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Sarah Schwomeyer
DePauw University

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GREEK LIFE AFTER DARK

How DePauw Women Navigate the Sociocultural Space of Party Culture Safely,

Contextualized by Greek Life

Sarah Schwomeyer

DePauw University Honor Scholar Program

Class of 2019

Dr. Leigh-Anne Goins

Dr. Sarah Rowley | Dr. Helis Sikk

GREEK LIFE AFTER DARK

How DePauw Women Navigate the Sociocultural Space of Party Culture Safely,

Contextualized by Greek Life

Women in college are disproportionately prone to sexual assault (Berntson et al. 2013). This study examines the potential dangers women experience while engaging in party culture, particularly in threatening spaces where a paternalistic, heteronormative, and heteropatriarchal fraternity culture is dominant. The central question I seek to answer is if sororities are the empowering organizations they were founded as, especially in relation to party culture. The overall goal of this study is to assess DePauw women's safety perceptions while engaging with party culture in context with Greek life as an institution. Major findings revolve around two main themes: threat perception of party culture and internalized protection and empowerment with perception of Greek values as a moderating factor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my sponsor, Dr. Leigh-Anne Goins, for her continuous support of my study. Her affirmation, motivation, sacrifice, and acceptance helped me in the highs and the lows of writing this thesis. As much as she helped with my study, she helped me and all her advisees feel affirmed and capable. I could not have imagined having a better advisor.

I am also gratefully indebted to Dr. Sarah Rowley and Dr. Helis Sikk as the second and third readers. Their input and encouragement made the paper complete.

Thank you to Dr. Kevin Moore, Amy Welch, and Tonya Welker for their direction of the Honor Scholar Program at DePauw University; to those who gave their time to participate in the survey and interviews; and to Heather Phillips and Printing Services.

Special thanks go out to: my sister Lindsey for her edits and support; my parents for their encouragement; my editor, Becca Sellers; to Katrina, Anne, and Emma, for struggling together; to my supporters Anna, Lauren, Taylor, Hallie, and Nathan; and to the following for their unwavering affirmation: Barb, Olivia, Hallie, Reba, Kaitlyn, Libby, Ali, Ashley, Emily and Joelle.

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Greek REFERENCE CHEAT SHEET
DePauw Chapters and Their Councils

Multicultural Greek Council (“MGC”)

Sororities.

- Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. (“OPB,” “Beta”)
- Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority, Inc. (“SLG,” “Gamma”)

Fraternity

- Lambda Sigma Upsilon Latino Fraternity, Inc. (“LSU”)

National Pan-Hellenic Council (“NPHC”)

Sororities

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (“AKA”)
- *Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. (Inactive at DePauw)*
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. (“Zeta”)

Fraternities

- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. (Alphas)
- Kappa Alpha Psi® Fraternity, Inc. (“Kappa,” “Nupes”)

National Panhellenic Conference (“Panhellenic”) (Sororities only)

- Alpha Chi Omega (“Alpha Chi,” “A-Chi-O”)
- Alpha Phi International Women's Fraternity (“Phi,” “A-Phi”)
- Delta Gamma (“DG”)
- Kappa Alpha Theta (“Theta”)
- Kappa Kappa Gamma (“Kappa,” “KKG”)
- Mu Sigma Upsilon Sorority, Inc. (“Mu,” “MSU”)
- Pi Beta Phi Fraternity for Women (“Pi Phi”)

Inter-Fraternity Conference (“IFC”) (Fraternities only)

- Alpha Tau Omega (“ATO,” “Tau”)
- Beta Theta Pi (“Beta”)
- Delta Tau Delta (“Delt”)
- Delta Upsilon (“DU”)
- Phi Delta Theta (“Phi Delt”)
- Phi Kappa Psi (“Phi Psi”)
- Phi Gamma Delta (“Fiji”)
- *Sigma Alpha Epsilon (Inactive at DePauw)*
- Sigma Chi (“Sig Chi”)
- Sigma Nu (“SNU”)

FORWARD

Or, the Current State of Affairs Regarding Greek Life at DePauw

Throughout my college career, a collection of incidents has situated my Greek life experience. This section is dedicated to providing an explanation of these noteworthy incidents from a student's perspective. This forward serves as a collection of allegories about Greek life that allude to Greek life culture at DePauw University.

The Wujimu chapter or Mu Sigma Upsilon Sorority, Incorporated arrived at DePauw in the spring of 2016. Mu proudly advertises itself as the first multicultural sorority in the nation. At DePauw, Mu is a mostly Latina organization; the sister-sorority to LSU Latino Fraternity, Incorporated. Mu is governed under MGC on other campuses; however, when the potential new members applied to charter their chapter under DePauw's MGC, the historically-Latina Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority, Inc. and Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. voted against their membership. It was common knowledge that Gamma and OPB did not want Mu to charter a chapter at DePauw because of the fact that there are relatively few Latinx¹ women² at DePauw and an even smaller amount of those women who are willing to go through MGC's strenuous new member education period. Consequently, MSU applied for membership into Panhellenic and a majority of the Panhellenic chapters voted to grant MSU membership. As a result of

¹ Definition of Latinx: A person of Latin American origin or descent (used as a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to Latino or Latina).

² Throughout this paper, my use of "women" includes transgender women.

competition between historically Latinx sororities at DePauw, the women of MSU – a chapter of seven members — had to join a council of 100-person, majority white chapters.

* * *

During the same semester, a podcast called “House of Scaife” by DePauw’s ATO fraternity became public via an editorial by Professor Doug Harms. Professor Harms (2017) describes “House of Scaife:”

This podcast is the standard bearer of rape culture, exhibiting major characteristics of this deplorable approach to sex: objectification of women, absence of mutual respect for sexual partners, egocentrism and selfishness, predatory pack mentality (e.g., referring to group members as “hounds”), and no mention or concern regarding consent.

DePauw President Mark McCoy actually guest starred on one of the podcasts, ignorant to its subject matter. The podcast had already been dismissed by both WGRE and D3TV when it was discovered by the public (Kobe & Burton 2017). Even after dismissal, “The House of Scaife producers used university equipment that was independent of any official student media, according to the head of the DePauw Pulliam Center for Contemporary Media, Jonathan Nichols-Pethick (Kobe & Burton 2017) . When asked why they allowed the podcast to continue production despite repercussions from WGRE and D3TV, Nichols-Pethick explained, “I found that content to be offensive, frankly juvenile, and I listened very closely for legal issues and didn’t find those. I had to make a judgement call on the role of the center in dictating content and if I erred, I erred on the side of legal caution with regard to the freedom of people to speak,”

(Kobe & Burton 2017). Thus, the sexually predatory podcast survived two dismissals to be condoned by a University faculty member.

DePauw newspaper editorials reveal troubling dialogue from the podcast, serving as the only remaining evidence of “House of Scaife” after its deletion from the public Youtube, Soundcloud, and Instagram pages hours after Professor Harm’s opinion piece was published. One of the leaders of the podcast, student Anthony Sciarrino, served as the ATO head of recruitment during the 2016-2017 school year, resulting in a leave of absence from “House of Scaife.” When asked about recruitment in “Episode 5: Scaife and Big Events,” the conversation went as follows:

...Sciarrino described what types of individuals he was recruiting to ATO. “We’re looking for people that want to go out every night and get scaife,” Sciarrino said.

When Cusumano asked, “Is there like a moral code or a moral guideline you look for when you’re looking for a scaife hound? Is there anything you really specifically look for in a scaife hound that morally makes you look like a better person?”

Sciarrino simply answered, “To be honest with you, no.” (Kobe & Burton 2017).

To blatantly deny searching for members of moral character is certainly jarring. Though all Greek organizations are founded with values their members must possess, not all organizations actually recruit members on character.

In the sixth episode of “The House of Scaife,” Senior John Vitale spoke about date parties at ATO: “there’s a group of women who just need to get in there and then once they’re in the door they’re just like ‘Hey I got invited to this date party’ I’m just here to be scaife” (Kobe &

Burton 2017). Vitale’s rhetoric reveals a culture in which fraternity men attend parties with the end of goal of having sex. When women recognize this intent, they may drink in order to lower their inhibitions or feel more at ease. Alcohol also lower women’s defense mechanisms, which makes protection from predatory behavior more difficult. Knowing that the men in this space are not recruited for morals and are socialized to seek hookups, predatory behavior seems probable.



The “House of Scaife” podcast and the campus response it garnered are indicative of DePauw culture. The podcast exemplifies how rape culture perpetuation is not only the physical act of assault, but the criminal language of sexual violence — even in its most vague and veiled forms. An environment where sexual assault can occur does not appear overnight but is fostered overtime through sociocultural norms. “House of Scaife” continued so long without repercussion because its dehumanizing language about women was acceptable to regular listeners.

* * *

During the spring of 2018, DePauw administration informed a group of Greek student leaders that a new rule barred university-owned housing units from having more than 30 guests at one time. Aside from occasional IFC fraternity live-out parties, the university-owned housing units that regularly throw parties are the MGC and NPHC chapter houses. Therefore, the 30 guest rule essentially forbade MGC and NPHC chapters from having parties. Ironically, later research reveals that MGC and NPHC parties decenter alcohol consumption and instead revolve around dancing and talking. The IFC chapter houses where over-consumption and assault typically occur are nearly unaffected by this rule.

* * *

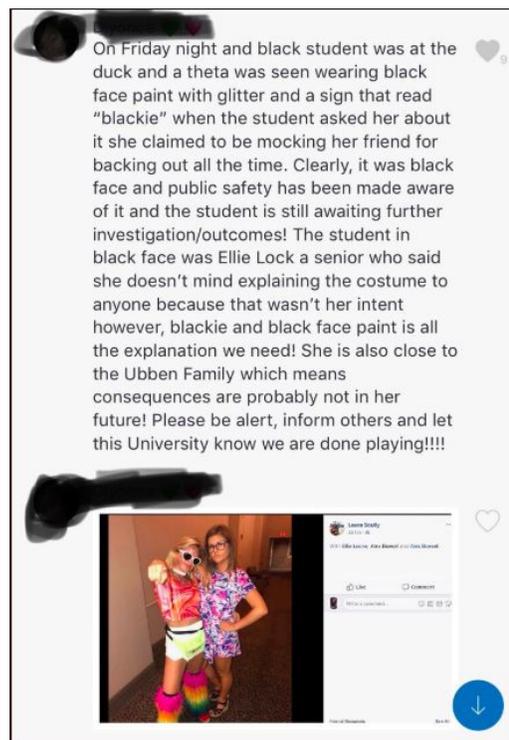
Several bias incidents and hates crimes plagued DePauw over a pan of two weeks during in spring 2018.³ At the time, a Senior Theta named Ellie Locke wore blackface and a name tag that said “blackie” to a Theta date party hosted at the campus bar, The Fluttering Duck. Below, the account of the incident from a DePauw alumna Jazmin Lesane (2018):

Now out of the recent racial crimes that occurred, one in particular stood out to me. That’s the blackface incident involving DePauw Senior, Ellie Locke. On Friday night, Ellie got ready for a fun night out with her Kappa Alpha Theta sorority sisters. The girls were hosting a “Freak[y] Friday” themed event at the local bar. This is where one friend would dress up as the other. Harmless right? Well, Ellie decided to paste dark glitter over her face (making herself visibly darker) and wore a sign that said “Blackie.” Now from recent comments, the word “Blackie” was a nickname that referred to a friend who “blacked out” whenever she drank alcohol.

³ While detailing each hate crime is outside the scope of this paper, the high volume of hate crimes in such a short time span exemplifies the state of racial justice at DePauw.

