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**DEVELOPING CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN TRADITIONALLY WHITE  
FRATERNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

by

Jason J. Artrip

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Services and Leadership  
College of Education  
In partial fulfilment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Masters of Arts in Higher Education  
At  
Rowan University  
May 6, 2021

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## Abstract

Jason Artrip  
DEVELOPING CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN TRADITIONALLY WHITE  
FRATERNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION  
2020-2021  
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Masters of Arts in Higher Education Administration

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of fraternity members within the higher education system in New Jersey. One major goal of this study was to analyze the level of critical consciousness developed through involvement in a fraternity. While research exists on the fraternity experience in relation to race, and whiteness, not much has been examined to understand the experience of fraternity members in relation to these issues. By expanding this research, fraternity and sorority affairs professionals, student affairs professionals and fraternity national office staff can better understand the fraternity experience in relation to racial injustice awareness and critical consciousness.

Findings from this study focused on alumni reflecting on their experience as an undergraduate member and analyzed how their experiences connect to racial injustice awareness. These findings highlight that there exists an alumnus disconnect with the organization in relation to these issues, as well as demonstrate how alumni continue their lifelong learning through the fraternity experience. Recommendations for further research and practice are outlined.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The United States has a deep-rooted history of racism and discrimination (Bonilla-Silva, 2019; DeSante & Smith, 2020; Lavalley & Johnson, 2020). Much of this history is reinforced by the current political climate that has led to an increasing awareness of racial issues (specifically injustices) in our society (Bonilla-Silva, 2019). Much of what happens at U.S. institutions are a direct reflection of what happens in our society, and undoubtedly the political climate impacts the campus environment.

When colleges and universities were first established, they were founded on the idea of teaching white males discipline and assimilating them into the colonial society of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Goodchild, 1997; Tyson, 2019). College and University campuses have changed since colonial times and have become more than just a place for education. Colleges and Universities are their own societal organism, operating as small cities and communities with rules, regulations, and self-created social norms. As the higher education systems becoming more complex and the growing student population facing problems of racial injustice, wealth distribution, equity and social injustice. College campuses have been at the forefront of these issues. College students have diverse backgrounds and identities, attending college allows many of these students to think more critically about who they are as individuals.

Colleges and universities are the birthplace of fraternity organizations, and historically the early fraternities were traditionally for white male students to join (Syrett, 2009). The early fraternities were a way for college men to reject the education they were receiving, and seek out the education they thought they should be getting (Syrett, 2009).

The traditional white fraternity also influenced the creation of Multi-Cultural fraternities when the Students of Color were not allowed to join the Traditionally white fraternities (Gillon et al., 2019; Joyce & Cawthon, 2017).

I was motivated to do this study because of the connection I observed between racial injustice awareness and how fraternity organizations were dealing with these racial injustices. Accompanying the COVID-19 Pandemic there has been a rise in racial injustice awareness in U.S. society (Jones & Fishbein, 2020; Krieger, 2020; Porche, 2020). This study aims to bring more awareness to racial injustices in society and then outlines the role fraternities can play in developing critically engaged members. Using Critical Race Theory, this study explored the relationship between the fraternity experience and critical consciousness, and the impact on an individual's critical thinking on race related issues.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many fraternity organizations have core values that are rooted in bettering their membership, they preach values that enhance the overall growth and development of their members. This includes chivalry, respect, academic achievement, and career development (Syrett, 2009). As seen in Bowman and Holmes (2017), the fraternity experience can lead to positive development in grades, retention and overall college experience. This shows that the values embedded in the fraternity experience do have an impact on academic, social, and career development. The problem then is whether these values enhance fraternity members understanding of racial issues in our society. There exists a lack of research on how fraternity members develop critical consciousness towards issues of racial injustice. We know little about fraternity members and how they

develop critical consciousness through their experience in a fraternity (Bowman & Holmes, 2017; Gillon, Beatty, & Salinas 2019; Harris, Barone, & Finn, 2019; Joyce & Cawthon, 2017). We also know little about how fraternity members are taking any critical consciousness they have gained through their organization and applying it to become more aware of the systemic discrimination present in society.

With a simple Google search, one can find a variety of programs that fraternity and sorority life offices have developed and executed to contribute to the fight for racial and social justice. For example, UC San Diego (2015) created a program, Greeks United for Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (GUIDE), which, at the surface, seems to bring to the inequities evident in societal and institutional structures and systems to the forefront of the fraternity experience. What remains unclear is whether programs like GUIDE only appear critical or if they actually raise critical consciousness and encourage critical action among Greek members and prompt them to adopt more inclusive and equitable approaches in within their respective organizations.

### **Purpose of the Study**

There exists little research on the connection between fraternity experience and critical consciousness. The purpose of this study is to understand the connection between fraternity experience and critical consciousness development among members, and illustrates why critical consciousness development is important in the fraternity experience and why the fraternal experience is an ideal place for this type of development.

## **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it can help to inform improvement in cultivating organizational cultures within fraternities that are focused on developing critical consciousness and impacting society broadly. Much like scholars who pushed back against the history of elitism and whiteness in the academy with critical theories (Goodchild, 1997; Wechsler, 1997), there is a need for more conversation and action regarding the issues of racism and white supremacy. Cabrera (2020) discusses that some white people feel uncomfortable with discussing issues of racial injustice, thus leading to the undermining of important issues surrounding race and racism. This study is necessary in order to add to the limited literature on culture change within organizations in relation to racial justice and equity.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How has the experience within a fraternity organization impacted your awareness and knowledge of racial injustices in society?
2. How has your organization both locally and nationally responded to the recent increase in awareness of racial injustices in our society?

## **Operational Definitions of Important Terms**

1. Critical Consciousness: to have a mindset of critical analysis of the world around you, especially for this study the ability to understand racial injustice (Diemer, Rapa, Voight, & McWhirter, 2016; Freire, 2005).

2. Critical Race Theory: a perspective that emphasizes the centrality of race and racism and challenges white supremacy in the law, education, political and other social systems (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998)
3. Racism: is the conscious or unconscious discrimination against any group of people based off their biological disposition (Cabrera, 2020, Harris & Poon, 2019).
4. Whiteness: This term has been defined by many different scholars i.e.: Cabrera, 2020; Cabrera, 2014; Joyce & Cawthon, 2017. For the purpose of this study I have taken all of these definitions and formed my own. I define it as the following: It is a social framework representing the ideology of privilege and immunity of the oppressor from racial injustices.
5. Systemic Racism: the embedded oppression of People of Color in any public or private sector i.e.: Healthcare, Education, Criminal Justice, and many more (Bonilla-Silva, 2019; Cabrera, 2014; Harris & Poon, 2019).
6. BIPOC: Black, Indigenous and People of Color (Garcia, 2020)

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

This study presents a few limitations. First, there was a small sample size which is reflective of only a portion of the larger fraternal population. While important, and certainly a starting point to inform future research, findings may not be generalizable. Second, when accounting for how critical consciousness is developed this study is only focused on critical consciousness in relation to issues of race, when critical consciousness is not limited to just race. Critical consciousness can include gender, religion, socioeconomic status and basically any identity an individual can have. Lastly, there is a

limitation regarding the availability of pre-existing research in this topic. This provides a great opportunity to generate new research but also hinders the ability to base the study off other empirical evidence.

### **Overview of the Study**

Chapter II will provide an overview of literature on the history of whiteness in both higher education institutions and fraternity organizations, as well as defining Critical Race Theory and its connection to student development.

Chapter III will provide a detailed overview of the methodology and procedures that were taken in order to enact this study. The methodology overview shows in detail the sample size, data collection and questions asked throughout the interview process.

