with cooks and maids. One white participant said, 'I don't know if you seen our house, but it's pretty tight. It's got ten columns. It's a big white house.'

Fraternity houses allow white fraternity men to limit social interactions with other students. First, the house as a structure serves as a boundary. Similar to the millions of personally owned homes across the US, yards are considered private property and off limits to others. Though these houses are on university property, most students view them as inaccessible since fraternities technically own them.

Second, given the privatization of Greek houses on campus, white fraternities are able to choose who to invite to programmes and events. This means they can include desirable groups, like attractive women, and exclude others, like racial/ethnic minorities. Third, if individuals who are unwelcome try to enter fraternity houses, white men have the privilege of doing their own policing. The researchers have several field notes documenting incidents where individuals would try to enter a fraternity house for a party and were turned away by members, alumni or hired security who act as doormen.

Black fraternities face a different set of normative institutional arrangements. First, they are substantially smaller than white fraternities. As stated earlier, one black fraternity is about one-tenth the size of white fraternities. Second, the black community is extremely small and insular. Unlike the comment made about white fraternity men having access to the entire student community, black fraternity men's statements and behaviour indicate the exact opposite. Since very few events have black and white attendance, black fraternity men view their interactions to be mainly limited to black students. Furthermore, they were recognized by other black students even when they did not have on paraphernalia. In fact, black fraternity men were recognized by name, even if they did not know the name of the person speaking to them. These dynamics lead to black fraternity men perceiving they have an obligation to speak to other black students.

Two quotations demonstrate this finding. Ted and Wolly are both business majors and have been presidents of their fraternity. Ted stated, 'Like as blacks, some people feel like it's our duty as black people to say hi to other black people.' Wolly stated, 'It's like dang! Am I that good I gotta come hug you and shake your hand? I shake everybody hand man. I mess around and have a phone booth disease on my hand!' Though Wolly was somewhat exaggerating about the disease, his statement is insightful because it speaks to the inability of black fraternity men to control who they interact with. Ted's comment below highlights the consequences of black fraternity men not adhering to the deference and demeanour rituals (Goffman 1959) they are expected to undergo with black students.

When we are together as Etas [his fraternity name] people say "the Etas are stuck up." So then those people play that off Eta. "He's stuck up. He didn't say hi." But a lot of people expect you to say hi. People you don't even know!

Interactions with fraternities across racial lines

The interactions that white and black fraternities have with each other can be categorized as extremely limited. The most telling piece of

evidence comes from the in-depth interviews. Respondents were asked, 'Can you name at least three white fraternities? Can you name at least three black fraternities?' While white fraternity men had no problem naming several white fraternities, only three of the fifteen could name one black fraternity. In fact, white fraternities knew so little about black fraternities that one respondent asked, 'You mean black guys in white frats?' Some white fraternity men did not even know there were black fraternities on campus.

Conversely, all fifteen black fraternity men could name at least three white fraternities, frequently naming at least one white fraternity in the study. During the focus group, black fraternity men were outraged and disrespected that white fraternity men did not know about them. They commented that black fraternities have won several awards at the campus-wide Greek awards over white fraternities with white men in attendance. Though this is true, two important components are missing. First, a black participant during the focus group said it best: 'This campus is so segregated that it is no wonder why Greeks don't know about each other.' Second, white fraternity men simply have no incentive to know about or interact with black fraternities. White fraternities have a large student community to cater to without needing black fraternities to bring the black community to events to increase attendance numbers. They also have a central place to organize, hold programmes and throw parties without paying extra costs for venues. Additionally, black and white fraternities are part of different Greek councils so white fraternities do not have to engage with or answer to black fraternities in any way. Instead, other white fraternities are the primary competition for Greek awards, dollars raised for philanthropy and intramural sports. So, even when black fraternities beat white fraternities, it is inconsequential to the status and success of white fraternities.

For black fraternities, there are incentives to interacting with white fraternities. First, co-sponsoring events with white fraternities gives them access to cost-efficient venues. The university charges to use campus space for profit-raising events like parties. Second, having events at white Greek houses gives black fraternities some relief from the monitoring of university officials, as I will discuss later. Third, beating white fraternities at just about anything, whether it is Greek awards or intramural sports, becomes a win and morale boost for the entire black student community. In many ways, the black community relies on BGLOs to be their face and voice for some status gains among the broader student community. Justin, who is a 21-year-old junior and the highest-ranking undergraduate officer of his fraternity in the US, touches on these points in his statement about collaboration.

We've tried to collaborate with some of the [white] organizations. We reach out to them for like homecoming or the parade, or just random other daily events that happen at SU and usually they are already doing something. And we operate on two different calendars, so it's hard to get that networking with them. Relations could be a lot better. I think it should be a lot better. We could really open up a lot of doors. I think that if *we* were able to tap into those networks and *that group* of people *our* [blacks with whites] unity would be a lot better.

Notice, Justin identified white fraternities as 'that group' and all black fraternities as the collective 'we'. He further states that if organizational relations between black and white fraternities increase, social interactions between black and white students will increase as well.

