ABSTRACT

LYNCH, ROBERT JASON. Hidden Voices: Narratives of Worldview/Religious Minorities in Historically Christian Fraternities and Sororities. (Under the direction of Dr. Alyssa Bryant.)

This study was intended to explore the experiences of religious minorities in historically Christian fraternities and sororities, as well as how they make meaning of their worldview within the context of their fraternal organizations. A narrative inquiry method was used, as three undergraduate students were asked to complete two sets of interviews where they shared stories about their worldview and fraternal experiences. Participant narratives were thematically coded to reveal common themes within and across their experiences, and narratives were also interpreted through the lens of Park's Theory of Faith Development to shed light on how participants made meaning of their experiences. Results reflected themes that permeated each participant's story: Support from organization, Connectedness, Expectations not matching experiences, Exploring worldview with others of a different worldview, and Religious privilege within the organization.

Hidden Voices: Narratives of Religious Minorities in Historically Christian
Fraternities and Sororities

by
Robert Jason Lynch

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science

Higher Education Administration

Raleigh, North Carolina

2011

APPROVED BY:

_____   _____
Dr. Audrey Jaeger   Dr. Paul Umbach

_____
Dr. Alyssa Bryant
Chair of Advisory Committee

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother, Carolyn Lynch, who helped me to understand the importance of celebrating the differences in others, inspired the confidence I needed to pursue my dreams, and provided the foundation for my own spiritual journey.

BIOGRAPHY

Robert 'Jason' Lynch was born and raised in Whiteville North Carolina, where he graduated from Whiteville High School in 2005. He graduated from the University of North Carolina Wilmington in December 2008 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. In 2009, he moved to Raleigh, North Carolina to pursue a Master of Science degree in Higher Education Administration, and worked as a Graduate Assistant in the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life at Duke University, Chapter Resident Advisor at North Carolina State University, and Resident Director at North Carolina State University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction

With the turn of the twenty-first century, research regarding the spiritual lives of college students has become increasingly prevalent (Astin, Astin, Lindholm, Bryant, & Calderone, 2004; Bryant 2005; Bryant 2008; Gilliat-Ray, 2000; Lindholm, 2007; Magolda & Ebben, 2006; Miller & Ryan, 2001; Nash, 1999; Nash, 2001). However, concern for the spiritual development of college students has been a focus of American higher education since its inception; after all, one of the purposes of colonial colleges was to educate clergy (Goodchild & Wechsler, 1989). As American higher education evolved, so did the priorities of faculty and administrators. With the advent of the German system of graduate education and the rise of the modern research university, priorities moved away from the spiritual development of students to the intellectual development of students (Cohen, 1998). In the era of mass higher education, post World War II, not only have student affairs administrators concentrated on intellectual development, they have sought to develop other areas such as ethnic identity, emotion, and morality (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Despite the renewed focus on holistic student development, the spiritual development of students has continued to be somewhat taboo.

Regardless of this hesitation, many researchers have begun delving into how students make meaning of their lives and work. Alexander and Helen Astin, along with a team of researchers, began a study that found that an overwhelming number of college students are interested in growing spiritually. Approximately 58% of students surveyed valued incorporating spirituality in their lives (Astin et al, 2005). In the same study, researchers discovered that a significant number of students think it is the job of higher education to help

them develop spiritually. This is not surprising that college students are seeking to find meaning in their lives and work, as higher education's affinity for positivism has grown over the past century. Even the earliest student affairs practitioners foresaw this pattern, as The Student Personnel Point of View 1949 (p. 122) states:

> For many students, the introduction to scientific understandings and meanings in the classroom may necessitate a drastic reorientation of religious ideology at a new level of objectivity. The time-honored teachings of organized religion may lose their effectiveness both as explanatory and guiding principles. The resultant disturbance may have deep and far-reaching ramifications into personal as well as family, and even broader, social conflicts. In his new search for values which are worthy of personal allegiance in a time of social conflict, the student needs mature guidance. The religious counselor and the religious activities program with a broad social reference may assist the student in developing an understanding of proper concepts of behavior, ethical standards, and spiritual values consistent with his broadened horizons resulting from newly acquired scientific and technical knowledge…

Many contemporary researchers have focused on the spiritual or religious development of students within the classroom (Nash 1999; Nash 2001; Lindholm, 2007). For instance, Sabri et al. (2008) used quantitative methods to investigate the connection between students' academic work and their religious beliefs using Perry's Theory of Intellectual and Moral Development (Sabri, Rowland, Wyatt, Stavrakopoulou, Cargas, &

Hartley, 2008). The study concluded that students' exploration of existential questions as they relate to their academics, while varied, followed the same pattern of development as described in Perry's theory. Students begin with a very narrow view of their worldview in the context of their studies and are eventually challenged to develop a more critical lens. However, the students selected for this study were primarily Christian and were associated with a divinity school. This leaves one to wonder if non-Christian or non-religious students develop their worldviews in the same way.

Others have focused on the spiritual development of students outside of the classroom (Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm, 2006; Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2010; Jablonski, 2005). Capeheart-Meningall (2005) highlights several ways in which student affairs practitioners can help students find meaning and develop their 'inner-selves' in already established contexts. Beginning with student orientation and other first year programs, the author asserts that students should be given ample opportunities to reflect on their values and how they relate to tasks such as course selection or career decisions. Capehert-Meningall also asserts that addressing the topic of spirituality can directly foster connectedness on campus through the facilitation of dialogues and lectures about spiritual diversity. These structured opportunities can lead to further one on one discussion among students.

However, one area that has rarely been researched in regards to spiritual development is Fraternity and Sorority Life. The bulk of research focused on fraternities and sororities revolve around substance abuse, and discrimination in regards to race or sexual orientation. (Arnold & Kuh, 1992; Caudill, Crosse, Campbell, Howard, Luckey, & Blane, 2006; Hesp & Brooks, 2009; Wechsler, George, & Davenport, 2009). Fraternities and Sororities have been

a major influence on the social development of American college students since the beginning of higher education in the United States (Torbenson & Parks, 2009). Because early colleges gave such great attention to the spiritual development of students, primarily Christian students, it is no surprise that the composition of Greek letter organizations has traditionally been students identifying as Christian. In using the phrase, "historically Christian fraternity/sorority," I have recognized the fact that the majority of the members in these early fraternal organizations were Christian, and the values, symbols, and traditions of these fraternal organizations reflected that worldview. Some studies have attempted to identify what role spirituality has within these fraternal organizations. In a 2009 study published by the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, researchers used quantitative methods to investigate the impact of fraternity and sorority membership versus non-membership on spiritual development. The study found that there were no significant differences between the spiritual development of fraternally-affiliated students and non affiliated students; however, the study did point out that fraternity and sorority members scored significantly lower on scales of connectedness than did non-affiliated students (Webb & Mueller, 2009). These findings are not surprising, as researchers assert that Greek Letter Organizations tend to be very insular, with members mainly socializing with other fraternity/sorority affiliated students. Researchers suggest that because of the insularity of these organizations, they are not being exposed to students of varying worldviews.

Because of the increase in diversity in American colleges and universities, it may be assumed that traditional fraternities and sororities are inducting many people who do not identify as Christian into their organizations (Torbenson, 2009). Historically, those

identifying as racial or religious minorities have been actively excluded from historically

Christian organizations (Torbenson, 2009; Turk, 2004). Turk (2004) states:

> Believing that some of their members would react negatively to any affiliation with
>
> Jewish or Catholic women, the sisters of Kappa Alpha Theta, Kappa Kappa Gamma,
>
> Pi Beta Phi, Alpha Phi, Chi Omega, and other organizations largely barred women of
>
> these faiths from entry (pg. 104).

The exclusion of minorities led to the creation of the historically black National Pan-Hellenic

organizations, as well as Jewish based organizations (Berman, 2005; Ross, 2000). This begs

the question, what are the experiences of these religious minorities, or those who do not

identify as religious, that joined historically Christian fraternal organizations? The purpose

of this study is to explore the spiritual experiences of fraternity and sorority members who do

not identify as Christian. Through this study I hope to answer two key questions. What are

the experiences of religious minorities in historically Christian fraternities? How do these

minorities make meaning of their worldview within the context of their fraternal

organizations?