Chapter IV reports the study's findings, and summarizes the data. Then the themes that emerged from the data and findings are introduced.

Chapter V analyzes major findings and themes in order to offer recommendations for implementation as well as further research on the topic.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

This chapter provides insight on the history of fraternities in higher education and outlines the research available on the historical experiences of fraternity members.

#### History of Whiteness in Higher Education Institutions

##### *Eras of Higher Education*

Goodchild (1997) discusses how the American Higher Education system was impacted by the outside world and student voice throughout time. The influence of World Wars, economic downfall, and civil rights movements changed the critical thinking of students at these institutions which led to changes in curriculum, campus life experience and overall student development. As identified in Goodchild (1997) The “Colonial College” era of 1636 to 1775 and the “Pioneer Colleges of the New Republic” of 1776 to 1861 depicted a common theme of religion and European Enlightenment humanities. Students wanted more from their curriculum and institutions, ushering in what Goodchild (1997) called “The Modern U.S. University” from 1862-1945 (p. 39). This was the beginning of the land grant college system which stole land and expanded the white space in higher education (Cabrera, 2020).

The U.S. Higher Education system also began to develop based on influences from their eastern counter parts, like Germany, and moved towards a more Ph.D. and University based system (Goodchild, 1997). For example: when U.S. Students came back from attending the University of Berlin, they had become acclimated to the studies of that institution, and insisted that United States institutions move towards a master’s or Ph.D. level program (Goodchild, 1997). This shift allowed for students to think more critically

about the world around them. Goodchild (1997) calls the next era “Democratic Colleges and Universities” from 1865 to 1945, and this was the time period where we saw people of African descent, women, and other marginalized people start to gain access to higher education (p.42). During this rise for higher education, we also see a rise in institutions gaining accreditation and prestige from National Associations (Goodchild, 1997). For example, the Association of American Law Schools and American Medical Associations helped organize and assimilate the curriculum of many leading institutions (Goodchild, 1997). It is also apparent that many of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were not receiving the same level of accreditation that traditionally white institutions received (Anderson, 1998). Accompanying the rise in accreditations came “The Public Policy Era of Federalism,” 1935-1980 which saw federal funding rise with the return of soldiers from World War II and the GI bill (Goodchild, 1997, p. 44). This era also saw an increase of government influence in education and curriculum, leading to a fear of communist teachings (Goodchild, 1997). This fear led to witch hunts, causing a need for the academic freedom of practitioners (Goodchild, 1997). This was finally achieved in the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Sweezy v. New Hampshire* (1957) decision, supporting academic freedom in the classroom and faculty lectures.

The final era that Goodchild (1997) discussed was “The Consumerist Student Era of Mass Higher Education” 1965-2000, which shows another expansion of student population with the Supreme Court case *Brown v Board of Ed* (p. 46). This influenced the need of diversity at higher education institutions across the United States, leading to Higher Education solidifying its place in American Society. Throughout these eras we see a slow movement towards an equitable higher education system for marginalized



communities, and how major events in society affect the experience that students want out of their higher education institutions. For this study, specifically looking at the progress of People of Color is significant because it shows a history of whiteness in higher education.

During the eras seen in Goodchild (1997), it is clear to see that the U.S. higher education system began to slowly change due to the changes in the world. The faculty and students slowly started to develop a more critical mindset, showing the early shift towards the critical higher education system we see in today's society. Analyzing these eras shows that there are different marginalized communities that gained advancement towards their goal for an equitable education.

### ***BIPOC Struggle for Equitability***

The struggle of BIPOC to gain equitable access, admissions and education has existed since the beginning of the American higher education system (Anderson, 1988; Wechsler, 1997). The early days of Black people gaining access to higher education was met with universities creating Jim Crow Law living situations, not being allowed to participate in certain student organizations, and experiencing a lack of social involvement outside the classroom (Wechsler, 1997). The early days also saw a majority of African Americans gaining education through private institutions, in addition to philanthropic organizations that wanted to foster education for African Americans at the college level (Anderson, 1988; Wechsler, 1997).

In both beginnings of higher education for white males and African Americans, we see how the church and other religious organizations were the first supporters of a religiously educated individual (Anderson, 1988; Wechsler, 1997). African American

Christian missionaries were also large stakeholders in the education of African American youth, they sought to help the newly freed men get accustomed to society (Anderson, 1988). This was not easy, as generations of uneducated youth led to a difficult assimilation into a society that still did not support equality or equity (Anderson, 1988). Outside of support from religious or philanthropic organizations the federal government and the southern states offered limited aid to Black land grant institutions (Anderson, 1988). These factors added to the layered systemic racism present in the higher education system. Through education of the white male and the lack of education offered to African Americans, the U.S. higher education system perpetuated an idea of elitism and whiteness. Eventually the African American college system grew and the funding of the missionary and religious philanthropies were not sufficient to keep up with the growing white higher education system and the lack of support from the federal and state governments (Anderson, 1988).

Wechsler (1997) mentioned a study done in 1942 that portrayed that many Black students were experiencing an unfulfilled student experience outside of the classroom. The experience inside the classroom during the early 1900s proved that many African Americans were not getting taught at the collegiate level, rather being taught at lower levels (Anderson, 1988). The Black student experience only started to see a slow positive impact after World War II and the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1955) (Wechsler, 1997). This decision led to the integration of white universities and colleges, which was a causality of Black students being mistreated on their new campuses (Wechsler, 1997). In addition, continued systemic issues of admissions, living situations, and exclusion from campus organizations affected the

Black student (Wechsler, 1997). This exemplifies the history of how Black students had to fight for access to not only higher education institutions, but also student organizations on campus. Slowly change was seen in these areas of admissions and student organizations but it took many battles to gain these rights to a slightly more equal education and social equality. The want for change led to a culture of pushing back against the systemic racism and elitism in higher education.

### ***Pushback Against the Higher Education System***

Due to the growing desire for change, society had to respond and demonstrate that it was willing to change. This change took time and is still happening today but it is clear to see how the field of higher education adapted a critical lens for issues of race. Boylan, Bonham, and Tafari (2005) introduce specific events that show how People of Color, especially African Americans, had a hard time gaining admission into higher education institutions due to the color of their skin. This lack of admission had People of Color fighting for their basic rights leading to the Civil Rights Act being signed in 1964 (Boylan et al., 2005). The Civil Rights Act dismantled the availability of federally funded institutions to base admissions on the race of their applicants (Boylan et al., 2005). The Civil Rights Act was one of the first signs that showed the shift of a racially biased higher education system to one that looks critically at racism and discrimination. There was still pushback from institutions that did not want to take responsibility for advancing minority admissions and access to higher education (Boylan et al., 2005). This issue of taking responsibility would not start to be resolved until the U.S. Congress passed the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 (Boylan et al., 2005).

The HEA aimed to establish these main points: make federal financial aid available to minorities and people of a lower socioeconomic status, fund college and university initiatives to recruit and retain minority and lower socioeconomic students, assist institutions to set up programs to help minorities and lower socioeconomic students adjust to higher education, give extra funding to institutions that were already supporting minorities and students of lower socioeconomic status, and finally deny funding of institutions that discriminate in their admissions process (Brubacher and Rudy, 1967). Even with the aid of the government and the HEA, the college experience for African Americans was not where it should be. Even though more students were being admitted the retention rate for African American students was still low (Boylan et al. 2005). This led to the call for programs to assist students of color in their college process. Examples of these programs included the TRIO programs, Learning Centers, and Remedial Programs all funded either by the institutions themselves or government funding (Boylan et al. 2005). It is evident that throughout the history of higher education, there were people willing to advocate for People of Color in the realm of higher education. However, Cabrera (2020) adds to the current discussion of how Predominantly white Institutions still need to do better in terms of advocating for their marginalized students.

