

The Effect of Sorority and Fraternity Household Regulations On Sorority Women's Social Realities

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Abstract

Within Greek Communities, access to parties, drugs, and sex are the effective social currency that is exchanged within the Greek micro-society. Formal, gender-segregated household regulations give hegemonic control of the party scene to fraternity men. Research has established widespread knowledge of how this control creates gendered power dynamics and courtship patterns. Further research has linked these cultural norms to a volatile social structure in which women must buy into this power imbalance or risk social exclusion, which contributes to sorority women's increased likelihood of sexual assault. The viability of Greek communities and their place on college campuses have been a subject of intense debate in recent years. Although studies have separately assessed motivating factors for individuals to join Greek Systems and have analyzed their experiences within its party culture, few studies have focused on how Greek women create their social realities and rationalize the social inequalities that exist within the Greek system. Those that have are decades old. This study intends to collect more recent data to better understand how sorority women create their social realities and rationalize the social inequalities of the Greek system.

Population of Interest

The University of Washington Greek Community provides a unique opportunity to answer these questions because during the summer, sorority chapters close and fraternity chapters allow women to live there for low rent. By interviewing a mix of 20 sorority women and from the University of Washington, Seattle Campus who have lived in both a fraternity and sorority chapter house we can better understand the social realities of these populations.

Research Questions

- How do sorority women make sense of the social inequalities that exist within the Greek system?
- Do sorority women also draw a connection between social risks and the formal rules and regulations that govern Greek life?
- If they do, why do women continue to join these organizations?
- Are women satisfied with their Greek experience?

Methodology



- In-person qualitative interviews.
- Goal sample size of 20.
- Interviews delayed due to security concerns.
- Preliminary results are based on pilot interviews.

Next Steps



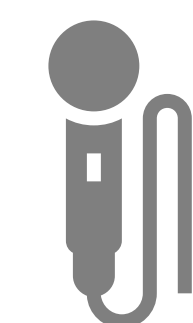
Continue to recruit participants and schedule interviews.



Continue to write thesis and adapt interview schedules.



Continue preliminary analysis of emerging patterns.



Conduct and complete interviews with sorority women.

Emerging Patterns

- **Differing alcohol use and party patterns:** Both women discussed how when they were living in the sorority chapter house, their decision to drink alcohol or attend a party was opportunity-based; it was less frequent large numbers of their peers went out, or there was a specifically memorable party happening, and they did not want to miss out for fear of social exclusion.
- **Fraternities provide increased agency:** They contrasted these experiences to that of the fraternity, where admittedly they drink on more occasions, but it was largely in a more casual setting, and they could do so at any time.
- **Improved relationships with fraternity men:** the decision to live at their specific fraternity chapter because they were in a relationship with one of the chapter's fraternity members, but that over the course of the summer they felt like they built closely-knit, friendly relationships with fraternity members that were not possible to achieve the academic year. mixed satisfaction with fraternity experience: both cited their summers living in a fraternity as standout experiences in their college careers, but conceded that if given the opportunity to live in a fraternity again, they would not.