To be honest, no matter the intent, the costume was interpreted as blackface by an overwhelming majority of people. In fact, a petition has been circulating calling for the university to revoke her graduation privileges. Over 200 students signed it in less than 12 hours of the petition being posted (Now that says a lot about how students are feeling).

Despite student activism, administration was slow to acknowledge Lesane's sentiments that so many students echoed. Still, students continued raising awareness: the following image circulated DePauw students' social media and was even printed out and passed around during an Ubben Lecture (among photos of other racial slurs found around campus the same week):



(Dreher 2018)

When Locke left her chapter house the night of the party, none of her sorority sisters recognized her problematic behavior; or, if they did, they remained silent against it. Lesane (2018) perfectly articulates this incident's relation to Greek life:

What can be learned from this? Don't be afraid to call out your friends! 100 sorority sisters and not one saw anything wrong with this situation? ... If we don't call out our friends NOW, we're going allow them to walk the streets of life continuing to oppress others with their "ignorance."

The Ellie Locke situation reveals the culture of privilege that majority-white Greek organizations easily. Her social life was impacted, as she was forced to move out of Theta's chapter house and did not walk the stage at graduation for fear of social repercussions. Refusal to acknowledge overt racism on behalf of DePauw administration mixed with class privilege provided Locke with protection from serious consequences.

* * *

Theta faced scrutiny again in the fall of 2018, this time with the aforementioned fraternity, ATO. One ATO served as a waiter at Theta and participated in their "waiter dinner," where waiters get extremely drunk and are served a meal by sorority members. Waiters and sisters "pregame" the dinner, meaning they get drunk before attending. At Theta's 2018 fall waiter dinner, one ATO went to the hospital for over-intoxication with a BAC above 0.45.⁴ The student was taken via ambulance from the Theta chapter house, so after the incident, Theta expected repercussions from DePauw and their nationals. Shortly after the incident, a Snapchat video surfaced of a Theta sister pouring a handle of vodka into the mouth of the ATO who went to the hospital, yelling at him to drink more. Consequently, neither Theta nor ATO were allowed to participate in recruitment for the 2018-2019 school year and numerous members of ATO were

⁴ A BAC of 0.40% leads to onset of coma. Death is possible due to respiratory arrest ("Blood Alcohol Concentration // University of Notre Dame").

kicked out of the organization by their nationals. While the woman who forced the man to drink should face consequences, Theta's punishment highlights gender inequality when compared with fraternity men who do similar things on a weekly basis. How often have IFC fraternity men held bottles of alcohol over women? How often have IFC fraternities provided the alcohol that caused women to be over intoxicated and in dangerous situations? Yet, how uncommon is the type of punishment that Theta faced enacted on fraternities?

INTRODUCTION

Women in college are disproportionately prone⁵ to sexual assault (Berntson et al. 2013). Many colleges and universities have implemented measures to combat the lack of safety afforded to college women, but the statistics remain unchanged. While sexual assault affects men, women, trans folx, non-binary folx, and others across the gender spectrum, the threat of college sexual assault disproportionately impacts women; especially women of color and queer women (Kelly 2012: 44). I am interested in perceptions of safety as they relate to college campuses and the role that sorority engagement has on moderating negative outcomes, specific to DePauw University. I seek to understand how sorority membership impacts perceptions of safety from the threats of engaging with party culture⁶.

DePauw University is a mid-sized, private liberal arts University in Greencastle, Indiana, is distinct for several reasons. While affiliation rates have declined in recent years, approximately 70% of students are Greek (DePauw University Fraternity and Sorority Life, n.d.). With such high affiliation rates and a long-standing structural advantage, Greek life is the dominating organizing unit of social life. Fraternity and sorority cultures are structured by a mutually constitutive, homosocial⁷, heteronormative⁸, and paternalistic space.

⁵ One in 5 women are sexually assaulted while in college. More than 90% of sexual assault victims on college campuses do not report the assault. National Sexual Violence Resource Center (2015).

⁶ Sororities are largely female-only and most women identify as cisgender.

⁷ Definition of homosocial: of, relating to, or involving social relationships between persons of the same sex and especially between men (Merriam-Webster).

⁸ Definition of heteronormative: of, relating to, or based on the attitude that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality (Merriam-Webster).

This study examines the potential dangers women experience while engaging in party culture, particularly in threatening spaces where a paternalistic, heteronormative, and heteropatriarchal fraternity culture is dominant. The central question I seek to answer is if sororities are the empowering organizations they were founded as, especially in relation to party culture. The overall goal of this study is to assess DePauw women's safety perceptions while engaging with party culture in context with Greek life as an institution. Combined findings from the survey and interviews revolve around two main themes: threat perception of party culture and internalized protection and empowerment with perception of Greek values as a moderating factor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

I structure the review of relevant literature in six parts. To better understand potential dangers of party culture at DePauw, I begin with a discussion of gender and Greek culture that situates and separates gender and sexuality within heteronormative spaces. I then move to a discussion of hookup culture, including its relation to (largely binary) gender, and the role of alcohol in Greek life and how it complicates hookup culture. I conclude with a conversation incorporating race and racial differences in Greek life and potential differences in engagement within hegemonic masculinity and hookup culture. Taken together, each part provides the groundwork (or a strong foundation) for understanding the structure of party culture and its potential to create threatening spaces.

Gender and Greek Culture

Greek life and associated relations at DePauw University are rooted in gender structures, norms, and ideologies. Gender as an organizing principle influences how we understand the self, how we relate to others, and how we perform or express our identities. Within Greek life and associated organizations, gender performances adhere to hegemonic masculine values (such as physical strength, assertiveness, and heterosexuality, to name a few) that are expressed in everyday conversation and meaning-making.

Panhellenic sororities are inherently transphobic, privileging cisgender women's bodies. Across councils, Greek governing language is cisnormative and heteronormative, structurally reifying the gender binary. Sororities and fraternities are legally allowed to discriminate based

on sex under Title IX as a means of maintaining single-gender organizations (Ruiz 2016).

Panhellenic sororities are sovereign bodies and can set their own membership standards. Over the last ten years, at least five Greek organizations have considered policies denying transgender folx Greek membership, according to Jessica Pettitt, a former college administrator and consultant (Ruiz 2016). As private organizations, sororities can keep trans exclusion policies private, which would be likely for organizations that do not accept trans folx but do not want to seem discriminatory (Ruiz 2016). Consequently, a trans woman going through recruitment could not know an organization's policy on gender identity and thus be made to navigate a transphobic space unknowingly. This potential creates a generally unstable climate for trans and nonbinary folx that discourages participation in Greek life altogether.

Ruiz (2016) relays the narrative of a transgender woman named Emily who participated in Panhellenic recruitment. Emily expresses, "it's a common misconception that genitals define gender identity" (Ruiz 2016). She believes many sorority women will reject her membership off the assumption she has a penis. Because sex and gender are so often conflated, many struggle to detach associations of gender identity and genitalia. Emily suggests sororities ask themselves, "why is a vagina so important to being a woman within our organization? How does having a vagina impact our ability to build character and to develop leaders and to instill values in people?" (Ruiz 2016).

Chapters in MGC and NPHC have also fallen short in their acceptance of trans folx. According to Decaille (2017), the ideal NPHC woman is a straight, cisgender woman. NPHC's

culture of silence pushes LGBT[IA+]’ members into silence, especially since “homosexuality is still frowned upon in the black community.” Stereotypes about femininity and masculinity “oftentimes may place individuals lives in danger—for LGBTQ[IA+] members that means keeping your sexuality under wraps” (Decaille 2017). Decaille (2017) suggests revising Greek organizations’ code of conduct, by-laws, initiatives, and process for new-member initiation to directly acknowledge the underserved community. There is a dearth of information on historically-Latinx Greek letter organizations and their status on gender identity policy. Ultimately, examination of gender identity and sexuality specific to members of MGC or NPHC chapters is underdeveloped and is an avenue for suggested research. At DePauw, both sororities in MGC have explicit language expressing their acceptance of trans women. Neither of the two NPHC sororities at DePauw, AKA and Zeta, have policies regarding gender identity and membership. Finally, six of seven DePauw Panhellenic chapters accept all who identify as women, with Alpha Phi as the exception with no clear policy.

* * *

Hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity that is most highly valued in modern patriarchal society. Rooted in the social dominance of men over women, hegemonic masculinity is a socialization process that rewards whiteness, cis heterosexuality, and traditional masculine traits (Currier 1987: 24). IFC fraternities recruit men with hegemonic masculine values and

⁹ Definition of LGBTQIA+: A common abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Transgender, Genderqueer, Queer, Intersexed, Agender, Asexual, and Ally community (“LGBTQIA+ Terminology”).

cultivate an environment that privileges hegemonic masculinity. Gender within the binary, which is the primary mode of understanding gender (sex and sexuality) within Greek life on campus, operates through a co-constructionist and mutually constitutive frame where cisgender women subscribe to notions of emphasized femininity, or “the pattern of femininity which is given most cultural and ideological support... patterns such as sociability... compliance... [and] sexual receptivity [to men]” (Currier 2013: 706; Connell 1987: 24). Often, women are not consciously aware of their subscription to emphasized femininity. Instead, this behavior is a societal expectation and feeds into hookup culture. It is the psychosocial response to hegemonic masculinity iterated within social systems, meaning that in response to men who exhibit hegemonic masculinity, women will exhibit traditional feminine traits such as appeasement, niceness, and submission. (Currier 2013: 706). The pressure to conform, as mentioned earlier, is underscored in a fraternity environment where “hookup culture and this view both avoid addressing how much control a woman really has in a system of pressure so geared toward fulfilling societal expectations of male sexuality” (Kelly 2012: 41). Thus, when considering the mutually constitutive elements of gender within a binary, women’s actions and decisions are bound within a masculinist social structure — one that is also woven into Greek culture and that dominates DePauw social life.

Hookup culture on college campuses perpetuates the gender structures, norms, and ideologies inherent to Greek organization. As Kelly (2012) explains, “the same structures that are stacked against women also pressure men to prove their sexuality by having sex with

multiple partners, and any dissent from this pattern becomes a denial of their masculinity" (Kelly 2012: 43). Therefore, sex is engrained within conceptions of manhood and women are the vehicle through which manhood status is obtained.

Hookup Culture

A narrative associated with 'manhood' is sexuality and the ability to have multiple partners, contemporarily through non-committal sexual acts with someone who is not a romantic partner and is characterized by a "divorce between one's sexual activity and one's emotions" (Kelly 2012: 29). The defining feature of hookup culture is "the ability to unhook from a partner at any time" (Kelly 2012:29). Hookup culture is typically associated with young people, especially those in college, because of "freedom from adult authority, a homogenous population, and residential density. Students are drawn to partying and hooking up because they satisfy developmentally specific desires for belonging, self-exploration and definition, and general meaning making" (Arnold 2010). So while hookup culture directly relates to 'manhood,' all students have reasons, outside of performing masculinity, to engage in the culture as well.

A continuous thread of heterosexuality runs within the sexual discourse that creates and reifies masculine identity, normative male bonding, and narratives surrounding hookup culture. Narratives of sexual experiences with or feelings toward women are a principle way male bonding occurs within fraternities. Sweeney (2013) explains, "men's stories are full of collective rituals of heterosexuality" (Sweeney 2014: 812). Of course, hookup culture is not solely for heterosexual identified people, but the dominant narrative amongst men is heterosexual.

Sweeney explores how men use that narrative to maintain their position of power: “the impact of heterosexual hookups because the gender differences in these situations create a distinct interaction that men, far more than women, are in a position to exploit to a dominating advantage” (Currier 2013; Kelly 2012: 28). Further, and because the term holds gendered ambiguity¹⁰, men use “hookups” as a way to “imply an encounter was more sexual than it actually was” (Monto and Carey 2014: 614), furthering their ‘sexual prowess.’ Whereas women use the term to cast doubt upon their sexual encounters and avoid sexual stigmas (Currier 2013: 719-720).