## **History of Fraternity Organizations**

### ***Fraternal Origins***

Traditionally white Fraternities were first founded as secret literary societies in an effort to move away from the European Enlightenment humanities, but the origin of the first fraternity is somewhat of a mystery (Syrett, 2009). Some scholars and fraternity men believe the first fraternity was formed out of the Flat Hat Club and became Phi Beta

Kappa at the College of William and Mary, while others believe that the Kappa Alpha society was one of the first (About the Flat Hat, n.d.; Greekpages.com, 1998; Syrett, 2009). No matter what, where or who founded the first Greek letter society, the reasons for starting were mostly the same, they wanted to advance man's way of thinking through literacy and social advances (About the Flat Hat, n.d.; Greekpages.com, 1998; Syrett, 2009). The early fraternities, or secret societies as they were called, rebelled against the education they were receiving. The students wanted to move away from the early studies of priesthood and missionary work, and wanted to pursue education in the careers that mattered in the society at the time (Syrett, 2009).

The students in these early colleges did not have the freedoms that students have today. They were in strict schedules of prayers, recitations, and meals from the college faculty (Syrett, 2009). The fraternities and secret societies they were apart of offered a space for these men to express themselves. Early fraternity members had goals of gaining knowledge in sciences that the religious influenced education they were getting did not offer them, instead they wanted to study topics that would add to their overall collegiate experience and personal development (Syrett, 2009). Interestingly enough, many students said they gained more knowledge and development from the literary societies and fraternities than the education offered by the institutions (Syrett, 2009). This adds to the narrative that higher education has a critical mindset, with the early college fraternity men wanting change from their institutions. Be that as it may, the college fraternity has not always been on the right side of advancement.

## **History of Whiteness in Fraternities**

Fraternities at U.S. higher education institutions originally started for the majority of students, which were white male students. The early fraternity organizations were established for white Anglo-Saxon males (Syrett, 2009). This shows a history of creating a white space. Multi-Cultural Fraternities and Sororities exist, but they originally started due to not being allowed to join the white male organizations (Syrett, 2009).

The segregation of students through fraternities has contributed to the creation of a primarily white space (Joyce & Cawthon, 2017). This white space has added to the whiteness on college campuses as well as making it comfortable to be around only white individuals (Joyce & Cawthon, 2017). As fraternities advanced and grew so did the white safe space that they created (Gillon, Beatty, & Salina, 2019). Whether this space was created with the intention of exclusion is not a conversation for this study, rather recognizing its existence is. This societal division of college students by color came at a price for marginalized students because the college experience began to split. Many of the early African American Culture fraternities were created in a time where white supremacy was backed by law and largely accepted by society (Gillon et al., 2019).

In addition, with creating this white space, white individuals also control who enters this space and how People of Color interact inside this space (Harris, Barone & Finch 2019). White individuals might be blind to this notion or not want to recognize this, regardless they create and control this space due to the history of their organizations and the lack of change occurring within their organizations. While many organizations have adapted to get rid of their old white only membership laws, there still exists an as de facto exclusion within recruitment and membership invitations (Harris et al., 2019;

Syrett, 2009). This notion was reaffirmed by the video coming from the University of Oklahoma Sigma Alpha Epsilon, stating that “There will never be a N\* word in SAE. You can hang him from a tree, but he can never sign with me. There will never be a N\* word in SAE” (Harris et al., 2019 p. 19). This appalling video was all over the internet and sparked a conversation that some people had been ignoring. These racial incidents that occur in the white space of the fraternity world allow whiteness to strengthen in these communities. It is important to note that not all fraternities are inherently racist or advance the white space, but just because they have diversity at one institution or in one chapter does not mean that these organizations at the national scale call for true equitability and diversity in the Fraternity and Sorority community (Gillon et al. 2019; Harris et al., 2019).

### **Critical Race Theory**

The history of racism and inequitable treatment of People of Color and people from a lower socioeconomic status has influenced theories in higher education to become more critical, we see this in the start of the civil rights movement (Patton et al. 2016). This aligns with the changes that were noted throughout the eras of higher education as indicated by Goodchild (1997). Critical Race Theory (CRT) has become a popular scholarly lens to look at race and whiteness effects on student development (Harris & Poon, 2019). The components of CRT can be connected to “psychological perspectives” (Abes, 2016, p. 1) allowing for a developmental look at how student’s experience with these critical issues (i.e. racial injustice) can impact their development. Many of these themes can be connected to the analysis of the whiteness in fraternities from Harris et al., (2019) & Gillon et al., (2019) using critical frame work to discuss race & white

supremacy in fraternity culture. To fully understand how CRT is used we must look at how scholars understand racism and how they apply these theories to the student development process.

Racism is a complex idea that is not always visible or easy to understand in our society (Harris & Poon, 2019). Racism in today's society can be seen as challenging because it is deeply embedded into our system, we may not see it unless we look at things with a critical lens. Critical Race Theories aim to use that critical lens to identify systemic racism and white supremacy in order to help pushback against these oppressive systems (Abes, 2016; Harris & Poon, 2019).

In order to analyze a student's development and truly understand that development, scholars must apply how racism functions within their experiences (Harris & Poon, 2019). A student's experience with racism will be affected by the world around them, in Ali (2017) the Muslim Ban was discussed and how that further legitimized anti-Muslim racism in the united states. This led to a completely heightened negative experience of Muslim students at higher education institutions. In addition to the experience of People of Color and racism, it is critical to analyze whiteness as property to fully understand how racism impacts student development (Harris & Poon, 2019). Understanding that racism is a multifaceted complex system of oppression that will affect every individual differently and at different stages in development, is key when looking to use critical race theory. For a scholar or researcher to apply CRT to student experience they must first look at their own identity and experiences with racism and oppression (Patton, 2016). There are many ways to apply CRT and that changes by the way in which



a scholar defines racism, as well as how the scholar uses whiteness in their application of the theory.

CRT sets up a framework to take a closer look at the experiences of men in traditionally white fraternities and their awareness of racial injustices. CRT helped me dissect the experience of the fraternity members interviewed. This dissection showed the impact of racial injustice awareness on fraternity members.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

Overall, this chapter examined the literature related to the history of U.S. higher education system, struggle for equality and equitability for People of Color, and the history of whiteness in fraternities. As mentioned in this chapter, Critical Race Theory is a popular scholarly lens to look at race and whiteness and their effects on student development (Harris & Poon, 2019). In addition, Critical Race Theory is the most appropriate lens to explore critical consciousness development in individuals who are members of traditionally white fraternities. The history of both higher education institutions and traditionally white college fraternities perpetuate the themes of white Space, white Immunity and white Privilege. The main difference seen across these two systems is that higher education has begun to realize its history and is working slowly to help the oppressed, while the fraternity world is a lot slower to recognize these issues and be willing to fix them. As fraternity members begin to navigate the world of higher education their development will set the tone for future members. The literature supports the need for fraternities to shift critically in order to create equitable, inclusive and just cultures.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This study employed qualitative methods, using a phenomenological approach to look at the fraternal experiences of members in one specific fraternity throughout colleges and universities in New Jersey. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews that were transcribed verbatim. These transcriptions were analyzed to identify findings and similar themes to understand the answers to the study's research questions.

#### **Research Questions:**

1. How has the experience within a fraternity organization impacted your awareness and knowledge of racial injustices in society?
2. How has your organization both locally and nationally responded to the recent increase in awareness of racial injustices in our society?

#### **Context of Study**

This study was conducted during the 2020-2021 Rowan University academic year within the New Jersey membership of the fraternity being studied.