      To investigate this problem, I employed a narrative inquiry approach. Three students

were selected to participate in this study. Each was from the same large, public, land grant

university located in the southeast United States. In order to identify potential students,

Fraternity and Sorority chapters were contacted so that I could speak with the chapter

membership about participation in the study. In addition, an email was sent to every

fraternity/sorority affiliated student on campus soliciting participation. Interested individuals

were to contact me via email. To qualify as a participant, students were asked to complete a

short demographic survey that asked them for their name, age, gender, fraternity/sorority affiliation, and spiritual belief (Appendix A). Students, who were members of organizations belonging to councils other than the Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Association, or National Pan-Hellenic Conference, were not considered for the study; students who identified as Christian or as any Christian denomination were also not considered.

Once three participants were selected, each was asked to complete two interviews. Between the interviews, participants were asked to compose a spiritual autobiography exploring their fraternal organization in regards to their worldview. Interviews and autobiographies were then thematically coded in order to explore themes related to their experiences as religious minorities. After completion of the final interview and the first draft of results, participants were given the chance to read the findings and offer feedback and/or clarification.

Since fraternities and sororities can be very isolated and insular communities, this study will help to inform practitioners of the, perhaps hidden, experiences of students identifying as religious minorities (Webb & Mueller, 2009). By understanding how the religious majority influences the day-to-day functions of traditional fraternities and sororities, fraternity and sorority advisors can implement programs to help chapters become more inclusive. More specifically, practitioners should create programs or incorporate into established programs, education about the religious history of IFC, Panhel, and NPHC organizations. In addition, gaining a better understanding of the experiences of this student population may better inform policies and practices that could negatively impact these students; for example, certain dietary restrictions should be addressed in creating meal

options within fraternity and sorority housing systems. Finally, many Fraternity/Sorority Life Programs (FSLP's) collect and/or publish various demographics about their students, such as grades, racial diversity, and geographic diversity; these administrators should also collect and publish information in regards to student worldviews so as to attract other students with diverse worldviews.

Furthermore, this study opens up other areas of potential interest for future research such as investigating what effects the presence of religious minority students in chapters has on fraternities and sororities, or differences in religious inclusion between fraternities and sororities. In addition, future quantitative research could be conducted on the spiritual development of non-Christian fraternity and sorority members compared to Christian fraternity and sorority members.

Due to the qualitative nature of my investigation, this study cannot be generalized to the greater fraternity and sorority population. The degree of worldview diversity within other fraternity and sorority chapters on the campus is unknown. Only three organizations were represented in this study: two associated with the Interfraternity Council and one associated with the Panhellenic Association. No members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council participated in this study; therefore future research about religious minorities in these organizations would be of benefit to understanding the experiences of this student population. Additionally, the worldviews highlighted in this study (Pantheism, Judaism, and Non-Religious) were a small portion of the worldviews that are potentially found within the various chapters on campus.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Because of the increasing diversity of college student worldviews, college fraternities and sororities may be experiencing an influx of members with varied worldview backgrounds. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of religious/worldview minorities in historically Christian fraternities and sororities. In this chapter, I will ground the reader in past and present research regarding spirituality in higher education, as well as fraternity and sorority life in five sections. To begin, I will explore what is meant by the terms religion, spirituality, and worldview, followed by a review of literature regarding spirituality in higher education, with a focus on spirituality student affairs. The third section will focus on research about collegiate social fraternities/sororities, with an emphasis on the history of these organizations and the predominant issues facing the modern fraternity/sorority. I will then explore research regarding issues of spirituality in fraternities/sororities. Finally, I will articulate a conceptual framework for this study concentrating on Parks' Theory of Faith Development.

Religion, Spirituality, and Worldview

To many, the terms "religion" and "spirituality" are synonymous. However, there are many debates within the literature about what the terms mean. Some would contend that to be religious means to be inherently spiritual and visa versa, while others challenge that they are two separate concepts.

Webster's Dictionary defines religion as, "a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith." The key word in this definition is *system*. The differentiation of religion from spirituality or worldview is that it is institutionalized; that is, it involves

formally organized beliefs that follow prescribed doctrines, values, and rituals. However, it should be recognized that some individuals follow the tenets of their religion without being a member of a religious institution. Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism are all prime examples of the institutionalized nature of religion. Astin, Astin, Lindholm, Bryant, Szelényi, and Calderone (2005) used the following indicators to describe what constituted "religiousness": believe in God, pray, attend religious services, discuss religion/spirituality with friends and family, and follow religious teachings in everyday life. However, I have found that the most fitting description of religion is the threefold definition posited by Fontana (2003), "It [religion] is a belief in a spiritual dimension, the observance of a set of spiritual rituals or practice, and the adherence to a doctrine of ethical conduct arising from spiritual teachings" (p. 11). This definition is particularly fitting because of its emphasis on observance/adherence to a prescribed set of traditions and/or beliefs.

Yet, for many people, the rules, regulations, and formality of religion do not fit their belief system. They, instead, prefer to use the term "spiritual." Much of the current literature on students' personal beliefs uses the term spirituality because it encompasses a wider range of beliefs than religion. Western culture tends to use the term spiritual in reference to a person's soul or energy, whereas many eastern cultures use the word synonymously with life and/or breath (Fontana, 2003). Again, Astin et al. (2005) used the following indicators to describe spiritual behavior: Believe in sacredness of life, have an interest in spirituality, search for meaning/purpose in life, have discussions about meaning of life with friends, see spirituality as a source of joy, seek out opportunities to grow spiritually. Their research has shown that a significant number of college students are entering college identifying

themselves as spiritual. Finally, Love and Talbot (1999) describe spirituality in terms of human development. Key phrases they use in relation to spiritual development are: seeking personal authenticity, transcending one's locus of centricity, developing greater connectedness to self and others, deriving meaning and purpose in one's life, and openness to that which is beyond human knowing. While I have made a point to distinguish spirituality and religion in this passage by defining spirituality as a broader concept, those that identify as both spiritual and religious may choose not to differentiate the two.   Because religion innately encompasses spiritual concepts, and spirituality can be concentrated into religion, it is easy to see how the two could be considered synonymous.

Because some students do not identify as religious or spiritual, I have chosen to use the term "worldview," as it is more inclusive and gives a better representation of the beliefs of college students. A person's worldview can encompass any guiding beliefs and values. In a study aiming to define the concept of worldviews, Koltko-Rivera (2004) defines worldview as "…a set of assumptions about physical and social reality that may have powerful effects on cognition and behavior (p. 3)." Essentially, a person's worldview is their life philosophy, whether it is of a religious, spiritual, non-religious, or political nature, that guides their behaviors and meaning-making process.

Spirituality in Higher Education: History and Rationale

It may be surprising to some that despite the perceived secularization of the academy, institutions of American higher education were intricately linked to religion. The oldest colleges and universities in the nation, including Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, and Dartmouth, were all founded out of a need to educate the clergy and to spread the Christian

tradition throughout the "New World" (Dudley, 2010; Geiger, 2005; Cherry, Deberg, Porterfield, Durbin, and Schmalzbauer, 2001). However, as higher education evolved, more emphasis was placed on research and less on religion (Cohen, 1998). Even with this secularization, leaders of these colleges and universities still held that the spiritual development of their students was important. In 1949, campus administrators from across the United States came together to revisit *The Student Personnel Point of View*, highlighting the areas of focus for campus administrators in regards to students. Spirituality was an area which administrators felt important; as they identified that one of the core student needs and personnel services is that "the student discovers ethical and spiritual meaning in life" (American Council on Education, 1983b, p. 122). Currently, some researchers in the field of religious sociology contend that the idea of colleges and universities becoming increasingly secular is a myth. Cherry et al (2001) points out that while the primary focus of American higher education is no longer to produce clergyman, religious and spiritual practices are still alive and well within student culture and within academia.