Perceptions about gender further complicate hookup culture, as the allure of the male gaze compels women to engage in hookup culture on men’s terms. Women experience and feel pressure — even if it is only a perception of pressure — to behave in a way that men would find appealing, such as dressing in a way they imagine a man will find attractive. Women place particularly high burdens upon themselves in pursuit of perfection and are expected to work towards that pursuit in place of a career (Kelly 2012: 30). In addition, while at parties and in settings that emphasize homonormativity,¹¹ like Greek houses, some women engage in heteroflexibility, or behaviors associated with same-sex attraction (erotic dancing with other cis

¹⁰ Definition of “gendered ambiguity:” “...when individuals use the term ‘hookup’ to describe their sexual activities rather than give details about their sexual activities as an impression management strategy to protect their sexual and social identities” (Currier 2013), which differ based upon gender identity.

¹¹ In their opinion editorial, Buffy Flores (2017) defines homonormativity as “a set of rules used to decide which people in the queer community are the best. Homonormativity... encourages heterosexual mimicking.”

women; kissing other cis women) to gain masculine attention or to facilitate a hookup.

The male gaze that supports the aforementioned behaviors also places parameters on what constitutes a ‘good girl,’ including whiteness, low “body count” (number of sexual partners), thinness, and non-authoritative. This labeling is a double standard born from unequal power relations. These standards are also in accordance with traditional gender roles, such as men being assertive and dominant while women stay submissive and non-confrontational. Emphasized and idealized forms of femininity, which young sorority women may feel they *need* to perform, does not allow space for promiscuity, and thus “the women walked a fine line between ‘enough’ and ‘too much’ hooking up and displayed a level of sexual compliance by downplaying their own sexual pleasures and desires in hookups” (Currier 2013). Sexual double standards can be paralyzing and confusing for women to navigate; especially for women of color, who must also balance respectability politics¹².

Double standards are prominent within hookup culture. For men, sexual promiscuity is rewarded. For women, sexual promiscuity lands them the label of “slut,” thus making them less desirable. Even within sororities, that promote themselves as organizations that bind women together, there are unspoken understandings of those who are “sluts” and those who are not (Kelly 2012: 42). Within fraternities, it is widely known which people have hooked up. There are some women who are considered “sluts” within certain fraternities, oftentimes announced at

¹² Definition of “respectability politics:” the set of beliefs holding that conformity to socially acceptable or mainstream standards of appearance and behavior will protect a member of a marginalized or minority group from prejudices and systemic injustices (*Dictionary.com*).

chapter meetings (Kelly 2012: 41). In fact, "women should not hookup with men who know each other... fraternity brothers sometimes hooked up with the same women, but that such women easily gained reputations as 'easy' and promiscuous" (Sweeney 2011: 9). Furthermore, women must ration their desire, or deny its existence completely: "it's just not as acceptable for the girl to want it as much. The man, he's got to initiate something, but she's not going to say no... ' men could engage [promiscuous] women sexually, but only 'if they're desperate. Guys who can't get any better, I guess' " (Sweeney 2011: 9). However, the expectation placed on men to initiate sex and women to passively receive sex is just one component of the broader normative, heterosexual script for engaging in sex.

Social scripts, as defined by Berntson et al.'s (2013) study, helps further illuminate the role of gender within sexual interactions. Scripting theory, as it is called, "views sexual behavior as guided by sexual scripts, sets of culturally constructed social norms internalized through socialization and modified in interpersonal interactions... hooking up is commonly believed to be the dominant sexual script on college campuses" (Berntson et al. 2013: 150). Scripting theory connects research on college hookups with a common thread that includes shared experiences resulting from the social norms of sexuality and intoxication. Berntson et al. (2013) find that recreational scripts, common among college students, lead to higher alcohol consumption and increased propensity for perception of peer sexuality activity to be linked to one's own (Berntson et al. 2013: 150). Penetrative sex is central to masculinity maintenance.

Sexuality and Greek Culture

College is often seen as a time for sexual exploration and, subsequently, the pressure to have sex looms over students' social lives. Heteronormativity pervades fraternity culture at DePauw, constructing the most desirable expression of manhood as one that is cis and straight. Therefore, heterosexual sex functions as a reification of hegemonic manhood.

College students consistently overestimate both their peers' acceptance of and participation in sexual activities (Berntson et al. 2013: 161; Barriger and Velez-Blasini 2013; Chia and Gunther 2006; Holman and Sillars 2011; Lambert et al. 2003). Additionally, college students assume their peers approve of and enjoy hooking up and casual sex, but studies show that they may participate in hookup culture reluctantly (Berntson et al. 2013: 161; Lambert et al. 2003; Heldman and Wade 2010). Sex factors into a college's social scene not only in the form of actual hookups, but desire and potential as well (Currier 2013: 712). In other words, there is a dual pressure between the idea that 'sometimes people hookup' and that 'everyone is looking to hookup.' Perceptions of pressure to engage in casual sex frequently influence the interpersonal sexual script in the college context. Cultural scripts "provide a set of general rules for sexual behavior that include what and how many partners are appropriate, what acts are appropriate, who should perform the acts, and even how one should feel about sex" (Laumann et al. 1994; Mahay et al. 2001). These scripts become further complicated by gender.

For men, sex is part of performing masculinity. Having sex with women is a reinforcement of masculine prowess amongst peers. Men share their sexual experiences with

others — particularly their fraternity brothers — as a way to perform masculinity. For example, it is common knowledge that DePauw’s Sigma Chi and Beta share stories of the weekend’s hookups at chapter meetings. Research shows that perceptions of close friends' sexual behavior will have greater impact on sexual scripts than perceptions of general campus norms (Berntson 2014), which directly relates to Greek life, due to the fact that “behaviors related to partying and hooking up serve as the site and material for interactional processes of meaning making and masculine identity construction” (Sweeney 2014: 818). It is mostly privileged fraternity men who engage in partying and risky behaviors. Similarly, Currier (2013) explains, “men have a hyper-focus on heterosexual activity and bonding with other men” (Currier 2013: 705). Therefore, recounting their sexual endeavors is a way of making friends. Finally, “the connections made in mainstream fraternities seem based more on drinking and how you talk about women” (Sweeney 2014: 816). For fraternity men, there is a notion of pressure to hookup if single or else they experience social ostracization or lack of self-worth (Kelly 2012).

Societal inequality also contributes to and complicates societal expectations of sex. Berntson et al. (2013) explain, “gender, race, alcohol consumption, and perceptions of whether close friends are having hookups are significant predictors of both sexual intercourse and friends with benefits hookups” (Berntson et al. 2013: 161). Notably, sex is mostly defined as over when the man climaxes, with no consideration about women’s pleasure (Currier 2013: 717). Consequently, penetration and ejaculation are socially valuable markers of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is evident in the active super-heteronormativity expected of men, and in

how men's descriptions and interpretations of hookups often revolve around their male friendships and desires to impress others or manage their perceptions of others' views of their 'manhood' (Currier 2013).

Racial Differences

Considering racialization within this study alters previous conversations on Greek life and the production of 'manhood,' narratives associated with sexuality, alcohol consumption, space, and participation within hookup culture. As outlined in the reference section, there are three councils under which fraternities are governed: the National PanHellenic council (hereafter NPHC), a co-ed historically black council, the Multicultural Greek Council (hereafter MGC), a co-ed historically Latinx/Multicultural council, and the Interfraternity Council (hereafter IFC), a men-only historically white council. At DePauw, there are two NPHC fraternities, one MGC fraternity, and nine IFC fraternities. The IFC fraternities are easily recognizable due to their large houses that make their Greek letters apparent — these are also the houses that have greater amounts of alcohol, throw more parties, and are idealized fraternity spaces. Members of NPHC and MGC fraternities, those largely of color, must live in student housing, which is subject to DePauw rules. IFC fraternities are not subject to these rules because IFC fraternity houses are owned by each chapter's nationals (and are not considered university housing), so DePauw Public Safety cannot regulate IFC fraternity parties the way it can NPHC and MGC parties. DePauw Administration has limited parties in NPHC and MGC fraternities by capping the amount of people allowed in student housing at one time (30), which, when coupled with the fact

that DePauw Public Safety is known to shut down the already infrequent NPHC and MGC parties due to “noise complaints,” increases the reputation of IFC fraternities and maintains their ability to define party culture.

In his 2014 study, Sweeney examines relationships between drinking and casual sex among a group of class and race-diverse fraternity men. Sweeney (2014) found that “more privileged men draw on age and gender to construct college as a time to let loose, indulge, and explore ‘college hedonism’ ” while “men from disadvantaged backgrounds express greater ambivalence toward partying” and tend to describe college as a time to mature (Sweeney 2014: 817). Thus, the difference in attitudes toward the college experience between white men and men of color points to an “inversion” of the markers of masculinity (Sweeney 2014: 814). Placing Sweeney’s (2014) findings in context with Greek life shows the absolute domination of white men’s fraternity culture at DePauw in numbers, financial ability, and power over social life. Sweeney (2014) explains how white fraternity men are hyper visible because of their control of the party scene (Sweeney 2014) due to their large houses, freedom from DePauw policing, and financial ability to provide alcohol:

Predominantly white fraternities hosted the vast majority of the gatherings that comprised this scene, controlling timing, organization, and themes. Gatherings ranged from small, impromptu drinking groups to highly organized events involving hundreds of guests, staging and decoration, and hired bands.

Common party discourse aligns privileged white fraternity men with an “exalted image of heterosexual playboy fraternity guy” that Sweeney (2014) describes simply as “booze, boobs, and brothers” (Sweeney 2014: 811).

Men of color perform sexuality less for their other brothers. In other words, men of color do not talk about sex as publicly or openly as white men and thus do not perform their masculinity through sex to the same extent as white men (Sweeney 2014: 814), though white men are not more likely to have casual sex or friends with benefits (Berntson et al. 2013). Taken together, this research suggests that men of color are not less sexually active than their white men peers, but are less likely to socially construct sex as a way to reaffirm their manhood.

Men of color and other men that Sweeney (2014) describes as “upwardly mobile” (less privileged men) draw on “ideas of maturity and social responsibility to depict college partying as foolish and self-indulgent” (Sweeney 2014: 813). This may be partially due to black students having to “carefully guard their collective reputations -- to assert public identities as serious, academic, and committed -- and partying too heavily could undercut these managed impressions," (814) as three participants stated. Additionally, black students hookup less on campuses where they are the minority because “there is little interest from whites and blacks in pursuing sexual partners of another race” (Kelly 2012).

Sweeney (2011) suggests it "would be wise to identify examples of when bonding occurs without sexism and misogyny" (Sweeney 2011: 12). At DePauw, this hypothetical suggestion would take place in IFC fraternities because of their white majority and reproduction of patriarchal structures that is not present in other councils. When the notion that men are pressured to have sex to confirm their masculinity is combined with the fact that women adhere to notions of emphasized femininity such as niceness and submissiveness, the potential for

assault becomes clear. It is within this space that I situate this project and ask, does sorority membership influence perceptions of safety?

Alcohol's Influence

In addition to sexual exploration, college is notoriously regarded as a time for students to experiment with alcohol. Greek life is especially associated with heavy alcohol consumption, to the point of getting drunk or 'lit.' In fact, those who engage in binge drinking have a higher likelihood of becoming the victim of drugging¹³ compared to those who do not, regardless of Greek membership. However, members of a Greek sorority are victims of drugging at higher rates compared to those who are not (Lasky et al. 2014). Ultimately, "parties hosted by fraternity groups set the occasion for the highest levels of intoxication found on college campuses" (Glindemann & Geller 2003), making women who enter these areas susceptible to over-intoxication, which in turn makes them comparatively more vulnerable to sexual assault.