#### **Research Method**

The study was done using a qualitative method conducting interviews to analyze the fraternal experiences of participants. A qualitative method allowed me to look at patterns and find similar words in the data, thus allowing connections to be made between all of the participant's fraternal experiences. Participants were asked to participate through email communication. Using a semi-structured interview method, the study examined the experiences of fraternity men, in relation to questioning the rise of racial injustice awareness. This study adds to the continued research of student

experience and the impact critical consciousness can have on members (Cabrera, 2020, Patton et al., 2016).

### ***Procedure***

After receiving approval from the IRB, the next step was to recruit members of the fraternal organization to participate in the study. The national office of the fraternity being studied had me sign a consent form to keep their member's personal information confidential. In addition to granting approval to use the member contact information in the recruitment of participants through email communication. Using the information provided by the fraternity national office, a recruitment email was sent to potential participants with an overview of the study, as well as confidentiality forms if they wished to participate. In this email, the possible participants were notified that their personal information will not be shared with anyone as well as their participation being completely voluntary.

### ***Population & Sample***

The study population consisted of members of the fraternal organization that is being studied in the state of New Jersey. The age of the study population started at 18 and did not have a cap. The population was members of the fraternal organization who went to a higher education institution in New Jersey. Upon gaining IRB clearance to conduct my study and the support of the national fraternity, the conduction of research began. Using contact information gained from the fraternal organization, I contacted the fraternity members in New Jersey who also attended a higher education institution in New Jersey to invite them to participate in the study. After gathering the list of

participants, I worked with them to schedule interviews. There was a total of 10 participants after this process.

### ***Profile of the Sample***

The individuals of this study were chosen using purposeful sampling (McMillan, 2016). This style of sampling allows for representation of the population the study seeks to understand (McMillan, 2016). This process allowed for the selection of individuals in the fraternity of study, and who were members of that fraternity from a higher education institution in New Jersey. Fraternity members who were interested in participating were instructed to sign the consent forms and return them with their expressed interest. Out of the 2,741 members that were contacted to participate, only 16 expressed interest in participating in the study. From those 16 interested fraternity members only 10 committed to the interviews. Between February 13<sup>th</sup> to February 21<sup>st</sup> all 10 interviews took place virtually over Zoom lasting between 30 minutes to an hour in length.

### ***Sample Biographies***

Below is a simple breakdown of identities for the 10 participants of the study. Real names were replaced with pseudonyms for confidentiality. There is also a pseudonym provided for the fraternity that is being studied.

- Ares is a heterosexual Asian American male who is an alumnus of the organization.
- Zeus is a heterosexual South East Asian American Male who is an alumnus of the organization.
- Poseidon is a heterosexual white Italian male who is an alumnus of the organization.

- Hermes is a heterosexual white male who is an alumnus of the organization.
- Apollo is a heterosexual Caucasian male who is an alumnus of the organization.
- Hades is a heterosexual Caucasian male who is an alumnus of the organization.
- Hercules is a heterosexual white Jewish male who is an alumnus of the organization.
- Atlas is a heterosexual white male who is an alumnus of the organization.
- Cronos is a heterosexual white male who is an alumnus of the organization.
- Eros is a heterosexual white male who is an alumnus of the organization.

### ***Data Collection***

The semi-interviews were conducted via the virtual video conference software called Zoom. This allowed for scheduling flexibility as well as seeing the physical reactions to the questions and topic discussed. The interviews were scheduled for 90 minutes but were not restricted on time whether they were shorter or longer than the time scheduled. The interview was recorded to allow for play back of the interview if needed, and memos were taken during the interview. The interviews were scheduled and conducted within a six-week time period. Each participant was allowed to receive their interview transcripts to allow for any further input on topics or clarifying points, and they were given a week to submit any further input as to not impede on the continuation of the study.

### ***Data Analysis***

Each interview was transcribed within the week it took place. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step thematic analysis process. Upon completion of all interviews the transcriptions were analyzed to identify

similar themes, ideologies and opinions to then be used for data reporting (Braun and Clarke, 2016). The transcription included dialogue between the participant and myself as well as any notes taken by me. Once all of the interviews were conducted, transcribed and further input was received, all data was then formulated into similar themes and experiences (McMillan, 2016). The entire data collection and analysis process took approximately eight to ten weeks. After that ten-week period the summary, findings and implementation suggestions were concluded.

### ***Ethical Consideration***

Before any data collection, and to protect the participants of this study, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application was submitted on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 and accepted on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021. The application included all necessary information needed as well as copies of the Consent forms and Draft of Email Recruitment. The participants faced little to no risk and did not receive any compensation for their time. All participants signed the consent forms and understood that the interview sought to understand their fraternity experience as it relates to racial injustice awareness.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of fraternity members within the higher education system in New Jersey, especially to understand how critical consciousness is developed in members, in relation to racial injustice awareness. The fraternity experience is not widely researched in this manner, meaning that there is a need to understand the experience more. Using semi-structured interviews this study's purpose was to add to the fraternal experience research literature. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step thematic analysis process the interviews were listened to three times to allow for accurate transcription and theme analysis. I manually coded the themes into a Google sheets document, which was also password protected. The themes that emerged from the data are as follows: a) History of whiteness, b) Critically Analyzing DEI Training and c) Awareness of Racial Injustice.

#### History of Whiteness

Many fraternity organizations and institutions of higher education have a long history rooted in the betterment of individuals (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976; Goodchild, 1997; Syrett, 2009). The individuals that make up these organizations and institutions have their own experiences with the topics being studied. The history of whiteness in higher education and the fraternity system was a common theme that appeared in the data. In conjunction with agreeing that there is a history of whiteness in the fraternity system many of the participants pointed out the history of whiteness in higher education and how those two directly correlate. This overarching theme is built upon the demographic composition of the institution and recruitment of students. This speaks to

the history of whiteness within higher education institutions and the student experience in traditionally white fraternities.

### ***Recruitment***

Recruitment is a subtheme of the history of whiteness. This study found that fraternity recruitment of diverse males was a challenge due to the small demographic of People of Color at the colleges and universities attended by the participants. Hermes indicated the connection between recruitment and opportunity, stating:

I think the bigger issue is that they're not having the interview because they're not, they don't know about the opportunity or they're not being pursued for the opportunity. Hermes goes on to get into if the institution is diverse than the fraternity chapter at that institution should be a reflection of that diverse population.

Poseidon, when asked about recruitment connections between higher education and the fraternity system stated:

The changes in college enrollment with their focus on diverse populations gives us a more diverse population to choose from, I would say that, and I would also note that, as our chapters have refined their operations, they have been able to become more selective in who they choose to join and in that selectiveness, with a more diverse population to choose from because of the enrollment teams at the universities, they're just bringing in high quality guys and some of them happened to be Latino and some happen to be Black.

A few other participants mentioned seeing the relationship between higher education institution recruitment and the recruitment of the fraternity chapter. Atlas concluded the



same notion that since the college was not diverse then there was no diverse pool of recruits to choose from for membership. Hercules spoke on how he attended a large diverse university and saw that his fraternity chapter and others on campus represented that diversity to some degree in their membership.

Poseidon, Hercules, and Hermes noted many times how university or college populations were lacking in diversity, which inevitably caused the population of the fraternity to be less diverse. The fraternity chapter, as outlined by participants can only be as diverse as their host institution because they can only recruit men that attend said institution. Participants in the study believed that if colleges and universities were more diverse their chapters would recruit more men for their organization regardless of race. Hermes explained, that the location of an institution also played a great role in attracting diverse students, and explained that the geographical location an institution is situated in reinforces the history of pervasive whiteness beyond the confines of the institution itself.