In the last decade, there has been a renewed interest in the spiritual life of college students, illustrated by the use of campus religious advisors, expanded research about the spiritual development of college students, and the formation of committees specific to spirituality in two national organizations for higher education administrators: NASPA and ACPA (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 2010; Bryant, 2005; Schaper, 2004). However, despite this upsurge of interest, some feel that higher education is still not doing enough to meet the spiritual needs of today's college students. Nash (2007) criticizes higher education's lack of responsiveness to the spiritual needs of its students. He asserts that the ignorance of college

faculty and administrators in regards to the various worldviews of their students is detrimental to students' development and may lead to further conflict between students of different worldviews. He also points out the disconnect between the values and actions of higher education, as administrators and faculty promote multiculturalism and social justice, but choose to ignore matters concerning religious pluralism.

However, Nash is not the only researcher suggesting that higher education is not doing enough to support the inner-development of its students. Raper (2001) writes about the silent struggle students are facing concerning their spiritual beliefs. She asserts that for the most part, higher education completely ignores the religious and spiritual sides of its students, which leaves students to develop their spiritual identities with little to no support. A correlation is also made between spiritual struggle and the development of substance abuse and psychological disorders that have continued to rise since the 1990's. Raper emphasizes the importance of engaging students in dialogue about purpose and meaning. She offers several examples of how student affairs professionals are facilitating these dialogues, including the use of residential life programs geared toward meditation, self-reflection, relaxation, and engaging students in community service projects followed by a period of reflection.

Supporting Nash and Raper's sentiments, Astin (2004) asserts, "…the development of self-awareness receives very little attention in our schools and colleges, and almost no attention in public discourse in general or in the media in particular" (pg. 34). Some faculty and administrators may think that this is not a problem since colleges should not be interested in helping students address self awareness or help them explore existential matters; however,

it is apparent that this is an area of development in which students are struggling (Astin et al, 2005). In 2003, Alexander and Helen Astin, along with Jennifer Lindholm began a study that would change the course of research in higher education concerning spirituality and college students (Astin, 2004; Astin et al., 2005). After surveying 3,680 college juniors at forty-six different colleges and universities, researchers found that fifty-eight percent place a high value of incorporating spirituality into their lives. Furthermore, many students report spiritual struggles. Sixty-five percent of students surveyed reported that they occasionally question their spiritual beliefs, and sixty-eight percent felt "unsettled about spiritual and religious matters" (Astin et al, 2005). Like the emergent student affairs professionals of the early 20th century, it is our job to understand these struggles and support our students through these spiritual challenges.

It would seem that those leading American higher education have come full circle in their attention to developing the worldviews of college students. In the beginning, the primary focus of higher education was to train those that would spread the Christian tradition throughout America. As education evolved, colleges and universities shied away from anything that could not be empirically studied. Today, faculty and administrators are beginning to recognize the importance of how students make meaning of their lives; however, unlike the college and university leaders of the past, current faculty and administrators must navigate developing students in an increasingly pluralistic environment.

Spirituality and Student Affairs

Outside of the classroom, student affairs administrators are charged with spiritually developing college students in the spirit of holistic education (American Council on

Education, 1983b). However, in light of the secular influence on postsecondary education, and the emphasis on the separation between church and state, colleges and universities, particularly public institutions, have been perceived to avoid intentionally addressing this area of concern (Cherry et al, 2001). Additionally, it would seem that the nature of our work in student affairs impedes spiritual development in relation to the concept of connectedness; for example, departments within student affairs have a tendency to silo themselves and fail to connect with others within their own division (Allen & Kellom, 2001). In response to this trend, Capeheart-Meningall (2005) calls on student affairs administrators to accept the challenge of fostering students' spiritual development outside of the classroom since that is where students spend most of their time. Recognizing this issue, many student affairs administrators and researchers have begun identifying ways to incorporate spiritual development into their practice.

Some studies have shown that increased attention to the spiritual development of college students has positive outcomes. Stewart (2001) explored the effect of spirituality on substance abuse. The study showed that students identifying as more spiritual were less likely to use of alcohol and marijuana in college; although, results also showed that this effect lessened the longer students were in college. Also, Gehrke (2008) found that there is a slight, but significant, correlation between spirituality and leadership. However, the most compelling argument for the importance of attending to the spiritual development of students comes from Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2010). According to the authors, "…data suggest that spiritual growth does indeed enhance many of these other [traditional] college outcomes [academic performance, leadership skills, psychological performance, etc]" (p. 115). They

go on to explain that certain measures used in their study to define spirituality are positively correlated to an increase in traditional college outcomes; for example, student growth in equanimity is positively correlated with higher GPA's and growth in measures of Global Citizenship is positively correlated with an increased level of diversity awareness.

Fraternities and Sororities

Contemporary collegiate fraternal organizations are complex and closely connected to the culture of American colleges and universities (Owen, 1991).   In looking at the purposes of fraternities and sororities, their missions and values center on fostering leadership, intellectual, and social development in order to better the human condition (Schreck, 1976; Torbenson and Parks, 2009; Turk, 2004). However, these organizations maintain a sense of diversity in purpose compared to other organizations that focus on specific aspects of these shared purposes, such as religious-based organizations, social justice organizations, and cultural organizations.

Although fraternal organizations have a clear impact on the collegiate experience for students involved, to date this area of campus life has received little attention from researchers as compared to other functional areas (Becker, Smith, & Ciao, 2005; Molasso, 2005).   The research that has been focused on Greek Letter Organizations (GLO's) has primarily dealt with issues of substance abuse and discrimination based on race, gender, and sexuality, leaving colleges and universities with little empirical data on which to base its programming and development models in relations to GLO's. In this section, I will discuss the history of the modern fraternity and sorority community, as well as explore existing research on these organizations.

History.

The fraternity and sorority community, found primarily in American colleges and universities, is nearly as old as U.S. higher education itself, beginning at one of the nation's oldest colleges, William and Mary (Current, 1990; Geiger, 2005; Turk, 2004). Turk (2004) states, "The first fraternity in the United States, Phi Beta Kappa began in 1776 at William and Mary College in Virginia, when five students came together to form a social club based on the principles of friendship, morality, and learning" (pg. 2). Like many of the early fraternal organizations, Phi Beta Kappa was established as a form of protest against the educational system of its time. Modeled after the Literary Societies, the early fraternities sought to provide college men with a social an intellectual outlet since at the time the academic curriculum consisted of rote memorization and recitation (Cohen, 1998; Current, 1990; Torbenson, 2009). Eventually the leadership of Phi Beta Kappa decided to move the organization away from its roots as a secret society and towards a more open collegiate honor society (Current, 1990). However, the fraternity community was built on a shaky foundation as they inherited the drinking behaviors and social privileges of wealthy, white, Protestant, men who were the primary student demographic of the time period (Cohen, 1998; Horowitz 1987; Nuwer, 1999). Currently, these organizations are affiliated with the trade association known as the North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC). These organizations are also affiliated with the Interfraternity Council, a student-led organization that sets policies and guidelines for NIC/IFC affiliated organizations. Because the majority of students accepted into colleges and universities at the founding of many of these NIC organizations were Christian, it is not surprising that the majority of fraternity men identified as Christian

16

(Cohen 1998; Horowitz, 1987; Torbenson, 2009). As a result of this majority perspective, many of the values, traditions, symbols, and rituals have a very strong Christian influence that is still present today; therefore, these organizations can be labeled as historically Christian fraternities (Torbenson, 2009). The same holds true for women's organizations, as discussed below.

It wasn't until the late 19th century that women would begin to formally participate in the fraternity community. Unlike the first fraternity (Phi Beta Kappa), it is unclear which organization can claim the title as the 'first sorority.' Surprisingly, the beginning of women's participation in GLO's can be traced to the following fraternities who allowed a small number of women to join them: Sigma Alpha Epsilon, Beta Theta Pi, Phi Delta Theta, and Pi Kappa Alpha; however, the extent of the women's involvement was limited to decorating chapter houses and planning parties (Torbenson, 2009). Alpha Delta Pi would claim to be the first sorority, as it began as the first women's collegiate organization; however, Pi Beta Phi was established as the first national women's fraternity. Even so, Kappa Alpha Theta was the first sorority to use Greek letters, and Gamma Phi Beta was the first women's organization to use the term *sorority* (Nuwer, 1999; Torbenson 2009; Turk, 2004). Although many of these organizations would like the distinction of being "the first," the most important fact is that these organizations were founded in response to lack of inclusivity of the male-dominated fraternity community . They were safe havens for the few collegiate women of the time to share ideas, build relationships, and learn (Torbenson, 2009; Turk, 2004). The National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) now governs these sororities.