Alcohol contributes to hookup culture because of its inhibitory factors and their influence on decision making. Glindemann & Geller's (2003) find that men fear sudden rejection in a hookup and use alcohol to soften the blow and/or make women more apt to agree (Glindemann & Geller 2003: 34). The authors also find that men feel they are entitled to sexual gratification (Glindemann & Geller 2003: 41), which is exacerbated by the fact that DePauw women might

¹³ Refers to date rape drugs. Definition of date-rape drug: a drug (such as GHB or ketamine) placed secretly usually in the drink or food of a potential victim to induce a state (such as confusion, physical weakness, or unconsciousness) that makes the victim vulnerable (Merriam-Webster).

feel they “owe” men for being in their home and drinking alcohol paid for by the men. Sweeney (2011) explains how "men-controlled women's access to party space and alcohol while women were held to feminine norms of niceness" (3). At the same time, sorority women are most likely new to drinking (Lasky et al. 2014: 185), which presents risks for over-intoxication due to these students not being familiar with alcohol’s effect on their bodies. DePauw students’ drinking habits have been the subject of scrutiny, due to multiple hospitalizations for high Blood Alcohol Contents¹⁴ (BACs). Combined with the fact that there exists higher percentages of drugging victimization for students who spent at least one day binge drinking in the last month compared to those who did not engage in binge drinking (Lasky et al. 2014), DePauw women are particularly at risk for sexual assault.

While sorority women are most at risk for being assaulted, fraternity men are likely to be the perpetrators. In fact, "fraternity members may be at greater risk¹⁵ of perpetrating crimes against others due to the significant positive relationship between heavy drinking and perpetration, particularly for crimes against women due to the negative attitudes toward women that may be promulgated and reinforced within the fraternity culture" (Lasky et al. 2014: 177).

¹⁴ DePauw student Estefanie Solis (2018) reports, “the average BAC has dropped from 0.17 percent [in fall 2017] to 0.10 percent [in fall 2018], which is a 41 percent decrease. No students have had a BAC over 0.30 percent [during the first semester of the 2018-2019 school year] as opposed to [the first semester of the 2017-2018 school year] where we had six students with BAC’s higher than that,” said Julia Sutherlin, assistant dean to Campus Life and director of the Office of Alcohol Initiatives.

¹⁵ I disagree with Lasky et al.’s (2014) language of fraternity members being “at risk” of committing crimes against women because it effectively victimizes the population prone to perpetrating assault.

There is also a notion that fraternity men “have each other’s backs” in their own home (Sweeney 2011), which can prevent men from being held accountable for their sexual misconduct.

Fraternities have become environments where maltreatment of women is enforced, where alcohol consumption is prominent, and therefore where assault against women goes unpunished.

Panhellenic sororities engage in self-regulation by adhering to restrictions imposed upon them by their national governing bodies. The rules imposed on Panhellenic chapters from their nationals prevent members from having men in the chapter house at night (hours vary by chapter) as well as rules prohibiting alcohol on property regardless of the members’ age (Berntson et al. 2013). In an editorial, McTigue (2019) explains, “by disallowing alcohol on Panhellenic property, Panhellenic is attempting to hold Greek women to a higher standard. Unfortunately, instead of staying inside their houses and staying sober, this rule only makes it more likely that Panhellenic women will drink elsewhere.” Panhellenic drinking and guest rules push women to party in heteromale spaces where intoxication threatens women’s safety. This structure implicitly excludes sorority women from having parties or alcohol in their homes and thus opens a space for fraternity men to influence DePauw social life, norms surrounding party culture, drinking, and even hookup culture. Consequently, Panhellenic sorority members self-regulate and reify IFC fraternity social power.

“Danger Spots” and Perceptions of Safety

The aforementioned research has shown fraternities to be dangerous places for women, though whether or not people view certain places as dangerous differs. Menning (2009)

dedicates his research to “danger spots,” places that evoke fear and avoidance in the psyche. One of his major findings was that gender plays a key role in determining a person’s fear spots (Menning 2009: 1715). The privilege that protects aggressive masculine action is centered at fraternities, which can be perceived as threatening. Research on fraternities aligns with Sweeney’s (2011) concept of fear spots, given that “the environmental context (i.e. the fraternity house and interpersonal interactions) is a critical variable, because numbers of fraternities also consumed more alcohol at fraternity parties than private parties” (Glindemann & Geller 2003: 662). Alcohol’s ability to lower inhibition and defense coupled with potential for masculine aggression creates a potentially threatening environment for women.

Fraternities are oftentimes one such fear spot in the minds of college women. Risks to safety are expected to be both higher and gender specific at fraternity parties because “excessive alcohol consumption and misogyny are deeply ingrained in the cultures of many fraternities and underpin social interactions in the Greek system” (Menning 2009: 1715). Regardless, women still frequent these parties. Sweeney (2011) begins to explain that phenomenon, explaining “women feel pushed into the fraternity driven party scene because few other venues exist for having fun and meeting men” (Sweeney 2011: 12). Women feel “pushed” since they know those spaces are dangerous and yet feel as though they have no viable alternative; especially those who live in Panhellenic chapter housing, which prohibits alcohol. DePauw’s small size exacerbates pressure to attend threatening parties because there are few options for partying. And with only one major bar on campus, options for recreational drinking and socializing are largely

constrained to fraternity parties.

The Study: Origin Stories

Every sorority website publishes its mission statement and the reason for its founding. Regardless of council, almost every sorority mission statement is similar: it includes something about scholarship, friendship, and making their members better people. I will refer to these tropes as “typical” of sorority mission statements. Organizations in MGC and NPHC contain the typical tropes, but include values outside of the typical that tend to revolve around civic duty and championing diversity.

The mission statements of Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Sigma Lambda Gamma Sorority, Inc., and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. stand apart from the rest in that they contain language referencing their position as organizations founded for women of color. Omega Phi Beta, Inc.’s mission statement states: “The purpose of Omega Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated is to Serve and Educate people of diverse backgrounds through sisterhood, leadership, and guidance. As positive role models, we promote unity of all cultures, focus on the empowerment of our gender and raise the standards of excellence in our academic, social, and personal endeavors” (Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated., n.d.). Through reading its mission statement, it becomes apparent this organization values diversity of background and culture. The statement includes the same values that every other sorority includes in their statements, but adds a new facet of commitment to diversity that no Panhellenic chapters have in their mission

statements. Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., is part of MGC, and many other organizations in MGC also indicate their commitment to diversity in their mission statements.

Mission statements for organizations in NPHC have commonalities with those in MGC. Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.'s mission statement states: "To foster the ideas of service, charity, scholarship, civil and cultural endeavors, sisterhood and finer womanhood. These ideals are reflected in the sorority's national program for which its members and auxiliary groups provide voluntary service to staff, community outreach programs, fund scholarships, support organized charities, and promote legislation for social and civic change" (Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated, n.d.). Again, beyond the common tropes, there exists an emphasis on "social and civic change" that reflects a consciousness of diversity of background and experience. Additionally, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.'s mission statement places a heavy emphasis on philanthropy, which is supposed to be a core tenet of every Greek organization in existence, regardless of council or gender.

None of the mission statements for Panhellenic sororities at DePauw contain any mention outside of the typical tenets of sororities. For example, the mission statement of Kappa Alpha Theta — the first fraternity for women on college campuses — states: "Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, Kappa Alpha Theta exists to nurture each member throughout her college and alumnae experience and to offer a lifelong opportunity for social, intellectual, and moral growth as she meets the higher and broader demands of mature life" (Kappa Alpha Theta, n.d.). The other Panhellenic organizations at DePauw have mission statements that convey the same

message with slightly different phrasing. Panhellenic sororities seem to place full emphasis on the growth of the individual, while organizations in MGC and NPHC expand their commitment to personal development to the community around them and to women who share their identity. Panhellenic organizations do not reflect on diversity or the outside community in their mission statements the way organizations in MGC and NPHC do.

To further investigate what I supposed to be a disconnect in values between MGC, NPHC, and Panhellenic sororities, I studied the foundational statements of each organization at DePauw. Foundational statements are statements published on each organization's website that state the purpose and intent of their founding. The same organizations whose mission statements I analyzed will also be used as examples for their findings:

Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated was founded on March 15, 1989 at the University at Albany, State University of New York. The historical marginalization of women, particularly women of color, has had a significant impact on the process by which multicultural, multi-ethnic and multiracial women ascertain educational, economic, social and political capital in American society. In response to this reality, seventeen women from various racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds synthesized their passion, commitment and motivation. They envisioned an organization that would unify women of color who were dedicated to correcting the injustices that have and continue to affect our communities. As the first Latina-oriented organization in the history of the University at Albany, our seventeen founders struggled to establish our organization, our purpose and most importantly, a precedent (Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., n.d.).

— Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. was founded January 16, 1920, at Howard University, Washington, D.C. The Klan was very active during this period and the Harlem Renaissance was acknowledged as the first important movement of Black artists and writers in the U.S. This same year the Volstead Act became effective heralding the start of Prohibition and Tennessee delivered the crucial 36th ratification for the final adoption of the 19th

amendment giving women the right to vote. The worst and longest economic recession to hit the U.S. would define the end of the decade-The Great Depression. It was within this environment that five coeds envisioned a sorority which would directly affect positive change, chart a course of action for the 1920s and beyond, raise consciousness of their people, encourage the highest standards of scholastic achievement, and foster a greater sense of unity among its members. These women believed that sorority elitism and socializing overshadowed the real mission for progressive organizations and failed to address fully the societal mores, ills, prejudices, and poverty affecting humanity in general and the black community in particular (Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., n.d.).

— Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Kappa Alpha Theta was founded at Asbury University (now DePauw University) in Greencastle, Indiana on January 27, 1870, making it the first Greek letter fraternity for women. (The word "sorority" was not coined until after Kappa Alpha Theta was founded.) Bettie Locke Hamilton was one of the first women admitted to Asbury in 1867, and she believed that uniting with other female students in pursuit of similar goals would greatly enrich their college experience. Bettie was friends with several Phi Gamma Deltas, and when one of them asked her to wear his pin as a symbol of friendship with the fraternity, she said that she would not unless she could be initiated into the fraternity. Since that was not possible as she was female, she decided that she would start

her own fraternity instead (Kappa Alpha Theta, n.d.).

— Kappa Alpha Theta

A common thread between the founding for these three sororities, each from a different council, is that they were formed to create a space for women where there was not one. The difference lies in which women are being included in the organization.

For reference, Kappa Alpha Theta was founded as an organization for “women” with the goal of “uniting with other female students” (Kappa Alpha Theta, n.d.) in 1870. However, the

first black woman to earn a bachelor's degree in the entire country graduated only eight years before Theta was founded. There were no black women at DePauw when Theta was founded, so in its foundational statement, "women" should contain an asterisk as it only included white women.

In contrast, both Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. and Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. explicitly mention their foundations as carving out space for women of color where there was not one previously. For example, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. was founded in the 1920's, when the Ku Klux Klan was heavily active, and the Harlem Renaissance was opening space for Black artists and writers. The sociopolitical context surrounding Zeta's founding was clearly central in the context of the organization's inception due to its explicit mention in the organization's history. Because there was animosity toward Black Americans at the time of its founding, Zeta's creation opened a space of empowerment for the first generation of Black women in college, as did the other sororities in NPHC. Additionally, Zeta was founded in opposition to existing "sorority elitism and socializing" that "overshadowed the real mission for progressive organizations and failed to address fully the societal mores, ills, prejudices, and poverty affecting humanity in general and the black community in particular" (Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., n.d.). The founders of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. were conscious of the injustice Black folks were facing in America and made sure to prioritize socio-political justice when deciding the purpose of their organization. In comparison, Panhellenic organizations were negligent of their privileged status

and neglected to acknowledge the injustice facing women around them in the way organizations in NPHC and MGC did.