Apollo spoke about how his college at the time was not very diverse. He stated:  
Now we weren't a very diverse community in terms of the college, there was only the student body was less than 1000 students. And at the time, I remember it clearly as well as I sat in freshman orientation, there were only seven women in the entire freshman class... actually the entire college.

While this example does not speak to racial diversity, it shows the history of segregation and discrimination in the higher education system. This is also seen in Cronos's statement about when he looks at the founders and leaders of the Fraternity they "are all white men" and how the history of whiteness in higher education has "ties to the roots" in the history of the fraternity system.

## **Critically Analyzing DEI Training**

This study gave the participants an opportunity to critically analyze their past diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training as members of the fraternity. Fraternity members receive a variety of training that their organization or the university deems necessary. When it comes to diversity, a common theme emerged in the data: that each participant had a different idea of what DEI training was and what impact the training should have. Many participants said there was diversity in their fraternity. They viewed socioeconomic status, cultural background, and personal interests as diversity. I refer to this idea as subjective diversity, because it is diversity but it does not specifically address racial diversity. Through this subjective diversity the membership was critical of the DEI training that they received as both undergrads and as alumni of the organization. Leading to the two subthemes of *Subjective Diversity* and *Analysis of DEI*.

### ***Subjective Diversity***

Ares and Zeus mentioned that in their experience in the fraternity, they often received questions about their heritage or culture from brothers who were curious about the differences in their lifestyles. Ares and Zeus found this to be educational for brothers who might not have come from a diverse background, it allowed brothers to ask questions that they might have been otherwise afraid to ask, but due to the brotherhood connection between them they felt comfortable asking questions. Ares also mentioned that he “gravitated” towards brothers who were Asian-American within the fraternity because he felt a larger sense of belonging. Ares also talks about a different chapter that he met at a national conference and how that “whole chapter is Mexican” and that they are “Fraternity Brothers too”, saying how “it’s cool to see that diversity”. Hades and

Cronos mentioned how through their experience with the Fraternity they became more open-minded. Cronos stated:

Well pre-the fraternity and I never like saying this, but I was more from where I guess, I was from and my experiences, I was a bit more on the ignorant side in terms of being a little more racist and stuff. But you know through the Fraternity that's what really opened my eyes to the different cultures and perceptions of you know other people's lives and what they've been through.

Hades backed up his notion by saying that his experience with the fraternity offered “a natural coming togetherness” allowing him to become more open-minded. Poseidon offers his experience with the fraternity and diversity. He explained:

To them (undergrads) it would be odd to be racist, to them, that to them, it would be odd for them to be told ‘you should only go out there and get white guys’ or ‘you should only get Black guys’, they would be like that doesn’t make any sense. Their worldview has never been that and that’s the population, we work with.

All 10 participants mentioned how their experience as members of the fraternity exposed them to differences, in one way or another.

### ***Analysis of DEI***

When listening to the participants talk about DEI and diversity as a whole there was not a direct definition of what diversity or DEI was in relation to the fraternity experience. Many of the participants questioned who was responsible for defining DEI Training for the fraternity: the institution or the national organization. In that arose another thought of how the chapter would interact with possible various definitions of DEI or Diversity

When asked about connecting racial justice and the fraternity experience Poseidon stated:

It, to the extent that you connect racial justice to any other part of the college experience and to the extent that any other social issue is connected to the fraternity experience. So, if we're going to connect racial justice as its own let's say pillar of the fraternity experience, I would just expect that there would be you know something there about financial literacy, and, and I would expect that there'd be something there about gender justice which needs to be a thing that people talk about. I would expect that there would be something there about justice for folks with special needs and not all special needs are those you can see, sometimes it's a mental health thing. I think I think the FSL community is starting to talk about some of these things, but They are far too siloes in their approach. So, I don't know if I would be a big cheerleader for racial justice itself individually, taken out, ostracized as one component of the fraternity experience. I would definitely welcome it, as part of a broad array a broad spectrum of the overall fraternity experience.

Poseidon agreed that racial justice should be addressed, but he was firm on his belief that other areas of diversity and societal injustices should be implemented as a part of DEI awareness for members of the fraternity. Cronos and Hermes also noted that DEI and diversity should not be the only focus of the fraternity experience but they welcomed the idea of it becoming a part of the fraternity experience as long as the fraternity can still be what it is meant to be in the eyes of its members. Hercules adding to this idea by stating

I think it is a necessary component, because when we're talking about developing collegiate men, when we're talking about, I mean you know this like, we want to

focus on the holistic student, the holistic person so like if you don't address race, in addition to all the other, we'll call protected classes groups you're not exposing people during their most formative years, their college years, you're not exposing them to different ways of thinking. So, like I believe it is incumbent upon fraternities to have that.

Many participants were on board with doing more for diversity and racial justice but many felt that the university resources and training did not work for the fraternity experience; they felt as if the colleges and universities were trying to mold the fraternities into something they are not. Apollo spoke to this by saying that

An unbalanced forcing of white students or Hispanic students, just for the sake of forcing some sort of equality, because that is like an elastic band or any other external force. When you relieve the tension or the pressure it goes back to the way it would have gone anyway. So, you can't make rules to provide for diversity, it has to be an environment in which it happens.

The participants showed that they welcomed DEI training and critical consciousness but they do not want it forced or defined by an outside source.

### **Awareness of Racial Injustice**

All of the participants mentioned how their experience within the fraternity made or still makes them better men to this day. When asked about the awareness of present racial injustices many of them had knowledge of this. Whether it was due to the pandemic, their consumption of news, their personal interest to be knowledgeable on these issues, or these issues having an influence on their career they all somewhat knew about

racial injustices in today's society. The awareness of racial injustice showed two subthemes: *Alumni Disconnect* and *Action*.

### ***Alumni Disconnect***

Many of the participants wanted to hear about their brother's experiences but they had not heard about their experiences due to this alumni disconnect. It is important to have a strong alumni connection so that the members can learn from each other about what is happening in the world. This learning can happen for both alumni and undergraduate members. Hades stated, "I consider myself a brother in the fraternity, but it would, if I had to list 20 things that describe to me it would probably maybe not even make the list". Many other participants felt similarly but didn't go as far as to outright say that. They all were proud of their experience and grateful for it but it was not the only thing that made them who they are today. Poseidon, Cronos, and Hercules are all active volunteers within the organizations, so their knowledge of these issues in relation to the chapters on college campuses was broader than those who were not presently involved.

Hermes spoke about how he is "not in the loop" on how fraternity members on colleges campuses can be connected with the racial justice movements that could be on college campuses. Ares stated, "I just don't know what to do on my level to raise awareness to be honest" and then was asked if there are more alumni out there similar to him that do not know what to do to assist their chapter but want to do something, "I think so yeah, I think so. You know one of the questions that you asked, honestly has never been asked". Hades stated, "I can tell you from my personal organization, the alumni outreach could be absolutely, be better" and continued to say "The more connected we are, you know, and perhaps it's the organization's jobs and the actual alumni's job

themselves, you know, the more aware everybody's going to be. So, I think it does play a major role". Poseidon was speaking about the platform that a fraternity may or may not have and mentioned how the Fraternity platform was not large in the industry "nor do I think our platform is large within our own members". Alumni disconnect is an issue for the participants because they want to be engaged in these conversations but do not know how to go about having these conversations. The challenge exists in opening up the dialogue within the entire membership to have these conversations, an alumni disconnect hinders that open dialogue.