Forming along the same time as women's fraternities, members of the Jewish community began chartering fraternal organizations, as they were barred from membership in already established organizations (Turk, 2004). Berman (2005) explained that the first of these organizations, Pi Lambda Phi, was established in 1895 by a group of Jewish men who wanted to create a nonsectarian fraternity. They imagined an organization that did not discriminate based on religious affiliation. However, this endeavor failed, as arguments over religious ideals and values began dividing the membership. Eventually Pi Lambda Phi began identifying as Jewish based fraternity. Shortly after the founding of Pi Lambda Phi, other fraternal organizations began to emerge that identified as primarily Jewish interest organizations such as Zeta Beta Tau in 1898 and Sigma Alpha Mu in 1909. These organizations played a critical role in 20th century America during and after World War II, creating unity and advocating on behalf of the Jewish community.

Following the inclusion of women, and those identifying as Jewish, into the fraternal movement, the next social milestone in fraternal history was reached in the appearance of African Americans in college life. Long after their emancipation, freed slaves, as well as the children of these men and women, were destined to face a lifetime of discrimination; however, a small number were able to seek a college education. In 1906, seven of these young men banded together, in order to survive the extremely hostile environment of collegiate life, to form the Black Greek Letter Organization, Alpha Phi Alpha. Two years later, the first Black Greek Letter Organization for women was formed, Alpha Kappa Alpha (Ross, 2000). Between 1906 and 1963, nine Black Greek Letter Organizations would be

formed comprising the National Pan-Hellenic Conference (NPHC), each carrying out the mission of social justice and equality in different ways (Ross, 2000).

Today, there are more than 70 North American Interfraternity Conference organizations, 26 Panhellenic organizations, nine NPHC organizations, and numerous cultural- and identity-based organizations with a combined membership of more than 600,000 undergraduate students (Owen, 1991). Due to the considerable involvement of undergraduate fraternity and sorority chapters in higher education, they have a great impact on student culture for better or for worse (Horowitz, 1998; DeSantis, 2007). Although the long history of fraternities and sororities has been marred by a tradition of exclusivity, within the last two decades, these organizations, with the help of fraternity/sorority life professionals, have made a concerted effort to diversify their membership and continue to change policies, missions, and standards to reflect more inclusive environments for their members and potential members. Because of these efforts, as well as the growing diversity of the United States, it can be assumed that fraternities and sororities will be inducting members with more diverse backgrounds in regards to race, spirituality, sexuality, and will need to make greater efforts to educate its members on how to celebrate these varying worldviews (Nash, 2007; Martin and Johnson, 2009).

Impact of fraternal membership on undergraduates.

In the section above, I explored the foundation of the modern fraternity and sorority community and highlighted the high level of participation by undergraduate students. I will now turn to a discussion of the impact of Greek Letter Organization membership on students.

As noted above, much of the research on fraternities and sororities deals with alcohol consumption (Alva, 2007; Barry, 2007; Caron, Moskey, & Hovey, 2004). In fact, a meta-analysis of research published in student affairs journals found that 27% of articles dealt with alcohol (Molasso, 2009). Many of these articles highlight the self-destructive relationship of fraternities and alcohol consumption. In a comprehensive qualitative study, using multiple case studies of individual fraternity chapters, Arnold and Kuh (1992) concluded that alcohol consumption is a cultural phenomena, national fraternities lack an understanding of how to effect cultural change, and the greatest change agents to fraternity culture are individual local chapter members. Furthermore, studies have found that membership in a fraternity or sorority is the strongest predictor of binge drinking (Caudill, Crosse, Campbell, Howard, Luckey, and Blane, 2006; Wechsler, 1996). In fact, according to a survey of one national fraternity, over 60% of members were binge drinkers (Caudill et al, 2006).

In addition to the topic of alcohol consumption, much research has been conducted in regard to various forms of discrimination within fraternity and sorority chapters. Historically, NIC and NPC fraternal organizations prohibited members who were not white, heterosexual, Protestant, or were not of the upper socio-economic status (Torbenson, 2009; Horowitz, 1987; Turk, 2004). Despite efforts on the national level to add statements supporting diversity within chapters, fraternities and sororities are still quite homogenous (Arnold & Kuh, 1992). Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, and Terenzini (1996) found that first-year student membership in a fraternity or sorority was negatively correlated with openness to diversity, particularly for White first-year students. In regards to diversity among sexual identity, an emerging area of interest is homophobia within fraternal

organizations, as fraternities and sororities have had a history of excluding members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community (Windmeyer 2005; Windemeyer and Freeman, 1998). In a case study, Hesp and Brooks (2009) interviewed several affiliated and non-affiliated men to explore the role of sexual identity in the local fraternity community, as well as the level of homophobia or lack thereof within the local fraternity community . Results showed that there was a level of homophobia within membership selection practices and within chapters. Participants identifying as members of a fraternal chapter reported that they felt that while there was very little overt homophobia, chapter membership displayed overt heterosexist behaviors.

Even though studies on fraternities and sororities primarily deal with alcohol and diversity, many studies have pointed out other interesting outcomes of fraternity and sorority involvement. Again highlighting the lack of connectedness between members of Greek Letter Organizations with other campus populations, Byer (1998) interviewed fraternity members who were also members of the Student Senate. His findings found that those interviewed perceived that membership within their organizations helped them to develop as leaders; but they felt that their fraternity hindered them from developing an appreciation for students outside of the fraternity/sorority community . It was found that those in fraternal organizations would like for their organizations to provide them with social interactions with other non-Greek student groups.

However, another qualitative study found that this organizational isolation may have led to the positive moral development in fraternity members. The case study focused on one fraternal organization in the Midwest whose membership had a positive reputation on

campus for upholding their fraternal values. Four themes uncovered the potential secret to

their success: "1) recruiting quality students, 2) upholding house tradition and reputation, 3)

emphasizing moral development, and 4) encouraging community service" (Mathiasen, 2005,

p. 1). After recruiting members, the traditional new member education process, as well as the

great deal of time spent with fellow fraternity brothers, had very positive outcomes, as

opposed to the negative outcomes in the studies mentioned above. In discovering that the

insular nature of these organizations seems to have profound effects of collective nature of

their students, it would be helpful to understand how this influence can be harnessed to help

positively develop students, or what drives these organizations to behave in a positive

manner.

Spirituality in Fraternities and Sororities.

Fraternities and sororities have had a major influence on the social development of

American college students since the beginning of higher education in the United States

(Torbenson, 2009; Nuwer, 1999; Horowitz, 1987). Because early colleges gave such great

attention to the spiritual development of primarily Christian students, it is no surprise that the

composition of fraternal organizations has traditionally been students identifying as Christian

(Cohen, 1998; Torbenson, 2009). Not unlike the majority of higher education, the spiritual

development of fraternity and sorority members has been severely neglected. In a special

issue of *Perspectives,* a periodical published by the Association of Fraternity/Sorority

Advisors, Rebholz and Hoke (2009) underscore the commonalities between espoused values

of the fraternity community and concepts of spiritual development. In this section, I will

explore the limited amount of research that has been conducted in regards to spirituality and the fraternity/sorority experience.