Another difference is the way in which these organizations were established. In the story of Theta's founding, white men are central. Bettie Locke's journey to creating her organization was reliant on the men of Phi Gamma Delta and was based off their fraternity. While she was creating a space for white women where there was not one, she based her organization off of the IFC fraternity structure. Other Panhellenic sororities have similar inceptions, such as Alpha Chi Omega, whose founders received assistance from the Dean of the Music School and the men of Beta Theta Pi fraternity.

Though the reliance on men is not a direct correlation nor would it cause sorority women one hundred years later to cater to fraternity men, the co-construction and mutually constitutive elements of gender and sexuality remain implicit within Greek structures. What is different perhaps is that woven throughout sorority mission statements is an idea of care and support. This support and an attempt to a safe space for women may extend to care and protection while in potentially dangerous or risky situations, or fraternity parties.

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

To ascertain if perceptions of protection followed sorority women outside of their homes and into potentially dangerous spaces, I conducted a mixed methods study. In addition the collective knowledge gained from every source that contributed to this study, Hughes et al.

(2016) informed my methodology and data sections. Lasky et al. (2014), Glindemann & Geller (2003), and Sweeney (2011) were central to discussion on party culture and Greek culture.

Both qualitative and quantitative data make up this multimodal study. The first step in data collection was a survey which produced both qualitative and quantitative data; the second half consisted of ethnographic interviews, providing qualitative data. My findings are presented in three sections: survey results, interview results, and a contextualization of common findings from both.

The nature of Greek life situated a majority of data collection within a compulsory heteronormative space. In fact, a majority of this thesis exists within the gender binary, as much scholarship does. Future research should focus on gender and sexuality in the context of majority white Greek organizations. As noted throughout the study, the language of Greek life (ie. fraternity and sorority, “date” parties, etc.) is based in the assumption that all those engaging are one of only two genders and identify heterosexually, effectively closing off the space for those who do not live within these parameters. Unfortunately, the findings of this study have the potential to reinforce norms of fraternity culture through content and subject matter. Despite the exclusionary language, some queer-identified people do engage in Greek life. For example, my participant Bonnie identifies as bisexual but explained that she passes as heterosexual and thus feels accepted in her sorority. Since there is evidence of Greek values and language changing over time, future research could impact gendered and sexual exclusion in Greek life.

Research Design

This study consists of survey data and interviews with DePauw sorority affiliated women. I chose to begin data collection by administering an online survey that broadly interrogated large themes found in my Literature Review. The inclusion of open-ended survey questions allowed for nuance that informed the second step of my data collection: interviews. Interviews were conducted after the survey closed; therefore, the interviews serve as an in-depth expansion upon survey findings. Participants were asked to share their perceptions of danger within party and hookup culture at DePauw University. Since DePauw has a strong party culture with a majority of parties occurring at fraternities, my target population was women between the ages of 18-22 who are [1] statistically more likely to experience the dangers of party and hookup culture and [2] those who participate in the Greek system (over 70% of the campus is Greek).

Survey

Survey responses quantify data and create a general picture of women's perceptions toward safety within party and hookup culture, while interviews add depth to themes that arise from the surveys (Hesse-Biber 2013; Miner and Jayaratne 2013). This study aims to explore perceptions of safety among women at DePauw, with emphasis on sorority membership and cohorts of safety, so the criteria for this study — adapted from Lewis (2013) — were as follows: [1] DePauw University student, [2] self-identified woman, [3] 18 years of age or older, [4] affiliated with a Greek organization. For the first portion of this study I conducted a survey

(n=22) with self-identified women ranging in age from 18-22. To gain participants, I sent a Google form link to presidents of every sorority on DePauw's campus, which were then forwarded to members via email or posted in a chapter forum.

Interviews

The last page of the survey included an option for participants to volunteer to participate in an in-depth interview. Potential interviewees were asked to email me if they were interested in participation. Because the survey was anonymous, I cannot state how many women that were interviewed also completed the survey. I conducted interviews (n=3) starting one week after the survey was sent; each interview lasted approximately one hour. In addition to interviews, participants completed a demographic questionnaire including age, gender identification, race, ethnicity, and school grade.

I took measures to establish an ethics of care with interview participants. Participants were able to select the space in which we held the interview to aid in their perceptions of comfort and safety. Interviews began with the consent form procedure. After completing the form, participants indicated their chosen pseudonym and I began recording. I encouraged each woman to choose their pseudonym prior to the interview to increase their perception of control. I casually conversed with participants before beginning the interviews in order to diminish the impact power differences resulting from my role as a researcher might have on the interview. In addition, I conducted the interview as a conversation to increase participants' comfortability. Participants were reminded that they could skip any questions or stop at any time. After I

finished conducting the interview, I asked participants if they would like to add anything else to make their narrative complete.

In total, three women were interviewed for approximately one-hour. Requirements to participate in interviews included: [1] self-identified woman, [2] sorority affiliated (any council), [3] over 18 years old. All three interview participants were self-identified cisgender women ranging in age from 19-22 years old. Amber and Bonnie, 2/3 of the participants, are members of Panhellenic sororities and identify as white cisgender women. The last interviewee, Patricia, self-identifies as Latina and is a member of a MGC.

FINDINGS

I begin this section with a general discussion of survey findings followed by interview findings and concluded with a discussion of prominent themes between the two. The findings, more complex than anticipated, revolved around threat perception of party culture and internalized protection and empowerment with perception of Greek values as a moderating factor.

Survey Findings

The survey had eight items that included questions on basic demographic info, perceptions of their organization's mission statement, perceptions of safety, and perceptions of party culture.¹⁶ Survey results were complex — they provided themes and narratives, but

¹⁶ For a detailed list please see appendix A.

anonymity prevented mapping respondent identity with race, council, and other identifiers that could influence responses. I begin this section with a discussion of chapter involvement, engagement with party culture, and location where participants ‘party.’ When asked to rate their level of commitment to their chapter from 1 to 10, with 10 being most committed, respondents varied with a mean level of 5.25. When asked where they typically go to party, 95% of respondents indicated that they party at IFC property. Furthermore, 43% exclusively party at IFC property and nowhere else. 19% of people reported partying at their sorority house, which is an anomaly since Panhellenic self-regulation prohibits women from drinking in their chapter houses. This likely indicates participation by women of color, though it could also be resistance by Panhellenic women against sexist rules. Only 10% of participants partied at MGC or NPHC houses, respectively. The small number alludes to both the smaller party sizes at these houses as a result of university restrictions and a lack of attendance by majority white organizations.

Eighty-one percent of respondents are familiar with their mission statement and foundational statements while 19% are “somewhat” familiar. Fifty-two percent said their current experience aligns with the one described in their values; four said no; and six said mostly. Many expressed becoming a better version of themselves and having sisters there for them as a marker of their values being upheld. Inconsistency between values and lived experience occurs in spaces like philanthropy, which some respondents claim is “not actually enacted.” Nineteen percent mentioned the predominantly white structure of Panhellenic and how and that seems to be against values of diversity and inclusion. Finally, some respondents reported that their

nationals do not align with the values of the members of their specific chapter. These findings reflect the self-regulation that goes on within Panhellenic organizations. Organization's nationals make the rules about trans-inclusion, drinking, and when members of the opposite sex may be allowed in the house.

Findings from the survey are organized into the three following sections: MGC and NPHC distinction, threat perception, and internalized protection.

MGC and NPHC distinction.

MGC and NPHC were perceived very similarly throughout data collection and are thus coupled together in discussion. Parties at MGC or NPHC chapters were reported as substantially less threatening than other parties. In these spaces, nineteen percent of respondents indicated they felt less pressure to get drunk and reported lower levels of intoxication. One respondent noted that the focus, rather than on 'getting drunk,' was on dancing and talking, and included "different vibes." Participants, regardless of whether or not they had attended a MGC or NPHC party before, pointed to those parties having a more relaxed atmosphere compared to IFC parties. Within this relaxed space, participants shared that they felt less pressure to "find a guy" or to "look nice"—performances of emphasized femininity—than at IFC parties.

Additionally, there were mentions of more diversity at MGC and NPHC parties than anywhere else on campus. One respondent describes the divide between IFC versus MGC and NPHC parties saying:

There is an obvious but unspoken divide (i.e. when independent/non-IFC students show up to an IFC event or vice versa, there are sometimes altercations/drama involved/the need to get the member who invited them over to let them in) that doesn't typically occur otherwise.

This participant is speaking to racial and ethnic divides amongst Greek membership. Specifically, that white, feminine-presenting (and attractive) Panhellenic members are often welcomed to IFC parties, even if there is a list of guests. Students of color and LGBTQIA+ students on the other hand, have historically been excluded (sometimes forcibly) from these white, heteronormative spaces and thusly face apprehension when entering an IFC fraternity without the presence of a chapter member. Although the earlier statistic regarding attendance at MGC and NPHC was small for the overall population, it should be noted that 63% of respondents had no response. The lack of response may result from ignorance or lack of knowledge by the majority white student body and greek system of anything outside IFC and Panhellenic culture, or from a lack of participation in parties outside of the IFC structure. The majority of respondents, either through reporting that they had never been to a MGC or NPHC party directly or through non-response, indicated they they had no knowledge of MGC or NPHC. Considering that, along with the 19% of respondents who indicated that MGC and NPHC parties had a different or more relaxed ‘vibe’ than IFC parties, this section posites that ‘perceptions of threat’ exist within the culture of white, IFC Greek spaces.

Threat perception.

When recalling their perception of safety before and after joining a sorority, the majority of women reported gaining an increased network of women who would ‘look out for them.’ Fifty-nine percent of respondents agreed, with one participant describing their perception of gained safety as “security.” She said, “I think I gained security because there is a larger network

of women that know who I am and feel obligated to look out for me regardless of how well they know me.” Some reported that their sorority has a culture or expectation that their members will look out for each other in this way. As one respondent explains:

Now, being part of a sorority, I feel like I have a lot more people looking out for me, and intrinsically more people that I know at parties. Freshman year I spent a lot more time having to focus on keeping myself safe because I was the only one truly looking out for myself.

Interestingly, most responses indicated that finding friends as a means of remaining safe while engaging in party culture, which is part of the DePauw experience, existed before *and* came with sorority membership. As one respondent wrote, “before I joined a sorority I felt like I could go to any group of girls, regardless of affiliation, and find sanctuary. I think women on this campus know the danger because we interact with it every day, and watch out for each other because of that.” The caveat, “before I joined a sorority,” might even imply that this woman feels a decreased level of security since joining a sorority, perhaps because the exclusionary nature of sororities limits interactions between women who do not belong to the same chapter.

As expected, some potential discrepancies or differences exist amongst sorority women’s experiences with protection. For instance, one participant indicated that her level of protection increased with membership, but that her experience was unique to her particular chapter and not Panhellenic as a whole, saying, “YES, I would argue that my sorority especially does a great job watching out for myself and other members at parties AS WELL AS members of other houses that are VERY OFTEN left behind by their own sorority sisters/“friends.”” While this woman believes she has gained safety through membership within her sorority, she does not believe her

experience of safety extends to women in other chapters. In fact, she goes so far as to state that the members of her sorority not only look out for themselves, but the safety of women in other chapters who get “left behind” by members of their own sorority.