### ***Action***

After reflecting on their level of awareness to racial injustices the participants transitioned to making meaning of what fraternities and institutions can do with racial justice awareness. They all spoke about what they would like to see happen, what programs or policies they want to see in place or even what programs and policies had to change to better fit the overall fraternity experience. All 10 participants wanted to learn from the experiences of their brothers. They all wanted to listen to real life experiences of dealing with racial injustices and see how they can learn from other's experiences. Many of them wanted the national organization to find a way to share these experiences.

Poseidon mentioned:

Younger alumni of color reach out to the national organization and say you know we expect this, this, and that. A whole list of things they expected and the fraternity wound up putting out a statement or two, I believe I don't really recall, to be honest, I think it was two different statements and they were very well received, they were very well received so.

All the participants welcomed the idea of adding DEI, diversity, or some form of racial injustice awareness learning into the new member education process. However, they want to make sure that the fraternity experience offers a variety of diversity awareness. Take action to advocate for marginalized groups but it should not be the overall goal of the fraternity experience. Many of the members noted that after the summer of 2020 and the events that took place, the awareness of racial injustice increased.

In summary, the major themes of the study are: “History of Whiteness”, “Critically Analyzing DEI Training”, and “Awareness of Racial Injustice”. In conclusion, the findings of this study highlighted the participants experience with the fraternity and how critical consciousness is developed in members, in relation to racial injustice awareness.



## Chapter 5

### Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The final chapter will summarize the study and offer dialogue on the fraternity experience in relation to racial injustice awareness. Secondly, it will discuss the findings based on the research questions. Lastly, the study will make conclusions and recommendations for practice and further research.

#### Study Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the connection between fraternity experience and critical consciousness development among members. Not much is known about how the fraternity experience can affect the racial injustice awareness of an individual. Therefore, this study's goal was to understand the organization's influence further. These findings add to current literature on fraternity organizations, help fraternity organizations become more aware of their impact on members, and examine opportunities to recreate organizational cultures that prioritize equipping their members with the adequate resources and tools to develop critical consciousness in relation to racial injustice.

Purposeful sampling was used to gather a pool of participants that were members of the Fraternity and who attended institutions of higher education in the state of New Jersey. The interviews were then conducted over a two-week period where the co-investigator took notes and recorded the interview over Zoom, a virtual video conferencing software. To best identify the personal experiences in the data thematic analysis was used to analysis the data gained form the interviews. The themes of the data were portrayed in a data analysis that used direct and indirect quotes from the interviews.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

To understand how critical consciousness develops in members of a traditionally white fraternity, there were two research questions used to guide the study. These questions helped explore the experiences through the eyes of the participants. The following information provided are the answers to the research questions.

### ***Research Question 1***

*How has the experience within a fraternity organization impacted your awareness and knowledge of racial injustices in society?*

I found that the fraternity experience is different for each individual, these members took their undergraduate collegiate experience within the fraternity and turned it into lifelong lessons and development. They spoke on gaining skills that helped them in their careers and personal lives. Most of them noted that the fraternity experience filled the gaps that their higher education institution did not fill. For most of the participants, the experience within a fraternity organization did impact their awareness and knowledge of racial injustices in society.

Similar to the way fraternity organizations started, as discussed by Syrett (2009) these members pushed back against the higher education system and wanted to educate themselves on what they felt was important for them and their membership. Throughout their experience it was clear to see they were impacted by listening and learning from their fellow brother's experiences. During their undergraduate experience, not much dialogue regarding racism or racial injustice awareness took place, but there were instances of critical consciousness development. For example, a few of the participants

mentioned that throughout their undergraduate experience members who identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community became more accepted into their organizations.

Whether it was learning about a brother's socio-economic status or exposure to individuals of different cultural backgrounds, there was this form of *Subjective Diversity* within the organization. I found that subjective diversity is only acknowledging one layer of diversity not the entire aspect of diversity. To say that every participant became more aware of racial injustice specifically through their fraternity experience would be false, but it seemed as if the younger participants were more open to becoming more aware or were already more aware of these issues. Another factor that played into the awareness of the participants was the career field that some of them were in. If their jobs involved working with a diverse population, or their job had a component of DEI in it, they were seemingly more aware of racial injustices.

The findings of this study begin to show how the modern-day fraternity member views racial injustice. Through the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Black Lives Matter Protests following the murder of George Floyd, the world saw an increase in racial injustice awareness (Jones & Fishbein, 2020; Krieger, 2020; Porche, 2020). This study highlighted how these current events impacted fraternity members, with many of the participants noting that it takes time for true change. To address the research question of the impact on the awareness of racial injustice, more research should be done to further examine how having an increase awareness about racial injustice influences an individual member of a fraternity. This study still shows that fraternity members are developing their own definition of critical consciousness that fits within their fraternity experience.

## ***Research Question 2***

*How has your organization both locally and nationally responded to the recent increase in awareness of racial injustices in our society?*

This study found that the participants were not too aware about how their local and national organization responded to the increase in awareness of racial injustices in our society. Thus, this study found that there is an alumni disconnect within the fraternity. The disconnect within the fraternity is in the definition of the role an alumni should play in the organization. It should be clarified whether they are educating the chapter on the values of the fraternity, donating money when asked to support, volunteering their time to work with the chapter on chapter functions or all of those combined.

For an alumni base to speak on the response of the national organization and the local chapter there must be a stronger connection between the local and national fraternity and their alumni. This study was not intended to look at that disconnect, but it emerged as significant in the findings. While more research is need into how each individual chapter in the state of New Jersey has responded to this rise in racial injustice awareness, this study shows that the participants were aware of the rise in racial injustices, but that awareness did not come from their current fraternity experience. The participants are aware of DEI and racial injustices through their careers, the news and social media.

## **Conclusions**

Developing critical consciousness in members of traditionally white fraternities is important. The purpose of this study was to breakdown the fraternity experience through a critical race theory lens. This lens allowed the study to examine the fraternity

experience critically. CRT also shined a light on the fact that there is a need for more action and implementation to become a critically conscious fraternity.

An important question that emerges from this study is who defines the critically conscious fraternity experience? Should each national organization define that for their own members? Should the Northern American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) define this for all fraternities who are members of the NIC, or does the field of higher education define this? The study's participants agree that DEI training is key for members, but they all have a different definition of DEI. The participants welcome awareness of racial injustices into the fraternity experience, as long as it organically fits into the experience.

Based on the conclusion of this study, the fraternity experience is on the cusp of becoming more aware of racial injustices that exist within the fraternity experience. This leads to the potential to redefine and pushback on the traditional and historical fraternity experience. The younger participants, and the data show that there exists a small rise in the pushback on the traditional fraternity experience. This pushback was seen in the founding of fraternities when they pushed back against the religious education they were receiving from early higher education institutions (Syrett, 2009). Just being aware of these issues is not enough, action and implantation are needed to advance the fraternity experience.

In conclusion, this study highlighted that fraternity members became more aware of differences throughout their personal fraternity experience. As the fraternity experience develops alongside the higher education experience it is important to keep developing a critical conscious mindset. The role alumni play in that development is key to the advancement of the fraternity experience. This study sets the foundation for further

research on enhancing the overall mission, vision and goals of fraternities. The fraternity experience is not one singular defined experience. With chapters across the country and sometimes the world, harsh generalizations of the fraternity experience diminish the impact it can have. The fraternity experience can change not only an individual but an entire campus culture. Allowing time for the fraternity experience to become more aware of racial injustices will lead to fraternities standing up and taking action against racial injustices.

### **Recommendations**

Based on this study, the research that exists and the personal experiences gathered from this study recommendations for fraternity organizations, institutions of higher education and future research are presented:

#### ***Fraternities***

1. Fraternity Organizations should survey their members on how the membership wants to engage in current issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion and social justices.
2. Fraternity Organizations should also define DEI training for their membership so the membership can navigate DEI training better.
3. Fraternity Organizations should also find a way to better connect to their alumni base to help educate alumni who wish to be educated on racial injustice.
4. After defining DEI training, the fraternities should take action in the community and make positive changes within their organization based on their definition.