Much research concerning aspects of spirituality in fraternity and sorority life primarily deals with fraternal rituals and congruence between values and actions. As stated in previous sections, many values are specific to the fraternal organization, but most speak to the importance of academics, leadership, community service/philanthropy, and brotherhood/sisterhood. Shalka (2008) explored potential differences among levels of values congruence and self-awareness between members of culturally based organizations (multicultural and NPHC fraternities and sororities) and socially based organizations (IFC and NPC), using the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL). Results showed that culturally based fraternities scored significantly lower than social fraternity members and non-affiliated men on two measures of self-awareness: consciousness of self and congruence. While Shalka attempted to explain this discrepancy from the viewpoint of historically Black NPHC members, she failed to address the point of view of other culturally based organizations such as Latino-interest organizations and Asian-interest organizations. While somewhat similar, these organizations are quite different in mission and organization, which may have affected results. However, this does not mean that socially based fraternity and sorority members show a significant congruence between organizational values and actions. Matthews, Featherstone, Bluder, Gerling, Loge, and Messenger (2009) call for the need to educate members about ritual and values, as there seem to be drastic differences in the values fraternity and sorority members espouse, and values shown in their behaviors. According to Callais (2005), many students in these organizations had little regard for ritual

because they felt the ritual ceremony lasted too long or they did not understand the content presented in the ritual ceremony.

While many studies related to spirituality and fraternity/sorority life are limited to discussions of values and rituals, there is a small body of literature that directly addresses the topic of religion and spirituality within fraternities and sororities. Webb and Mueller (2009) investigated the impact of fraternity and sorority membership versus non-membership on spiritual development. The study found that there were no significant differences between the spiritual development of fraternally-affiliated students and non-affiliated students; however, the study did point out that fraternity and sorority members scored significantly lower on scales of connectedness than did non-affiliated students (Webb & Mueller, 2009). This may suggest that membership within Greek letter organizations does not contribute to or inhibit the spiritual development of its members; however, because these organizations tend to be extremely insular, they may hinder members' exposure to people with diverse backgrounds, including those with different spiritual/religious worldviews. Specifically addressing religion in fraternities and sororities, Martin and Johnson (2009) call for dialogue involving the role religion has played, and continues to play, within these organizations. Due to the religious nature of the secret rituals and symbols, particularly Christian symbolism in NIC and NPC organizations, there may be an effect on members who do not identify as Christian.

Although there has been some research addressing the spiritual lives of fraternity and sorority members, the literature is scattered and neither directly investigates to what extent fraternal membership impacts the spiritual development of students, nor does it address the

experiences of fraternity and sorority members in regards to its students. As fraternal organizations attempt to foster the development of traditional college outcomes, they seemingly neglect an aspect of student development that could address all of their developmental goals: spirituality (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 2010).

Summary

Based on this review of the literature, it is evident that the study of college students' worldviews is of significant importance. The spiritual development of students has been valued within American postsecondary education since its inception, and has been formally integrated into the professional expectations of student affairs administrators. Within the last decade, faculty and administrators have observed the ever-increasing diversity of college student worldviews, and recognize the need for an understanding of religious pluralism if we are to create effective communities of learning on campus.

As a part of these communities, fraternities and sororities have had a long and impactful history, heavily influencing campus cultures and norms. However, not much is known about the extent of this influence on college student development outside of drinking behaviors and openness to diversity. In particular, very few studies have focused on the spiritual dimension of fraternities and sororities, with most addressing the topic of fraternal values. It seems there has been no formal research that directly addresses the religious/spiritual/worldview experiences of college students affiliated with fraternities and sororities. This begs the question, what are the experiences of fraternity and sorority members within the context of their fraternal organizations? More specifically, what are the experiences of religious minorities in historically Christian fraternities, and how do these

minorities make meaning of their worldview within the context of their fraternal organizations?

Conceptual Framework

To gain greater clarity of the experiences of worldview minorities in historically Christian fraternities and sororities, I will be analyzing participant narratives through the lens of Sharon Parks' Theory of Faith Development. By intentionally using the term worldview in this study, I attempt broaden the conversation of the existential or meaning making experiences of college students beyond that of religion. Parks (2000) aligns with this goal as she broadens the definition of faith beyond that of faith in a "God(s)." Instead, Parks defines faith in many different ways: faith as promise, faith as center of power and value, faith as connectedness, faith as trust, and faith as action (Parks, 2000).

In developing her theory, Parks cites the works of many well-established developmental psychologists such as Piaget, Erikson, Gilligan, Fowler, and particularly the work of William Perry. Grounding herself in their work, she expands the concept that human development takes place in four stages (Child, Adolescent, Adult, Mature Adult). Instead, she posits a fifth stage between adolescence and adulthood, which she terms 'young adulthood.' This period of development is characteristic of traditional college students and marked by a search for vocation, finding purpose, and feeling a sense of belonging. In her theory Parks recognizes four periods of development: Adolescence, Young Adult, Tested Adult, and Mature Adult (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn, 2010; Parks, 2000).

Parks' Theory of Faith Development suggests that students make meaning of their lives within the five previously mentioned stages through three forms: knowing,

dependence, and community. Parks (2000) and Evans et al (2010) highlight Parks' form of *knowing* as based on Perry's Theory of Intellectual Development, which describes how people develop cognitively. The form of *dependence* is based on Gilligan's Theory of Women's Moral Development and Kegan's Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness and describes how a person's dependence on others develops over time. Finally, the form of *community* is grounded in Fowler's Theory of Faith Development, and describes how a person develops networks of relationships. Below I have briefly summarized the forms.

Knowing.

Authority-bound (Early Adolescence)- Authority figures, such as parents and teachers, are interpreted to be the primary sources of knowledge. Individuals perceive situations as very black and white, and do not handle ambiguity well.

Unqualified Relativism (Adolescence)- Authority figures are found to be fallible, and individuals begin to accept multiple versions of 'the truth.' They begin to put more credence in that which can be supported by evidence.

Probing commitment (Young Adulthood)- Individuals make short term commitments that are based on critical thought processes and exploration. Commitments typically deal with future plans, vocation, and faith.

Tested commitment (Adulthood)- Individuals become more confident in their commitments.

Convictional commitment (Mature Adulthood)- Individuals have deep conviction for the truth they have developed through extensive exploration, while appreciating others views of the truth.

Dependence.

Dependent/Counterdependent (Adolescence)- Individuals rely solely upon the opinions of authority figures in regards to how they should think/feel. However, as individuals discover the fallibility of their authority figures they may begin to rebel against the teachings of the authority.

Fragile inner dependence (Young Adulthood)- Individuals begin to effectively balance their own personal views with the views of others.

Confident inner dependence (Adulthood)- Individuals develop a greater self-confidence in being able to shape their own destiny.

Interdependence (Mature Adulthood)- Having a great confidence in their own beliefs, individuals are able to appreciate other's values without seeing them as a challenge to their own values.

Community.

Conventional community (Adolescence)- Because of their dependence on others to define themselves, individuals adhere to the values of the group which they identify with.

Diffuse community (Late Adolescence/Young Adulthood)- As the views of individuals are challenged and begin to change, so do their relationships within their communities. Individuals begin to seek new relationships with others that share their new views.

Mentoring community (Young Adulthood)- As young adults begin to leave the

beliefs, values, and communities of their adolescence they seek support in their

transitions to new communities.

Self Selected group (Adulthood)- Adult seek out communities that share their

views and beliefs, and surround themselves with people like themselves.

Open to the other (Mature Adulthood)- As awareness of others continues to

develop, individuals seek communities that value the differences in others.

This conceptual framework will be used to analyze the narratives of three religious

minority students who identified as members of historically Christian fraternal organizations

by illustrating examples of how each student has developed within each form of Park's

theory as they reached the young adult stage. By using Park's Theory of Faith Development

as a lens for this analysis, I will demonstrate how these students have made meaning of their

worldview within the context of their fraternal organizations.