The different experiences are worth noting, as 23% reported ‘no difference’ in safety perception after joining their chapter. The respondent’s specific sorority, personality, or engagement with the sorority could explain the differences between respondents’ perceptions of safety. Further, some respondents may have had stronger friend groups or had greater levels of support before joining a sorority. Finally, some may have had negative experiences that caused their perception of safety to decrease.

Internalized Protection.

Finding friends: the overwhelming narrative that respondents noted when asked how they might find protection when they felt threatened while partying. Many also mentioned leaving the situation or “opting out” (not attending parties) as their response. One respondent explained:

I feel like we all are aware of the dangers that men, especially intoxicated men, pose to us at parties. While our drunkenness does not excuse aggressive or creepy behavior from men, we know that us being drunk puts us at higher risk. If a sister is very drunk and isn't making great decisions or realistic perceptions of what is going on, we intervene to remove her from the situation.

When specifically asked if their sisters watch out for them at parties, 95% said yes. More specifically, 45% reported their sister has taken them home or removed them from a party or situation where they felt threatened. Other common defenses included staying together and making sure that the people they came with were not too drunk, checking in before a friend left

with a partner, staying together, and communicating throughout the duration of the party via cell phone (see Figure 3).

Interview Findings

Interview questions were mainly designed to assess sorority protection measures against party culture, differences in engagement with party culture between MGC and NPHC versus IFC and Panhellenic, a general party culture assessment.¹⁷ Aside from their centrality to the subject matter of this study, these themes emerged in survey data as areas worthy of more exploration. Narratives in interview findings are reflective of each individual's experience and are not intended to homogenize experience.

All three women interviewed indicated strong levels of investment and dedication to their respective chapters and regular engagement with party culture. Interestingly, they also noted that they partied at a host of different places, which is a departure from survey data that indicated most white women exclusively party at IFC. Finally, all participants indicated that they participate in multiple sorority-related events per week, demonstrating a high level of commitment to their chapters, which could also be a motivating factor for participation in this research as well as cause some of their perspective to differ from members who are less engaged with their chapters.

Findings from the interviews are organized into the three following sections: MGC and NPHC distinction, IFC culture and over-intoxication, and internalized protection.

¹⁷ For a detailed list, see Appendix B.

MGC and NPHC distinction.

As my data collection progressed, the differences between chapters in MGC and NPHC versus those in IFC and Panhellenic became increasingly stark. Sororities in MGC or NPHC are not prohibited from having parties by their nationals like the Panhellenic sororities are. Survey data revealed perceptions of MGC and NPHC chapters having parties that emphasize dancing and talking with an overall more “chill vibe” in comparison with parties at IFC chapters.

Housing is central to inequalities that affect Greek organizations that historically serve people of color. Bonnie explains, “we have a very segregated campus, um, geographically and just socially. I mean like, geographically in terms of the student housing that historically houses students of color is kinda spread out, ‘cause it’s marginalized to be honest, and it’s kinda an afterthought.” Patricia adds:

“So, as I’m aware, um, frat houses are private property, yeah? And so it’s easier for them to throw parties, throw socials, without getting in trouble. Um, MGC houses or NPHC houses are still DePauw University owned housing, so whenever we get caught for something — whether it’s a party or having too many people at our houses — we are sanctioned. Um, we are fined as well, which is completely different. We are also limited. So, those houses can house about 100 plus people. Our houses are allowed 35.”

IFC privilege is reified by DePauw administration when the de facto consequence of policy is the over policing of organizations with majority black and brown bodies, leaving those with majority white men untouched. According to Bonnie, MGC or NPHC chapters usually have parties in public spaces such as the Inn social space or the Union Building, where alcohol is not allowed.

Therefore, MGC and NPHC chapters are literally barred from contributing to DePauw student drinking yet are the ones who experience party regulation the most.

The word “community” was continually used in regard to MGC and NPHC chapters and party attendees, most of whom are people of color and not Greek affiliated. Patricia said, “because our community is constantly being targeted, or our community is constantly, like, you know in danger, it’s hard for us to put ourselves in danger.” People of color do not frequently throw parties because it puts them in danger. Their protection measure is opting out. Amber adds,

“There's also like, you're on a PWI together and there's I think more of a sense that's like, “okay, this is my kinda, like, a safe space party”... when you have to fight all day in your predominantly white spaces like, in Greencastle, Indiana, then you made it to this party where there's a bunch of people who can, for the most part, relate to those difficulties that you faced on a PWI and like, they can look out for you some, I guess.”

In the DePauw POC community, social in-grouping is not based on Greek affiliation, but is identity based. People of color express needing protection more from racism than they do from party culture threats.

All three interviewees reported having “never heard anything” about MGC or NPHC being dangerous party spaces. Yet, MGC and NPHC houses bear the brunt of a new 35 person rule the administration established as a regulation against DePauw drinking issues. Patricia describes the rule as such:

So, we went to this retreat and they were bringing up new rules, and that's when it came out... they were like “oh, new rule, the capacity is now 35 people if you live in university owned housing and you want to have a party”... When it comes to parties, we just can't have them. It becomes impossible to have that space without fearing Public Safety... If

you can't touch the fraternity houses, where most of these things are happening... how do you expect to continue changing things when you can't touch the problem?... You're touching the organizations that are not really involved, again targeting POCs or like, because fraternity live outs don't get in trouble.

Public Safety is another example of the policing of bodies of color regardless of their involvement in the problem DePauw administration is attempting to correct.

Recruitment is more values based, as will be discussed in the next section. Patricia explains, "we all take care of each other. Because, again, our intake is different. Our intake *really* is different. So, we create bonds. It's always about foundation." MGC and NPHC chapters are much more committed to their values than IFC and Panhellenic chapters are. MGC and NPHC intake is rooted in teaching values to new members, whereas IFC and Panhellenic recruitment is a three day process. Interviewees explained that if Panhellenic members took their values more seriously, some problematic aspects of Panhellenic would decrease and the organizations would become more empowering.

Amber explains, "[in MGC and NPHC] councils, there seems to be more of a focus on letting in the most high quality people that total align with your values." For example, when asked her level of commitment to her chapter, Patricia of MGC rated herself an eleven out of ten.

Panhellenic sororities were not always as problematic as they are today. In our discussion, Amber explained:

Most sororities were founded as secret societies for getting women to be able to read... if you look at the progression of time, college was for white men and then finally white wealthy women were allowed in colleges, and then finally other identities were slowly let into college once they had access to it. And so, over time when other groups were actually able to fight into college, there were definitely not spaces... [for] people of color, men of

color, and women of color; and so in the same way that Panhellenic was carved as a space for women of color to empower each other and teach each other, then NPHC was carved as a space for men and women, predominantly black; and then MGC was for predominantly Latino, Latinx descent, and multicultural identities.

IFC was founded as elitist. Panhellenic has moved toward elitism. Amber says, “IFC was founded in a very elitist way, whereas Panhellenic was founded in, though did become elitist as well and still both do harm today in their power structures and to their institutions that they are, but they also, like, Panhellenic was founded to give women a space that wasn’t given to them.” Both continue to harm populations irrespective of their founding principles. In their power structures and to their institutions that they are, but they also, like, Panhellenic was founded to give women a space that wasn’t given to them. There’s a difference between IFC and Panhellenic and some other organizations. Because versus IFC, which was founded in a pretty elitist way, though now, yes, Panhellenic and IFC are both very high privileged groups, they’re predominantly white — only women that were white were once let into them because only white women were accepted into the universities that these organizations were started upon.”

Panhellenic is an example of mostly white women siding with their racial and class privilege (or pass for that privilege). Amber explains, “I think that’s a big reason why people can say oh these other identities are more aware of the world because they were forced to be more aware of the world because even if their whole identity isn’t everything that's in like a different power dynamic at least some part of them is so you don’t have to convince them that

the power dynamic exists.” Other avenues for research should investigate how economic privilege factors into this subject.

In contrast, Patricia explains how her organization is centered in the empowerment of women of color: “your job here on campus is to bring empowerment to, for instance, for us it’s every woman, but mostly POC women, right? So like we, everywhere we go we want to give that impression and we want to continue upholding those values because it is what we do.”

Amber and Bonnie both expressed conflict of pros and cons of being a member of a Panhellenic chapter. Bonnie explains, “I think generally yes, like, I sometimes am disappointed in, like, Panhellenic as a whole for the whole philanthropy aspect of things, and service, because it’s so lacking, and like it’s my job on campus to work on those things, so like, I’ve worked with Panhellenic a lot this year and it’s just disappointing to see how much we’re lacking. I think overall I’ve gained a very great sisterhood, and the academics are fine.”

In terms of drinking culture, Amber explains her battle with Greek life: “for me i would say I was safer being in an organization because i had more people looking out for me... but I was also more likely to go out being in a Greek letter organization because that's a part of the beginning is like oh we're gonna have all these mixers and all these people and so then like drinking part of it.”

Recruitment could act as a potential site for improvement in Panhellenic organizations. Amber says, “the actions of a lot of IFC and Panhellenic organizations are very different than what our values and mission statements and purpose are, and so if we act like social clubs when

we're supposed to be these meaningful organizations. Now because of that, we act like social clubs and we advertise ourselves as social clubs, we recruit people by being social clubs.” So then, new members do not think they are committing to community service and often do not want to do it once they are full members. Panhellenic and IFC chapters are not explicitly emphasizing inclusion and diversity. One type of girl fits the mold, similar to the way stereotypes work for IFC fraternities. The typical Panhellenic sorority woman is white, cis gender, straight, and financially well-off. Amber even said a lot of women that are recruited and therefore valued by Panhellenic organizations are white straight women and that the continual valuation of their bodies creates exclusive norms surrounding *who* should be in a sorority.

Amber explained, “I have to leave my house to have those conversations,” to experience diversity of identity or perspective. In addition to aforementioned white dominance, cisgender, and heteronormativity are privileged in Panhellenic organizations. Cis heteronormativity is deeply ingrained into Panhellenic tradition. Amber reveals how cis heteronormativity is reflected through language: “people say date parties or dates and, like, everyone asks who what guy you’re bringing... if you're in [the LGBTQIA+] community, if you're queer, then maybe you don’t wanna put yourself in this predominantly heteronormative space; and so for a date party, even if you just wanna bring a friend, you're just gonna bring a guy if you're a woman.” Simple linguistic phenomena reveal how deeply structural heteronormative practices are. For many queer folx, protection is opting out of engagement with IFC party culture.

IFC culture and over-intoxication.

The review of literature revealed alcohol and drug consumption is central to fraternity culture. Throughout interview and survey data, it became clear that intoxication was central to DePauw fraternities, specifically, majority white, IFC fraternities. Amber paints a descriptive picture of drinking culture in IFC fraternities:

Even my own friends who normally will be, like, fine in other spaces, for some reason when we're in IFC spaces, is mainly the times that any of us have been unwell and, like, drank too much or like gotten into any bad situations. And I think that there's something about the fact that so many people in IFC spaces over-consume or like, make poor decisions, get incapacitated, and that's normalized in those spaces...

IFC spaces enable and normalize excessive alcohol consumption as part of the campus culture.

She continued,

But then, if we took someone that was really intoxicated or out of it into a different space that wouldn't match the culture, it wouldn't be good and we'd be like, "wow, this isn't right, we need to take them home immediately" at a much sooner point than we might feel at IFC. And so, I think that's a big thing too, like, the cultures in those different spaces, even if these individuals are the same people in both.

Their discussion notes that if one were to change the location, the behaviors would stand out.