### ***Institutions of Higher Education***

1. Institutions of Higher Educations should organically find a way to make DEI a part of the fraternity experience without forcing it into the experience.
2. Institutions of higher education can work with fraternity chapters to help them define what diversity means to that chapter.

### ***Further Research***

1. Studies should be done analyzing the fraternity experience at a large scale.
2. A study on what the fraternity experience is should be done since it looks different for all members of fraternities.
3. Future research should look at how DEI training can improve upon the fraternity experience not change the experience just for DEI training.

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## Appendix A

### Institutional Board Review Approval

**DHHS Federal Wide Assurance Identifier:** FWA00007111

**IRB Chair Person:** Dr. Ane Johnson

**IRB Director:**

**Effective Date:** January 22, 2021

## Notice of Approval - Initial

**Study ID:** PRO-2020-135

**Title:** Developing Critical Consciousness in Fraternity Members within Higher Education

**Principal Investigator:** Raquel Wright-Mair

**Study Coordinator:** Jason Artrip

**Co-Investigator(s):** Jason Artrip

**Submission Type:** Initial

**Submission Status:** Approved

**Approval Date:** January 22, 2021

**Expiration Date:** January 21, 2022

**Approval Cycle:** 12 months

**Continuation Review Required:** Yes - Progress report

**Review Type:** Expedited

**Expedited Category:** 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

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

**Subjects:** 15

**Pregnant Women, Human Fetus, and Neonates Code:** N/A

**Pediatric/Children Code:** N/A

**Prisoner(s) – Biomedical or Behavioral:** N/A

**Protocol:** [sber protocol Jason Artrip.docx](#)

**Recruitment Materials:** [IRB Recruitment Form.docx](#)

**Study Instruments:** [Thesis Interview Questions.docx](#)

**Consent:** [Thesis Consent Form.doc](#)

**Study Performance Sites:**

Rowan University, 201 Mullica Hill Road Glassboro New Jersey 08028

**ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:**

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
- 2a. Continuing Review: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.
- 2b. Progress Report: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses, an annual progress report is required at least 21 days prior to the expiration date.
- 3a. Expiration of IRB Approval: If IRB approval expires, effective the date of expiration and until the continuing review approval is issued: All research activities must stop unless the IRB finds that it is in the best interest of individual subjects to continue. (This determination shall be based on a separate written request from the PI to the IRB.) No new subjects may be enrolled and no samples/charts/surveys may be collected, reviewed, and/or analyzed.
- 3b. Human Subjects Research Training: Proper training in the conduct of human subjects research must be current and not expired. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator and the investigator to complete training when expired. Any modifications and renewals will not be approved until training is not expired and current.
4. Amendments/Modifications/Revisions: If you wish to change any aspect of this study after the approval date mentioned in this letter, including but not limited to, study procedures, consent form(s), investigators, advertisements, the protocol document, investigator drug brochure, or accrual goals, you are required to obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of these changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. This policy is also applicable to progress reports.
5. Unanticipated Problems: Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: <https://research.rowan.edu/officeofresearch/compliance/irb/index.html>
6. Protocol Deviations and Violations: Deviations from/violations of the approved study protocol must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: <https://research.rowan.edu/officeofresearch/compliance/irb/index.html>
7. Consent/Assent: The IRB has reviewed and approved the consent and/or

assent process, waiver and/or alteration described in this protocol as required by 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50, 56, (if FDA regulated research). Only the versions of the documents included in the approved process may be used to document informed consent and/or assent of study subjects; each subject must receive a copy of the approved form(s); and a copy of each signed form must be filed in a secure place in the subject's medical/patient/research record.

8. Completion of Study: Notify the IRB when your study has been completed or stopped for any reason. Neither study closure by the sponsor nor the investigator removes the obligation for submission of timely continuing review application, progress report or final report.

9. The Investigator(s) did not participate in the review, discussion, or vote of this protocol.

10. Letter Comments: There are no additional comments.

**CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This email communication may contain private, confidential, or legally privileged information intended for the sole use of the designated and/or duly authorized recipients(s). If you are not the intended recipient or have received this email in error, please notify the sender immediately by email and permanently delete all copies of this email including all attachments without reading them. If you are the intended recipient, secure the contents in a manner that conforms to all applicable state and/or federal requirements related to privacy and confidentiality of such information.**

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent Form

#### KEY INFORMATION AND CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY

#### ADULT CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

#### KEY INFORMATION AND CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY

#### ADULT CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

**TITLE OF STUDY:** Developing Critical Consciousness in Fraternity Members within Higher Education

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Raquel Wright-Mair

**Co-Principal Investigator:** Jason Artrip

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide key information that will help you decide whether you wish to volunteer for this research study.

Please carefully read the key information provided in questions 1-9 and 14 below. The purpose behind those questions is to provide clear information about the purpose of the study, study specific information about what will happen in the course of the study, what are the anticipated risks and benefits, and what alternatives are available to you if you do not wish to participate in this research study.

The study researcher will explain the study to you and he will answer any question you might have before volunteering to take part in this study. It is important that you take your time to make your decision. You may take this consent form with you to ask a family member or anyone else before agreeing to participate in the study.

If you have questions at any time during the research study, you should feel free to ask the researcher and should expect to be given answers that you completely understand.

After all of your questions have been answered, if you still wish to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this informed consent form.

You are not giving up any of your legal rights by volunteering for this research study or by signing this consent form.

The Principal Investigator, Raquel Wright-Mair or another member of the study team will also be asked to sign this informed consent.

This study has been approved by the IRB, Pro-2020-135.

### **1. What is the purpose of the study?**

This study will seek to document the experiences of male fraternity members within their fraternal organization and how their experience connects to critical race theory, critical consciousness and critical action. These fraternity members have interactions with their brothers from different backgrounds, which could allow them to possibly gain critical consciousness through their fraternal experience. Since this study will take a critical stance I will use critical race theory (Patton, Renn, Guido & Quaye 2016) in our analysis of data, findings and future recommendations.

### **2. Why have you been asked to take part in this study?**

You have been invited to take part in this study because you are a member of the fraternal organization that is being used as a sample recruitment pool. This organization is being used because it has chapters at many of the New Jersey institutions, different culture and community background of chapters as well as a strong alumni presence in the state. You have been chosen specifically to take part in this study because you fit the participant requirements of being an active brother in the organization, either as an alumnus or an undergraduate. I also wanted to choose organization members who have had many experiences in their organization.

### **3. What will you be asked to do if you take part in this research study?**

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete a scheduling survey, participate in an interview which will take approximately one hour and will be conducted through virtual conference software. All interviews will be digitally recorded, transcribed, and analyzed with all identifying information removed at the point of transcription.

### **4. Who may take part in this research study? And who may not?**

Members of the fraternal organization being studied may take part in this study. Any inactive member or nonmember of the fraternal organization cannot take part in this study.

### **5. How long will the study take and where will the research study be conducted?**

The overall study will take approximately one year, but your participation will be an one hour one time interview. Interviews will take place over virtual conference software.

**6. How many visits may take to complete the study?**

One virtual interview from participants is required to complete the study.

**7. What are the risks and/or discomforts you might experience if you take part in this study?**

There are no inherent physical risks in the procedures themselves, and it is not anticipated that participants will experience risks in completing the interview. Participants will not be exposed to any more risk of harm or discomfort than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. The interview may cause you to question some of your professional or personal practices, experiences, and strategies. If you experience any discomfort in this process, you are free to discontinue completing the interview at any time. You may also discontinue your participation at any time, for any reason. Any potential risk is extremely rare.