Interactions with sorority women

Fraternities interact regularly with sororities. Researchers attended several events being co-sponsored by a fraternity and a sorority, though separated across racial lines. These events spanned homecomings, barbecues, parties, community service and philanthropic events and social programmes. There were two events consisting of black fraternities going to white sorority houses to put on a step show. Originating in the traditions of African cultural dances, stepping is considered a dance normally performed by black fraternities and sororities. Given the racial and gender demographic of the performers and audience members, it was quite telling to watch approximately fifty white women cheer on seven black men. In many ways, these events were reminiscent of early twentieth-century performances where blacks danced, sang or 'put on a jig' for the amusement of whites. These events further speak to how black bodies become sexualized for the benefit of whites (Collins 2004). Researchers did not observe one event where a white fraternity held an event with a black sorority.

Because white fraternities are not organizationally bound to sororities, they do not have to answer formally to sorority women. This leads to white fraternity men interacting with sorority women in a more sexually objectifying and carefree manner. In fact, white fraternity men seem to view sorority women primarily in terms of sexual convenience. Two quotations are fitting here. Lane, who is a 22-year-old senior majoring in marketing, implies that respecting sorority women is simply a front to not lose the benefit of sexual convenience.

R: You got one card to play. You can hook up with two girls in the same [sorority] house and you might be alright. As long as you don't

piss off the first one. If you do, you're done. You won't have a chance with any other girls in that house. But you can't play the card unless some time has passed.

I: How much time do you need?

R: It can't be the same weekend for sure. Probably after a week or so you should be okay.

Rex, who is a 22- year-old junior double majoring in biology and psychology, continues this line of thinking.

I: What would happen if you got caught cheating?

R: The way I could see it affecting something is if it's a sorority girl you fuck over.

I: You can't screw with a sorority sister?

R: You could, but you could get the name, you're an asshole, you're a player, or something like that. I mean it might. It could spread around the [sorority] house. Then you're blacklisted.

Rex never mentioned the thousands of women on campus who are not in sororities, while Lane's comments imply that white fraternity men simply need to wait about two weeks to hook up with a 'pledge sister'.

Unlike white fraternities, black fraternities are organizationally bound to sororities. As stated earlier, black fraternities and black sororities are part of the same Greek council. This means that a black woman can be president, or hold any other leadership position, over black fraternity men. This dynamic leads to black fraternity men engaging in more deference and demeanour rituals with black sorority women that lead to more respectful social interactions. Even when black fraternity men engage in romantic and sexual relationships with black sorority women, they are very aware that their behaviour can impact the relationship between their organization and black sororities. For example, a black fraternity man cheated on his girlfriend who was in a sorority. His fraternity had a meeting with her sorority to rectify the damage that had ensued between their organizations.

As mentioned earlier, black men are more religious, older and likely to be in committed relationships. Some may assume that these factors are more important than normative institutional arrangements. My analysis reveals these demographic differences play a very small role.

First, white men in committed relationships treat women similarly to those not in committed relationships. Second, non-religious and single black men treat women similarly to religious black men and those in committed relationships. Third, two white fraternity men reported being extremely religious. In fact, one was a virgin. In fraternal settings, he would act similarly to his fraternity brothers because he would be teased and scrutinized if his behaviour did not align with the hegemonic ideals of the Greek house (see Ray and Rosow 2010).

Interactions with university officials

Due to the boundaries of fraternity houses and the role of influential alumni, white fraternities are able to avoid obsessive monitoring by university officials in ways that black fraternities cannot. First, when asked, 'Whose opinion of your fraternity matters the most?', most white men said no one. A few said sorority women's opinions matter, but none of them mentioned university officials. Second, researchers witnessed four incidents where police came to a fraternity house during a party. In two incidents the officers simply requested that the music be turned down. The third incident involved the fraternity calling the police on a student who did not want to leave the premises. During the fourth incident, the party was actually shut down. Interestingly though, since fraternity men lived there, they simply told officers who was a personal guest and those individuals were allowed to stay. So, white fraternity men continued to party with a smaller group.

Two final points should be made about white fraternities' interactions with university officials. First, since white fraternities control a large living and social space, they rarely have to interact with university officials who serve as gatekeepers for programming and party areas on campus. Second, influential alumni intervene when white fraternities face severe sanctioning from university officials. Besides hazing incidents (i.e. alcohol poisoning), fraternity alumni seem to be quite successful at rectifying fraternity problems. For example, some members had to formally meet with the Dean for alleged incidents at the house. An alumnus met with the Dean privately and, according to fraternity members, had a successful outcome because they received word that there would be no current changes in their normal operating procedures. One member speculated that university donations by alumni mute fraternity problems.