This distinction points to the potentially accepted culture of partying and intoxication at IFC houses. It could also illuminate the need for protection discussed earlier.

Within this space, some participants noted that they or their friends felt a 'need' to get, or to be drunk to enter certain fraternities. Amber noted that sometimes women "have this mentality that they have to get so drunk to go to those places, and then also the people there

aren't really looking out for each other, themselves, or the people attending the party.” A possible explanation is that the women attending IFC parties are aware of the dangers stemming from party and rape culture, but still want to engage in partying. To navigate this complex and contradictory space, they get over-intoxicated so as to not worry so much about their safety once alcohol lowers their inhibitions. Additionally, Amber told me that it was mostly white women that attend IFC parties; therefore, another explanation for why women still attend these threatening parties could be evidence of choosing their racial privilege over the threat posed to them based on their gender identity.

While in-depth research on toxic masculinity and fraternity culture is out of the scope of this study, one interesting phenomenon emerged related to alcohol consumption and toxic masculinity that is worth further consideration in the future. Amber explained, “at IFC parties where people jump off of things; and break tables; and are reckless and dumb for literally no reason; or are like “I’m gonna hit stuff” with this like weird, masculine aggression that you totally see at an extreme in IFC parties which is literal, like, violence, you know, and like, destruction.” IFC fraternities are bastions of masculine performance, which includes aggression and violence. When these traits are socially rewarded in the context Amber describes, they might manifest elsewhere, which is threatening.

MGC and NPHC chapters were never once described as threatening during data collection. Bonnie explained they, MGC and NPHC chapters, “always have rooms where people are like, talking, and ATO and Phi Psi I feel like I’ve never really been in like, any rooms where

people are hanging out... It's more just like people are dancing in their darker, bigger spaces has been my experience, and everyone is really drunk." Furthermore, Amber articulates how "there's no one you need to be concerned about really [at MGC or NPHC parties]. I never see that at other parties but IFC... I struggle to think of an IFC party I've ever been to where there weren't people who you were keeping an eye on or actively needed help." Thus, IFC fraternity parties were the sole ones that interviewees perceive lead to over-intoxication and assault.

Internalized Protection.

While conducting the interviews, it became apparent that sorority women have established multiple protection measures against the perception of threat of sexual assault and other related dangers inherent within party culture. One of these adaptive protective behaviors is the phenomenon of risk management. Panhellenic participant Amber explained that almost all Panhellenic sororities have risk managers. Risk managers are an elected committee position with the sole purpose of monitoring sorority sisters on the weekends or any time that there might be high levels of intoxication. Panhellenic risk managers are also responsible for preemptively educating members about alcohol and drug safety, and topics like sexual assault and mental health.

Unlike risk managers, who help women avoid danger and act when a threat is perceived, Amber revealed that DePauw has forced IFC fraternities to maintain paid security at all registered parties. While extra precaution is okay, simply adding security cannot fix the deep-rooted indifference towards women who come forward with sexual assault allegations and

the structures that perpetuate sexual assault. When I asked if MGC or NPHC chapters had risk managers, Amber explained that usually the chapter president steps in—not specifically a risk manager—but she believed that even someone who is not Greek might intervene. Due to the small size of MGC and NPHC chapters, most members hold multiple positions on the executive board, thus it seems as though the responsibility for safety at parties is a shared, communal responsibility.

As in the survey, the dominant narrative regarding protection for women engaging in fraternity parties was of finding friends—mostly identified as women—looking out for each other. I asked if interviewees had sensed an increase in this phenomenon after joining a sorority or if the greater DePauw community of women looked out for each other at parties. All three expressed that their respective friend groups are very diligent in communicating—via text or in person—all throughout the night of partying and drinking, but that this was not the case within other chapters. Amber and Bonnie both expressed that they felt that their chapter was “one of the better ones” in terms of their united effort in ensuring the safety of all its members at parties.

Amber, Bonnie, and Patricia all shared that they had taken care of a woman from another chapter who was overly intoxicated. When discussing that event, each participant made it seem as though this was an indication of irresponsibility on behalf of the intoxicated woman’s sisters. Bonnie talks specifically about her experience with perceived lack of support in other chapters:

I know I have taken care of a lot of women that aren’t my sisters, who were Panhellenic women, which has really disappointed me. Not because I’m pissed that I have to do it, I’m pissed that their sisters aren’t doing it... we were all like, “where the fuck are her friends, I don’t even know this girls name.” I don’t want to generalize other

sororities, it's just happened to me a few times.

Bonnie reveals a perception of non-supportive culture in sororities other than her own. Patricia also echoed this sentiment, saying she has “heard of multiple stories of... [Panhellenic sorority members] leaving their sisters drunk in any place and then just worrying about themselves.”

Because this phenomenon appeared in all three interviews, as well as vaguely in the surveys, this phenomenon could represent a difference between chapters in perceptions of party culture. It seems as though some highly value the safety of other women at parties, which seems to indicate awareness of the threats that party culture can present.

Patricia perceives many IFC spaces as racist and thus places she “shouldn't go.” For many people of color, threats within party culture extend to racist, microaggressive acts. For other groups, this includes queerphobic, homophobic, and transphobic threats. Patricia continued that to “protect” against explicit and implicit racism that occurs at IFC parties, many people ‘opt out’ of attending. Patricia noted that she stopped going to IFC parties after a while because “they were just weird.” When I asked in what way, she explained, “I felt uncomfortable sometimes. Um, being a person of color, it's just uncomfortable in itself. So I just stopped showing up.” The discomfort she points to is not *being* a person of color; instead it is the response, or the ‘chilly climate’ she experiences when interacting with others who hold racist beliefs. In other words, she is made to feel unwelcome through social cues that emphasize her difference and their displeasure. As a result, she protects herself from further harm by leaving and not returning.

The narrative of welcoming or unwelcoming Greek houses extends throughout campus. Some stereotypes are seemingly harmless, like the ‘geeky’ or ‘nerdy’ houses, or as Bonnie describes:

...the stereotype is like the Delts are all like football players, and the Sigma Chis are kinda like, they’re like “oh, we’re future CEOs,” they like to wear ties and like, that’s what they like pride themselves on. Um, a good portion of them. So, it’s like, it’s more social almost, and like, it’s not really values-based.

In this example, both fraternities, according to stereotypes, privilege one or a few specific types of masculine behaviors, which influence how the campus ‘reads’ their members. These conversation unearthed a particularly important finding, that some stereotypes move beyond harmless or silly narratives to include real perceptions of threat. Multiple participants described their feelings of uneasiness and lack of safety when in contact with these fraternities:

IFC organizations that people have actively, constantly talked about feeling unsafe in, or are ... saying things like “I’m not drunk enough to go to that space because I’m so uncomfortable there” would be, like, ATO or Phi Psi... so the reason people talk about that is they say there’s a lot of sexual assaults that happen there, people don’t look out for each other. And there’s not like any kind of risk management. — Amber

I’ve definitely never heard anything like that about MGC or NPHC fraternities, only about IFC. So, ATO, definitely after ‘scaife hounds,’ and even beforehand... Um, Phi Psi as well. Heard stories about like, date raping Franzia bags, also just felt uncomfortable being in their space. — Bonnie

Okay, um, for example I knew Phi Psi was the “rape house,” that they were the ones that would, like, roofie drinks... I heard that Delt, ATO, and Phi Delt were racist and you should not go there. Um, Phi Psi was also racist. — Patricia

In every interview, the same two fraternities were mentioned during conversations about which organizations—no names were provided—were dangerous, or in which one should be careful

when attending their parties. Their affirmative statements and characterization of their experiences demonstrate the ways conversation can operate as a protective measure alerting women and others who experience marginalization.

While Panhellenic's protective measures are valuable for their members and have probably benefited many, Panhellenic sororities also perpetuate and reify the structures that are dangerous to their members. Sororities could be protective, empowering organizations, but, at times, their performance is conducive to sexual assault; thus, women have adopted internalized protection measures.

In her interview, Amber explained that when she joined a sorority, she felt she had a greater network of women looking out for her at parties. Another participant, Bonnie, echoes that she felt she had the greater support of women she had not even formally met: “[taking care of other women] was taught to me during my first week of the new member period ... that this is the cultural of this house from a very young age in my membership.” Because Bonnie was welcomed into a greater space of support, the idea of looking out for other women was established in her membership. However, she was also presented with more opportunities to drink, because it was highly prevalent in her new member period in the form of mixers with every IFC fraternity where alcohol was involved. She explained how new members see upperclassman sisters engaging with this behavior and might feel as though it is a norm or that they will be accepted as cool if they also engage.

Sororities are a social organizing unit amongst women at DePauw, and these units have created adaptive protective behaviors that act in defense of the threats that come with partying within themselves. Interestingly, Panhellenic sororities were founded with the goal of carving out a safe space for white, wealthy women who were historically excluded from academia and higher education. However, over time and into the present, Panhellenic sororities do not contain the language of empowerment and protection to the same extent that MGC and NPHC sororities do. MGC and NPHC chapters have been engaging in protection from threatening structures since their inception. Patricia explains,

I feel like it also has a lot to do with community. So like, at DePauw specifically, the community of POCs is very small so we take care of each other instead... because our community is constantly being targeted, or our community is constantly, like, you know in danger, it's hard for us to put ourselves in danger... if I was not Greek, I would not have a platform... if [a sexual assault] were to happen and I am Greek, I *will* voice it. I have a whole council to back me up about it. Not only that, I have an organization to back me up about it.

MGC and and NPHC serve as cohorts of people of color on college campuses, originally founded in opposition to the racism people of color face on college campuses. When these social cohorts have parties and invite other people of color, community is formed. Data suggests that the threat of racism is more imposing than that of threats from party culture for students of color. Thus, protection that emerges from students' of color social organizations around Greek life is typically against racism.

DISCUSSION

Taken together, the survey and interview findings produce common narratives. Combined findings from the survey and interviews revolve around two main themes: threat perception of party culture and internalized protection and empowerment with perception of Greek values as a moderating factor.

Threat perception of party culture is almost exclusively centered around IFC fraternity parties. Throughout data collection, IFC fraternities were inextricably linked to alcohol consumption. Survey responses included narratives of ‘creepy,’ drunk fraternity men posing perceived threats to safety. As interviews progressed, it became clearer that alcohol is threatening in context with party culture because it represents the potential for a fraternity man to be over-intoxicated to the point of acting aggressively, especially while inside a fraternity house where such behavior is normalized. These findings echo the literature that focuses on college drinking and Greek life.; specifically that fraternity members are more likely to perpetrate crimes against when alcohol is involved: as rates of alcohol consumption increase, as do rates of crime perpetuation. This is potentially compounded by and through fraternity culture that denigrates women and others with marginalized identities (Lasky et al. 2014: 177).

Sororities function as units of protection and empowerment against the threats of party culture that disproportionately affect women. In relation to party culture, Glindemann & Geller (2003) find that men use alcohol to make women more apt to agree to a hookup (34). My findings regarding women’s threat perception in party culture is structured by perceptions of IFC

spaces as (a) the only viable party location and (b) often-times threatening to women's safety, due to reasons expressed by Lasky et al. (2014), Glindemann & Geller (2003), and Sweeney (2011). College women's threat perception of party culture leads to adaptive protective measures, the most common of which is staying with a group of women friends when partying. Sororities are glorified "groups of friends," theoretically uniting friends around common values intended to make members better people. If true, then sorority membership should be equated with greater safety due to a larger network of friends. However, when sororities are placed in context with modern day party culture, an organization's values might not directly map onto the gray area of navigating party culture's omnipresent threat of assault. Each individual chapter's culture regarding protection and empowerment varies, even at a school as small as DePauw. One possible explanation for the data is that chapters whose members engage in protective behavior while partying must have collectively acknowledged the dangers that accompany party culture engagement, such as risk for assault. Furthermore, chapters in MGC and NPHC exhibit similar sentiments of group-wide protection, but instead center race while Greek life functions as a social unit within the community of students of color that provides a central space.