Chapter 3: Methods

Due to the increasing diversity of students enrolling in American colleges and universities, religious pluralism is quickly becoming a salient issue on campuses across the nation. Because of this increasing diversity, more pressure is being put on Greek Letter Organizations to ensure the inclusivity of all students. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of religious/worldview minorities in historically Christian fraternities and sororities. In this chapter, I will discuss the methods used to explore my research questions by first highlighting the general study design and research philosophy. From there, I will discuss sample selection, data collection and analysis, my role and assumptions in the study, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Paradigm and Study Design

Throughout this study I will be guided by an interpretive/constructivist epistemological perspective (Creswell, 2009; Cobern, 1993; Merriam, 2009; Riessman, 2008). This paradigm uses research to describe and interpret the lived experiences of participants (Merriam, 2009). Cobern (1993) argues that traditional scientific perspectives, guided by objectivity, are limited as they only allow researchers to investigate a part of a whole, and that there is really no such thing as true objectivity as all data requires interpretation based on the perspective of the researcher. In comparison to positivists who do research to find one clear attainable truth, constructivists realize that truth and knowledge are subjective and that there can be multiple truths or interpretations of knowledge experienced by different individuals (Merriam, 2009; Cobern, 1993). Whereas the positivist would tend to use measurable, empirical data based on quantitative experimentation, the constructivist

would use qualitative methods that depend on researcher-participant interaction and in-depth attention to subjects' perceptions.

Because of the descriptive and experiential nature of this study, I chose to employ a qualitative research design. According to Creswell, qualitative research, "…is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Essentially, qualitative research aims to investigate the experiences of individuals or groups within a given context. Unlike quantitative research, which concerns itself with making comparisons and generalizing results to larger populations, qualitative research is not meant to be generalized beyond the sample specified within the study (Merriam, 2009).

Within the qualitative paradigm, I will be using narrative inquiry techniques. Narrative inquiry is a research method that makes use of storytelling as a means of interpreting events or experiences (Merriam, 2009). Aligned with the constructivist philosophy, these stories do not aim to identify facts that support a single truth; instead, they are meant to convey various perspectives of truth. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe narrative inquiry as studying experiences of individuals, grounding their techniques in work of John Dewey, who asserted that individuals' experiences are a collective of social and personal elements. They go on to describe a three-dimensional model of narrative inquiry that interprets a person's story on the following vectors: internal and external (interactions); time (continuity); and physical environment (situation). This method of investigation is particularly appropriate, as I am trying to gain a better understanding of the experiences of religious minorities in historically Christian fraternities and sororities. In looking at

Clandinin and Connelly's vectors, I will be exploring the interactions of these fraternity and sorority members with their brothers and sisters over the course of their membership within the organization.

Sample Selection

Because the purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of a specific group of individuals within an organization, I chose to use criterion-based sampling. This approach sets up a standard of specific qualities that each participant must have in order to have the greatest chance of obtaining narratives rich in details that are relevant to the study (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993). I also employed the use of snowball sampling. This sampling method involves finding participants by word of mouth, typically from current participants in a study (Merriam, 2009). In order to participate in this study, students had to be members of fraternities or sororities associated with the Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Association, or National Pan-Hellenic Council. They must also have been initiated into their organization at least two semesters prior to their participation in this study. Finally, participants had to identify as having a worldview that is non-Christian.

To gain a better understanding of the experiences of religious/worldview minorities in historically Christian fraternities and sororities, three undergraduate students identifying as members of a fraternity or sorority were recruited for participation. To solicit participation, emails were sent to each IFC, Panhel, and NPHC chapter president to be forwarded to their chapter members. Additionally, and email was sent to each fraternity/sorority member on campus. The email sent to chapter presidents and general members can be found in

Appendix A. Finally, recruitment flyers were hung in various buildings across campus, as well as in on-campus fraternity and sorority houses.

Data Collection

In accordance with narrative inquiry methods, data were collected in the form of first-person narratives told by participants. I met with the three undergraduate fraternity and sorority members twice over the course of two months to let them share their stories about their experience as a religious minority in their fraternal organization. Each interview was recorded using a digital recorder, and a verbatim transcript was generated from the audio recordings. Before each interview, participants were emailed a copy of the interview guide to allow them an opportunity to reflect on the questions in advance. Because I intended to elicit stories from the participants, the interview guide contained a few broad questions with several probing questions. Other specific questions were asked of the participants based on their unique stories.

During the first interview, I explored the participant's general experiences within his or her organization. Finding out how they came to be in their fraternity or sorority, as well as their overall experience laid the groundwork for talking about the deeper subject of their organization in regards to their worldview.   After the first interview, all participants were asked to compose a spiritual autobiography chronicling their worldview experience in the context of their fraternal organization. The autobiography portion of my thesis is based on McAdams 'Life Story Model' (McAdams, 2001, p. 100), which posits that, "people living in modern societies provide their lives with unity and purpose by constructing internalized and evolving narratives of the self." By having participants purposefully construct written

narratives of their experiences as religious/worldview minorities in their fraternal

organizations, they were better able to talk about the topic during the second interview.

Supporting this, (Popp-Baier, 2008, p. 43) states, "...'narrative identities' are (re-)constructed

by telling stories that guarantee a certain degree of consistency and continuity while at the

same time nurturing discontinuities and inconsistencies." The life story/autobiography did

not have a maximum page limit, but I set an expectation that their stories were to be more

than one typed page. I encouraged participants to write only about their experiences since

they have been initiated into their organization; however, because this process was intended

to be as organic as possible, they were allowed to write about anything they felt was

relevant. They were asked to email their completed spiritual autobiography to me a day

before the second interview. The last interview explored what each participant identifies as

his or her worldview and how he or she views their worldview in the context of their

fraternal organization.

Following the methods established by (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I wrote field

texts after each interview. These texts were composed of my personal observations of the

interview such as where the interview took place, how I felt throughout the interview, and

how I perceived the participants to feel during the interview. Due to the interpretive nature

of narrative inquiry, these field texts helped to keep the participant narratives in context, and

shed light on why I may have interpreted their narratives in the ways that I did.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of the interviews, I generated verbatim transcripts and coded the

interview transcripts using thematic coding techniques (Riessman, 2008). Thematic analysis

involves examining the content of participant narratives, as opposed to the structure of the narrative (e.g. how the participant chose to formulate the narrative). Interview transcripts, as well as the participants' autobiographies, were read thoroughly, and statements were assigned a particular code (or theme). Initially, the codes were very specific, reflecting singular units of meaning, but after breaking the data down by specific codes, emergent themes were identified through the grouping of similar codes. Before composing the final research texts, I compiled my initial interpretations of the data into an interim research text. In doing this, I was able to reflect on the various ways I could interpret the data for each individual participant, as well identify common themes between all participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pg. 133). Finally, using the themes identified in the transcripts and autobiographies, in conjunction with the field texts, I composed research texts that illustrate the participant's experiences as worldview minorities in historically Christian fraternal organizations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Researcher Role and Assumptions

As the researcher in this study, I primarily play the role of interviewer/facilitator. In my role, I attempted to ask questions to elicit participant narratives that were rich with detail. However, it is important to identify my beliefs and part of my own narrative, so as to be transparent about how my own experiences may influence my interpretations.

Growing up, I was raised in a small rural town in the Southeast, where I regularly attended a United Methodist Church. My immediate family did not attend church regularly, so I attended services with my grandparents. As a child/pre-teen, I was fairly involved in my church, serving as an acolyte, attending confirmation classes, and participating in the

church's youth group. However, during my teenage years, I became less involved with my church even though I still identified as a Christian and considered myself religious. My separation from church occurred for several reasons. Because of growing academic and extracurricular commitments, I found that I did not have as much time to dedicate to my church. I also became very disillusioned when a portion of my church's congregation stopped attending services seemingly because a female assistant pastor was hired. The notion that women could not hold leadership positions in a church was absolutely ludicrous to me, and I did not want to be a part of a community that held those values. Lastly, I became frustrated with the political dynamics that formed in the church. As a place of worship, I did not think that politics should have had any role in the organization, and by the end of high school, attending church became more of a chore than a time of reflection and worship. By the end of high school, I was rarely found within my church, other than attending holiday services.