Unlike white fraternities, black fraternities face a different level of social interaction with university officials. First, black fraternities are dependent on university venues for programming, social events and parties. This means they have to interact regularly and directly with staff members, administrators and police officers. One of the most

telling pieces of data comes from Julio, who is a 21-year-old senior and president of his fraternity. When asked whose opinion of his fraternity matters the most Julio responded, 'The Dean of the School'. Second, black fraternities are forced to follow university rules strictly, while white fraternities have normative institutional arrangements that allow them to circumvent rules. Third, black fraternity men experience a heightened level of monitoring and sanctioning, and, in turn, perceive unjust treatment and discrimination. Bo, who is the president of his fraternity and one of the coordinators for the annual NPHC Step Show, stated: 'I hate to use prejudice, but I think this is a prejudiced city. Everybody say we use that word loosely, but I don't think they like to see black people have a lot of fun. I think we get stereotyped, especially as a black male on this campus.'

Similarly to Justin (see 'Interactions with fraternities across racial lines' above), when Bo says 'we' he is referring to black students as a whole. When he says 'they', he is referring to university officials and whites. Dave, who is the highest-ranking undergraduate member of his fraternity in the Midwestern region, stated:

We have parties. Like the main thing you have to worry about is finding a place on campus and that's a hassle because a lot of the people don't want to deal with a black organization. And the reason why, which is kinda our fault, but I feel like it's racism at the same time, but we're trying to change that.

Dave's comments that it 'is kinda our fault' is referring to some fights that occurred at black fraternity parties. In this sense, Dave is taking responsibility for the behaviour of the entire black community. Dave also mentioned the hassle of obtaining the approval of university officials. Bo further addresses this issue below.

We're trying to get a venue for a step show, which is a campus-wide event. They [university officials] don't even want us. Everybody else got they [white fraternities] venues, got rappers coming down. And we try to have a party and they tryin to charge us \$5,000. It's so hard to find venues. My fraternity had no record of fighting or nothing at no party. We had to meet with them (the police) like six times just to get a venue for one night!

The statements by Bo and Dave are telling because following their interviews a scandal occurred laced with racial tension. The NPHC Step Show party was being held at the university centre. Outside the party a fight occurred between individuals who did not attend SU. SU has a rule that everyone who attends the party must sign in and present a student ID, either from SU or another university. These individuals

were not allowed in the party. An hour or so after hired security put these individuals off university property, a shooting occurred several blocks away from the university. Staff members decided to stop the party. BGLO members were outraged because they followed all of the rules and felt as though they were penalized for something that did not concern them or students at SU. After this incident, BGLOs were not allowed to reserve the large ballroom at the university centre for one year. Additionally, the school paper did not focus on who won the step show that drew over 2,000 (mostly black) students to the university. Instead, the paper focused on the shootout that occurred off campus that did not involve university students. BGLO members perceived they were blamed for the behaviour of others simply because of their shared racial identity. This year-long sanction held even though alumni met with administrators and BGLO members were not found responsible. Some black fraternity men suspected that university officials wanted to force them to move their events off campus.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to show how normative institutional arrangements structure black and white fraternities' interactions with the broader campus community, other GLOs and university officials. I found that a large community size, private on-campus fraternity house, gender-specific Greek council and influential alumni lead to white fraternity men being held less accountable for their interactions with others. Because of a small student community, small Greek community, gender-neutral Greek council and dependency on university venues for programming, black fraternity men are susceptible to continuous, unwarranted and unsatisfying social interactions with other students, white GLOs and university officials. They are also held accountable for the behaviour of other blacks, even those who are non-students.

Normative institutional arrangements as a concept become useful for addressing how covert forms of racism operate in the twenty-first century to maintain the status quo. These arrangements draw attention to boundaries and organizational practices that allow high-status groups, such as white fraternities, to continue reaping the benefits of privilege. Normative institutional arrangements are situated at the meso-level of analysis and speak to the perpetual role of mechanisms of privilege, such as visibility and accountability, and how these mechanisms sustain status and racial inequality. In this regard, normative institutional arrangements have vitality for theoretical and empirical research on hegemonic whiteness (Lewis 2004; Hughey 2011; Ray and Rosow 2012) and offer a new platform for conceptualizing why high-status blacks are unable to take advantage of certain entitlements like their white counterparts.

My findings also link with the black middle-class literature that highlights how middle-class status can be costly for blacks (Pattillo-McCoy 1999; Banks 2007; Lacy 2007). In this case, black fraternity men on campus are emblematic of the experiences of middle-class blacks embedded in predominantly white workplaces and neighbourhoods. The small percentage of blacks in these spaces creates a peculiar social location that leads to a hyper-level of racial marking. This racial marking leads to a heightened level of visibility, unjust treatment and accountability. Even though African Americans are no monolith, these dynamics lead to middle class blacks being looked to by whites to forge connections on behalf of the black community and take responsibility for the behaviour of other blacks. So, high status (e.g. middle-class attainment or socioeconomic status) does not preclude blacks from experiencing these conditions. It may, in fact, be high status that exacerbates these conditions. Future research can use BGLO alumni samples as a proxy for the black middle class to examine how social-class identification among professional blacks, the health of the black middle class and civic engagement and public stewardship change throughout the life course and over time.

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RASHAWN RAY is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Maryland, College Park, and a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Research Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley/UCSF.

ADDRESS: Department of Sociology, 2112 Art-Sociology Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.

Email: rjray@umd.edu