While much scholarship (Currier 2013; Connell 1987; Kelly 2012) focuses on the power of Greek life in a sociocultural context, none of the work that informed this study made a delineation between the social functions of Greek organizations that historically serve people of color and those that are historically white. On campuses that have a mix of historically-black,

historically-Latinx, and historically-white councils, Greek life performs varying social functions and is thus an avenue deserving of further research.

Survey data regarding Greek values cast a narrative of individual benefits (i.e. “becoming the best version of myself”), but a disagreement amongst Greek life as a structure. When contextualizing these findings with interview data, a distinction became clear between IFC/Panhellenic and MGC/NPHC. Exploring foundational history reveals Panhellenic, MGC, and NPHC had similar, revolutionary inceptions. Comparatively, IFC began as a networking society for college men — which, at the time, were only wealthy, white men. The key difference between Panhellenic, MGC, and NPHC is that the latter two center race and gender¹⁸ while the former only centers gender. Empowerment for people of color is explicit in the language MGC and NPHC founders used, thus maintaining its centrality in MGC and NPHC values for over a century. Panhellenic chapters’ language regarding women’s empowerment is not nearly as overt. Overtime, Panhellenic — along with IFC — has become the dominant structural unit of social life, maintaining the power of the privileged students who are recruited to join. As a result, the IFC parties my participants reported as dangerous are maintained as the singular option when engaging in party culture. Thus, maintenance of the IFC and Panhellenic Greek systems in their current functionality create a space where the threat of assault is omnipresent. Sorority women are aware of the dangers posed when entering male-dominated party spaces and have adapted intervention as a protection measure. What would it mean to be reflexive and shift the space

¹⁸ Inherently, because organizations under MGC and NPHC governance are single-gender organizations.

where sororities are protective through active engagement with shifting the party culture discourse and not just finding friends?

CONCLUSION

As a member of a Panhellenic sorority on DePauw's campus myself, I have experienced much of what this study investigates firsthand. From that context, I believe examining the structures and systems that make college-aged women disproportionately prone to sexual assault is a worthwhile endeavor. These are my peers, my classmates, my friends, and my sisters; they deserve to have fun and feel safe doing so. Especially now, as single-sex organizations face increasing amounts of scrutiny, it is important to study the ways these organizations impact students' social lives, especially in order to determine and understand their role and worth in protecting and uplifting women and people of marginalized identities. Are sororities the empowering organizations they were founded to be? Not really, but women still need them. While Panhellenic, in particular, contributes to the structures and systems that create unsafe spaces, membership within these organizations also provides women with increased amounts of perceived security. While this may sound contradictory, it is reflective of the founding of these organizations and the propensity for cohorts of women to adopt internalized protective measures. Instead of faulting the individual organizations, it might be worthwhile to turn our critical eyes to the institutions where Greek life was founded and Greek life as a whole, instead.

LIMITATIONS

This study is undergraduate student research at DePauw University, a medium sized private school in Indiana, United States. It is advised by a committee of two professors of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality studies and a professor of History and is overseen by the Honor Scholar program of DePauw University. The author received no funding for the project.

The author is a cis-gender, heterosexual white woman from a working class background. My racial identity prevents me from fully capturing the experiences of people with differing identities from myself. Information regarding people of different identities — especially of different racial, sexual, and/or gender identities in this study — is the result of research, surveys, and interviews and is not from personal experience. The institution of Greek life both structurally maintains the gender binary and is historically heterosexual both in language and social norms, which is reflected in this paper.

My work is influenced by my status as an active member of a Panhellenic sorority. Personally, I feel a very low level of allegiance to the institution of Greek life. This study in no way attempts to defend or be apologetic toward the organization of which I am a member, the Panhellenic Conference, or Greek life as an institution. My sorority membership has given me an “insider” perspective on the inner-workings and social norms of Greek life that have only enriched my research and provided an outlet to call for participants.

APPENDIX

Figure 1

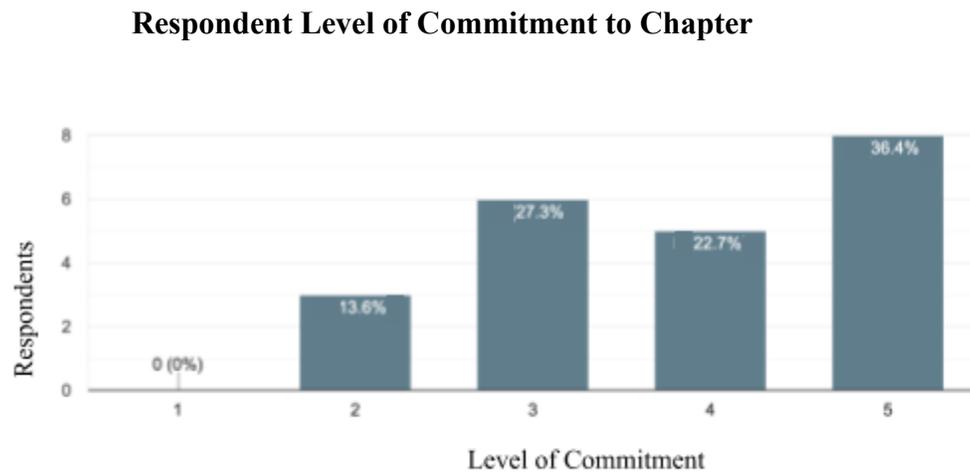
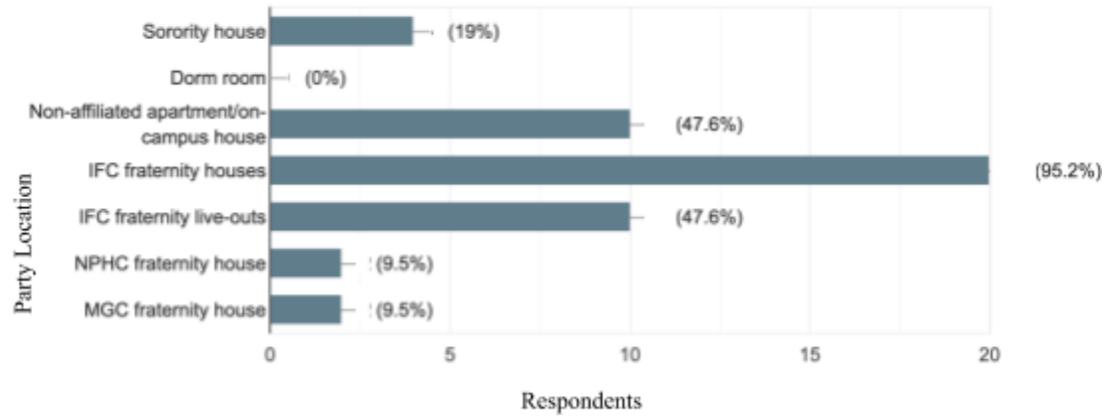


Figure 2

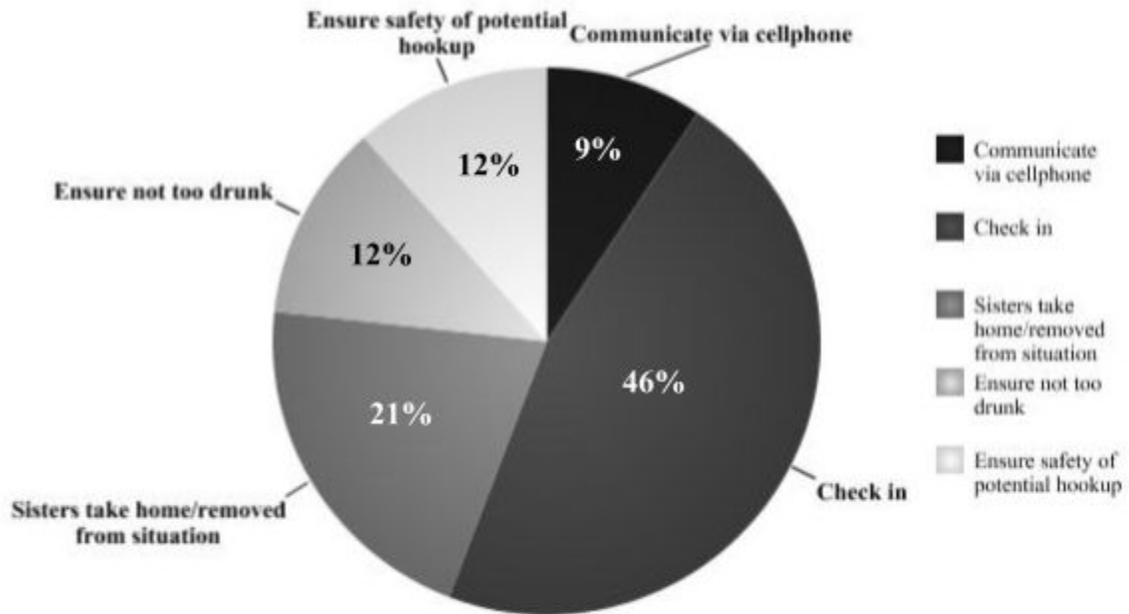
Where Respondents Party



Participants could check all that applied.

Figure 3

How Respondents “Look Out” for Each Other at Parties



Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. Please rate your level of commitment to your chapter
2. Where do you typically go to party? (Check any/all that apply)
3. Do you sense a difference between IFC fraternity parties and non-IFC fraternity parties?
If so, please briefly explain the difference.
4. When you feel threatened while engaging with party culture, how do you find protection?
5. Do you feel your sorority sisters watch out for you at parties? If so, in what way?
6. Do you sense a difference in your experience of safety while engaging with party culture before and after you joined your sorority?
7. Are you familiar with your sorority's mission statement or any foundational statements? (I am referring to statements such as "Mottos," "Mission Statements," "Core Values," etc.).
8. Does the founding mission (or the core values, if you aren't familiar with your mission statement) of your sorority match up with your experience as a member of your sorority? Why or why not? (In other words, if one of your sorority's values is that everyone will be treated equally, you could say you have or have not experienced equal treatment and how/why.)

Appendix B: Guiding Interview Questions

1. What chapter are you a member of?
2. Are you committed to your organization?
 - a. If so, how close?
3. What activities (sorority specific) do you participate in regularly?
4. Do you think sorority women are taught to ‘look out for each other’?
5. Do you go out at night to parties or events?
6. What kinds of events or parties do you usually attend?
7. Based on your perceptions of the campus and different Greek organizations, do you think there are differences between Greek councils?
 - a. (If yes) What are those differences?
8. Based upon your perceptions of the University and your understanding of Greek life, do you think IFC fraternity parties are similar to or different from non-IFC fraternity parties?
 - a. How?
 - b. What are some of the main differences?
9. Have you heard any rumors or stories where people think some fraternities are more “dangerous” than others?
 - a. If so, what councils/organizations/kinds of people have this kind of reputation?
10. Earlier we talked about perceptions of sorority membership, including ‘looking out for each other’ — do you think this relates to being at parties?
11. Do you think there is a difference between perceptions of safety before one joins a sorority and after?
 - a. Why/not?
 - b. How?
 - c. What do you think changes?
12. Are you familiar with your sorority’s mission statement or any foundational statements?

- a. If so, could you tell me some?
13. (If they are/not familiar, I will share with them the founding mission of their sorority and then ask this question:) Is the founding mission of your sorority consistent with your current experience?

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