During my first and second years of college, I attended church sporadically, but I regularly attended meetings of a campus Christian student organization. During the same semester, I also was initiated into my fraternity. My initial involvement in these organizations was spurred by one of my roommates whom I had known in high school. One of the things I appreciated most about the two organizations was how they exposed me to people who held to different worldviews than I did. The religious organization was nondenominational, therefore I was able to listen to the perspectives of people outside of Methodism, and through my fraternity I was exposed to people who did not identify with any form of Christianity. Because of personal conflicts and differences in ideation, I left both the

36

church's youth group. However, during my teenage years, I became less involved with my church even though I still identified as a Christian and considered myself religious. My separation from church occurred for several reasons. Because of growing academic and extracurricular commitments, I found that I did not have as much time to dedicate to my church. I also became very disillusioned when a portion of my church's congregation stopped attending services seemingly because a female assistant pastor was hired. The notion that women could not hold leadership positions in a church was absolutely ludicrous to me, and I did not want to be a part of a community that held those values. Lastly, I became frustrated with the political dynamics that formed in the church. As a place of worship, I did not think that politics should have had any role in the organization, and by the end of high school, attending church became more of a chore than a time of reflection and worship. By the end of high school, I was rarely found within my church, other than attending holiday services.

During my first and second years of college, I attended church sporadically, but I regularly attended meetings of a campus Christian student organization. During the same semester, I also was initiated into my fraternity. My initial involvement in these organizations was spurred by one of my roommates whom I had known in high school. One of the things I appreciated most about the two organizations was how they exposed me to people who held to different worldviews than I did. The religious organization was nondenominational, therefore I was able to listen to the perspectives of people outside of Methodism, and through my fraternity I was exposed to people who did not identify with any form of Christianity. Because of personal conflicts and differences in ideation, I left both the

religious and fraternal organizations before my third year in college. However, exposure to these different worldviews helped to shape my belief system into what it is today. While in my fraternal organization, I often noticed how sometimes brothers with different religious backgrounds where treated differently. Most often, these differences were not overtly mentioned; however, there were the occasional jokes about eastern religions or atheism. I even noticed that the religious symbolism in the fraternity's traditions could make those who did not adhere to Christian beliefs could feel uncomfortable. These small things often made me uncomfortable, as I did not think that an organization that claimed to be diverse and inclusive should force non-Christians to conform to a belief system to which they did not ascribe.

Within the past year, I have taken a renewed interest in my own worldview, which spurred me to take a class concerning spirituality in higher education. Although my worldview seems to continually change, I still identify as a Christian who believes in God and Jesus Christ; however, I still do not like the idea of belonging to a church, as my beliefs are a part of who I am on a day-to-day basis, and not just on Sundays. In regards to this study, my experiences have predisposed me to assume that the participants in my research may have experienced a degree of religious oppression that I observed within my own organization. In addition, my negative experience within my faith community could lead to an assumption that participants would have also found themselves in a similar situation.

Trustworthiness

Because this study was designed using qualitative methods, there are no statistical measures that can be used to establish reliability/validity; however, in order to establish the

trustworthiness of this study, I have taken several measures. In regards to internal validity, I made use of triangulation (Merriam, 2009). By incorporating various forms of data collection, including the use of spiritual autobiographies, field texts, interim research texts, follow-up interviews, and multiple participant perspectives, I was able to pinpoint the most credible account of the experiences of religious minorities in historically Christian fraternities and sororities.   In addition, I ensured the credibility of my findings by using member checks, where each participant was able to read my interpretations and express any questions, comments, or concerns (Merriam, 2009). Their feedback was taken into account in completing the final analysis.

Regarding external validity, two measures were employed: thick description and maximum variation (Merriam, 2009). By choosing to use a narrative inquiry approach, the data collected was rich with detail about the topic being investigated. This provides practitioners with the appropriate context in which to transfer the data and interpretations into their own experience and practice. Furthermore, I attempted to recruit diverse participants, thereby ensuring maximum variation. Both fraternities and sororities were represented, as well as three very different worldviews. In providing maximum variation of worldview and organizations, there is a greater chance that practitioners could find a narrative that resonates with their own lived experiences.

Chapter 4: Results

In this section I present the findings of the interviews that took place with three undergraduate fraternity and sorority members who identify as being non-Christian in a historically Christian fraternity or sorority. The interviews are presented in the form of a narrative chronology that highlights relevant themes found within their accounts. The section concludes by presenting common themes that were found across the individual narratives. Through presenting findings within and across individual narratives, the reader will gain a better understanding of the experiences of these religious minorities in historically Christian fraternal organizations.

Jake Powers

Jake Powers is a bright, enthusiastic, and personable young man who has a deep passion for his university and his fraternal organization, Beta Beta Beta (BBB or Beta's). Labeling himself as a Pantheist, Jake's worldview stems from a sense self-guidance and treating others with respect. In exploring his experience as a religious minority in a historically Christian fraternity, many themes emerged that shed light on his fraternal experience; however, the most salient themes, relating to this study, included a sense of connection, leadership, loyalty, self reliance, and reflecting on what is right/wrong.

Born in a place drastically different from the public land grant institution in the south that he attends, Jake Powers grew up in a very open home. From an early age Jake was taught to appreciate the difference in others. Describing his parental influence, Jake states:

> Well, let me just say, my mom is a hippie. She's a mental hippie. She's very liberal.
> She believes in an open mind to anything, anywhere, anytime to anybody and when

39

she and I would talk, we would get real heated, not arguing, just real deep

conversations about well, what really is happening, is there any proof, is there any of

this, that. And she feels very similar to how I feel. I guess I learned a little

bit from her. She has some influence on me. It was after that, it was just three or four

years of just, it was not a pressing matter to figure out my religion, but it was during

the course I would just talk to her or talk to anyone who was willing to talk abut it. I

mean, I've talked with Christians, Catholics, Jews; I haven't spoken with many

Muslims. I think, maybe one, one guy who was of Muslim faith, but I couldn't keep

up. And [my worldview] wasn't that hard to piece together. Piecing it together was

easy; it was the time coming to it. I mean, twelve years without understanding what

religion even was and then finally deciding what you are going to believe in. It was

just lengthy, I guess. Just in hindsight, it was a long road.

While raised with a clear set of personal values, Jake's spent a majority of his upbringing

bouncing from church to church as his family searched for a spiritual home; however, he did

not seem to find a connection to any of the religious institutions to which he was exposed.

My mom, when I was younger, she took us to a few different churches. She was

having some trouble with her faith, I guess. Each of my parents were born and raised

Catholic and then we tried a Lutheran church. I don't even know. I went to so many

different churches when I was in elementary school and just got dragged to it of

course. I had no idea that they were different.

Because of a lack of motivation, Jake did not perform very well, academically, in

high school and decided to begin his collegiate career at the local community college. This

was a difficult experience for Jake, as he did not feel challenged and lacked a sense of connectedness to his fellow students and the college. However, Jake was able to connect with a major university located close by through becoming involved with their marching band. Also Jake's experience at the community college led him further along in his spiritual journey when he met a professor for one of his English courses, who introduced him to the philosophy of pantheism. Jake's account of this experience exemplifies two themes, Self Reliance and Reflection on Right/Wrong, as he emphasizes his own conscious as his moral compass, as well as how one's actions affects others.

> Pantheism, I don't know if it's the true definition of pantheism, but it's close. What I believe is that it's nothing Christian. I don't believe in Christianity…I just believe in my conscience. My conscious is my god and then the devil is guilt. If you feel guilty it's because you know you've done something wrong, that is the devil in you taking over and if you truly feel bad, then your consciousness will make you feel bad. Devil is a part of god in my scheme of things. [My worldview] is truly just the golden rule. Do unto others as they would do to you because the reason you feel guilty is because you wouldn't want what you did to them, let's say you do something wrong. You steal a dollar from someone. You feel guilty. You feel guilty because if they stole it from you would you feel bad. You are out a dollar.

Jake's time at the community college eventually brought him into contact with his future fraternity brothers of Beta Beta Beta. Already having a connection with many of the brothers from high school, Jake felt very at ease with members of the organization. Jake started the recruitment process envisioning the stereotypes of the fraternity/sorority

community that he had been exposed to through various media sources such as the movie *Animal House*. But he described his experience as very different from his expectations.