**8. Are there any benefits for you if you choose to take part in this research study?**

This study may or may not directly benefit you, what you get from this is completely up to you. You can learn something or even maybe teach me something. This interview looks to start a conversation that may or may not be happening in the fraternal world. The interview will have you look back on your fraternal experiences in a critical way in order to see if these experiences align with what is being questions through this study.

**9. What are the alternatives if you do not wish to participate in the study?**

Your alternative is not to participate in the study.

**10. How many subjects will be enrolled in the study?**

Approximately 10-15 participants

**11. How will you know if new information is learned that may affect whether you are willing to stay in this research study?**

During the course of the study, you will be updated about any new information that may affect whether you are willing to continue taking part in the study. If new information is learned that may affect you, you will be contacted.

**12. Will there be any cost to you to take part in this study?**



There is no cost to you to participate in this study.

**13. Will you be paid to take part in this study?**

There will be no compensation for this study.

**14. Are you providing any identifiable private information as part of this research study?**

We are collecting identifiable private information in this research study. Your identifiable information will not be used in any of the future research projects or disclosed to anyone outside of the research team.

**15. How will information about you be kept private or confidential?**

All efforts will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential, but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Your personal information may be given out, if required by law. Presentations and publications to the public and at conferences and meetings will not use your name and other personal information.

**16. What will happen if you do not wish to take part in the study or if you later decide not to stay in the study?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may change your mind at any time.

If you do not want to enter the study or decide to stop participating, your relationship with the researcher will not change, and you may do so without penalty.

You may also withdraw your consent for the use of data already collected about you, but you must do this in writing to *Principal Investigator Dr. Raquel Wright-Mair, James Hall 3076, 201 Mullica Hill Road, Glassboro, NJ, 08028*

If you decide to withdraw from the study for any reason, you may be asked to participate in one meeting with the Principal Investigator.

**17. Who can you call if you have any questions?**

If you have any questions about taking part in this study or if you feel you may have suffered a research related injury, you can call the Principal Investigator:

*Dr. Raquel Wright-Mair  
Educational Services and Leadership  
856-256-4711*

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you can call:  
Office of Research Compliance  
(856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU

**18. What are your rights if you decide to take part in this research study?**

You have the right to ask questions about any part of the study at any time. You should not sign this form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have been given answers to all of your questions.

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**AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE**

I have read the entire information about the research study, research risks, benefits and the alternatives, or it has been read to me, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed.

All of my questions about this form or this study have been answered and I agree to volunteer to participate in the study.

Subject Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Investigator/Individual Obtaining Consent:**

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all of the information contained in this consent form. All questions of the research subject and those of his/her parent or legal guardian have been accurately answered.

Investigator/Person Obtaining Consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix C

### Audio/Videotape Consent Form

ROWAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
AUDIO/VIDEOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

You have already agreed to participate in a research study conducted by Jason Artrip. We are asking for your permission to allow us to ***[include optional procedure such as audiotape (sound)]*** as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The audio recording(s) will be used for

- ***analysis by the researcher***

The recording(s) will not include any identifiers and the recording(s) will be stored in a locked file cabinet with no link to subjects' identity and will be destroyed upon publication of study results. Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

***Signature***

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## Appendix D

### Interview Protocol

#### Developing Critical Consciousness in Fraternity Members within Higher Education

#### Interview Questions

The following is a list of the semi structured interview questions that will be asked to start the conversation. These questions will be asked in no specific order. Many of these involved learning about the participants experiences and those experiences in relation to critical thinking and racial issues. If you wish to answer these questions you are allowed to say so, as well as if you need any clarification of the questions. These questions are geared towards seeking to understand your fraternity experience in relation to racial injustices and critical consciousness.

1. How do you identify as an individual? i.e. Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation
2. Tell me about your experiences as an undergrad within your fraternity. How did your fraternity discuss race and racial issues?
3. What can fraternities do at both the local level and national level to help do more for racial justice and critical consciousness?
4. How would you describe your fraternal experience as it relates to racial issues and critical consciousness?
5. When your fraternity received training, or talked about diversity did you feel it was impactful for the membership? Follow Up: If your organization did receive this type of training or talked about diversity how did this impact you as an individual?

6. How can fraternity members influence the current rise of racial justice movements on college campuses?
7. Please describe if there has been a rise in critical consciousness due to the awareness of racial issues during the Covid-19 pandemic and how this rise has affected you as a fraternity member.
8. Thinking about the fraternity system, what are some examples of a history of whiteness in that system?
9. How do you feel about the idea of connecting racial justice and the fraternity experience? If you are unsettled by the idea of social justice being a part of the fraternity why is that?
10. Thinking about the current rise in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Programs and initiatives on college campuses, what does a fraternity look like in this time?
11. Do you think your identity has a relation to how you feel about the history of Whiteness in fraternities or anything I have asked you today?
12. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?
13. Would I be able to contact you again if I have additional questions about your fraternity experience?

### **Interview Definitions**

- Critical Consciousness: to have a mindset of critical analysis of the world around you, specially for this study the social component.
- Critical Race Theory: a perspective that emphasizes the centrality of race and racism and challenges White supremacy in the law, education, political and other social systems (Patton, L.D., Renn, K.A., Guido, F.M., & Quaye, S.J. 2016)

- Racism: is the conscious or unconscious discrimination against any group of people based off their biological disposition.
- Whiteness: This term has been defined by many different scholars i.e.: Cabrera 2020, Cabrera 2014, Joyce S. B., & Cawthon T. 2017. For the purpose of this study I have taken all of these definitions and formed my own. I define it as the following: It is a social framework representing the ideology of privilege and immunity of the oppressor from racism injustices.
- White Immunity: The idea that White people do not experience the same systemic racism and oppression that is experience by communities of color (Cabrera 2020).
- Systemic Racism: the embedded oppression of people of color in any public or private sector i.e.: Healthcare, Education, Criminal Justice, and many more.
- BIPOC: Black, Indigenous and People of Color (Garcia, 2020)

## Appendix E

### Recruitment Email

Dear Possible Participant,

Hello! I am writing to you today as a researcher interested in better understanding how you as a fraternity member think, talk and interact with your experience as a fraternity member in relation to race, racism and race related issues.

Please consider being a part of my study. I hope to learn more about the fraternal experience and how it developed you into who you are as a professional, a man and as a critical thinker. To do so I would like to speak to you about your fraternal experience, from the first interaction you had with your organization to what your membership experience looks like now. I became interested in this topic through my own fraternal experiences, studies of the higher education field and recent rise in my own interests in issues of Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity.

What I hope to gain from interviewing you is an understanding of your experience in relation to DEI, whether you believe the fraternal world is the place for DEI actions, and how you do or not think critical about these issues in relation to your fraternity.

The consent forms are attached to this email; if you are interested in participating, please indicate you're interested and availability at the link here. I will then reach out to confirm time and date in the virtual interview, which will be over the phone or WebEx your preference. The interviews will be 60 to 90 minutes long based on how the conversation goes.

I hope to be concluded with interviews by March 2021.

Thank you for helping and being a part of my study to advance the knowledge about fraternal experience in relation to DEI and development.

Study has been approved by Rowan IRB. (PRO-2020-135)

Contact Information for research team:

Primary Investigator: Dr. Raquel Wright-Mair, [wrightmair@rowan.edu](mailto:wrightmair@rowan.edu)

Secondary Investigator: Jason Artrip, [artrip92@students.rowan.edu](mailto:artrip92@students.rowan.edu)

Sincerely,

Jason Artrip