> I thought it [being in a fraternity] was going to be ABC and it turned out to be XYZ. It's just so much different. So much more fun. So much more involved with each other. I thought it was just guys being stupid together, but it's the time away from the parties that we do the most fraternity based activities such as like philanthropy events. I had no idea those went on before I joined. Leadership roles. I didn't know I could be a better public speaker because of being in a fraternity. So just ABC to XYZ.

Eventually, Jake was initiated into his fraternity and transferred to State University. In retelling his experience as a new member in Beta Beta Beta, Jake continued to clarify his worldview. As mentioned, he grew up in an environment that valued the differences in others, however several instances throughout his new member education came into conflict with his worldview. On one occasion Jake mentioned that due in part to the use of anti-Semitic jokes, a Jewish new member discontinued the new member education process. Again recalling witnessing his brothers using racial slurs, Jake reflects on what would have been the right thing to do in the situation and his struggles reconciling his worldview and his brother's actions.

> Jake: And so when I came here [to State University] at first I tried to fight it [brothers using racial slurs] and I said, you guys, I don't understand this, like is that really okay, but then you got to realize that's how they were brought up…
>
> Me: What was their reaction when you confronted them?
>
> Jake: [They] just call me a Yankee because I'm from [the north].

42

Me: How has that affected your experience, or does it?

Jake: It very much does because like I said, I came in thinking that I was the most

tolerant person, like I'd try and just be the most tolerant person, since I got here, it's

only furthered my wanting to just be completely open minded to anything and

anytime, anywhere and it's never been hard to be open minded about stuff, but now

it's, it seems like I need to make a push in order to overcompensate for what they are

acting like… Trying to be open minded of them and who they are being, in my

opinion, rude too. It's a sticky two way street to be open minded of one person and

when that person is getting ridiculed, to be open minded of the person who is

ridiculing them.

Although he witnessed these negative aspects of his organization, Jake still recalled many

positive aspects that continued to shed light on the construction of his worldview. One

reoccurring theme in Jake's narrative was the development of his leadership abilities. He

stated multiple times that he was looking for leadership experiences to further his career

development, and was surprised to find that experience within his organization. In the

passage below, Jake recounts the various leadership experiences his organization provided

for him.

I took on a lot of roles in it [the fraternity]. I took on chairmanship positions,

committees within the fraternity that I'm in. I'm in probably six different roles right

now and I guess I wanted to [immediately get involved] because I really didn't like

the community college. I mean, the classes were fine, but there was no university

setting. There is nothing to get involved there. There was maybe three on three

intramural basketball, but I mean, come on…So I got here and at State University you

got like student government. You got all these different clubs, things to get involved

in. And none of them really struck me at first glance, except for student government,

but I'm still looking into that. Plus I just took some roles in fraternity figure, get my

name up, get my rep up within the brotherhood and then hopefully that will help me

out with [grad school].

Perhaps the most prominent theme within Jake's narrative is the concept of loyalty.

Stemming from a conversation about the meaning of brotherhood, Jake explained that it was

customary that brothers within Beta Beta Beta always responded to phone calls or text

messages immediately, unless there was an extenuating circumstance. However, in the

account below, Jake reveals a story that highlights his sense of brotherhood expressed

through the concept of loyalty. This account also underscores how deep connections are

formed between Jake and his brothers during times of crisis.

I had some buddies from work who I had invited over to my new fraternity house and

they had salvia [a legal hallucinogenic drug]. And my heart couldn't take it, and I

started seizing and I completely blacked out after throwing up. Just basically an

overdose. The buddies from work said, don't call the ambulance because they didn't

want to get in trouble. My brothers told my work friends, to call the ambulance.

When the ambulance arrived, my brothers forced these guys to tell them what I took

and basically to never come around the house, ever again. That defined for me

brothers versus friends. They [my brothers] said these guys were not my friends, and

they didn't care about me. Nonetheless, when the ambulance arrived, I was coming

to and I was feeling better, but my brothers asked, "Have you had seizures before?"

And I said, no. They then put me in the ambulance and made me go to the hospital.

That was something that other people wouldn't do, obviously. That was a big

defining moment, and one of the guys who took charge of the situation was the one

who walked me through it…So, from that day forward, [it forged a] good connection.

And that's what I call brotherhood.

Since this experience, Jake has thrown himself into his studies and his fraternity, taking on

additional leadership positions. He expressed a sense of satisfaction in forming a connection

with the younger members, and even taking on the responsibility of mentoring a little brother

within the organization. In the passage below, Jake reflects on how his worldview has

changed since becoming a part of BBB.

My worldview has changed only slightly since becoming a part of BBB, that being

my attentiveness to worldly religious beliefs and tolerances. Don't get me wrong, I

love each of my brothers for each of their great qualities and I am quick to forgive

their faults, but BBB is packed with "sons of the South" racist feelings and language.

I almost feel uncomfortable at times at the usage of words and intolerance but I've

had to adapt to the situation and let the fight go at times.

As expressed in earlier passages, Jake has struggled with the worldview of his fraternity

brothers, as their values and beliefs seem to come into direct conflict with his values of

acceptance and openness. Below Jake continues to explain how he rationalizes his brothers

behaviors.

45

This does not mean that I at all condone the behaviors displayed by some of my brothers. I must be true to the code in my fraternity, and to put a long story short, we are brought into our fraternity through initiation, and at that point we become brothers. As brothers, we are slow to reprove each other's faults. As a person who believes in giving each person I meet the same amount of open mindedness and respect, whether I agree with his view or not. I had always considered myself to be tolerant of anyone and everyone. Since joining BBB, I have seen a lot of intolerance that I disagreed with, and I feel that now I am even more open to other practices of life.

Below, Jake summarizes his experience within his organization. His sentiments are somewhat ironic as he interprets his organization as being a very open and diverse organization, while recalling specific instances of racism and anti-Semitism.

… Beta Beta Beta is purely open minded to anybody, whoever wants to join has a shot. And at that point it comes down to merit. So, I like to think that my worldview is incorporated with my fraternity, because if not, I probably wouldn't have been here in the fraternity, my Jewish friends probably wouldn't have been in it. Rastafarian fellow wouldn't have been in it. Atheists wouldn't have been in it. Our chapter would be half as big. So, I guess there is a direct connection between my worldview and my fraternity. It [my fraternity] exemplifies everything that I stand for.

Gwen Jackson (Zeta Zeta Zeta)

Gwen Jackson is an ambitious, articulate, and energetic young woman who is rediscovering her faith in Judaism while balancing her commitment to her sorority, Zeta Zeta

Zeta (ZZZ or Zeta's). Throughout her interview, five key themes emerged that help focus how her worldview has developed, as well as her experience with her sorority: leadership development, experiences not meeting expectations, rebellion, exploring worldview with others, and minority experiences.

Gwen Jack grew up as a follower of the Jewish faith in an area of the country heavily dominated by Christianity, specifically the Baptist denomination. Not surprisingly, Gwen discovered at a very early age that she was different from her peers in elementary school. Educating her peers and teachers about her faith and having to notify teachers of absences because of religious holidays became routine. However, the overt discrimination she was subjected to, as a youth, was never routine.   Below Gwen recalls when she first became actively aware of her worldview, and also exemplifies one of her minority experiences.

> Yeah, [bullying] was pretty bad in elementary school. I had students tell me that Jewish people are going to hell. And it was like, what does that mean, I can't believe they even said it; but now looking back it's just a blip, but back then it was like, "Why are they telling me this?"…but, that was definitely a time when I was like, "this is because of my religion." That's what shaped [my worldview].
>
> I definitely think about it [my religion] a lot. So, I think I've always had that awareness of Judaism …and what that meant for me in school, having to, every single year, get approval to not be in school for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kipper… I didn't get it, but then, you know, elementary, middle school, high school you have to go through the motions, like telling your teachers you're not going to be at school that day, [and they ask] "why?" and I say "Okay, this is why."

Upon entering high school, Gwen started to experience a spiritual crisis when she began to feel marginalized within her synagogue. She described her family as having a conservative political perspective, which was not the norm within her religious community. This caused many tensions as she had to balance being a minority at school, as well as within her synagogue, which led Gwen away from her spiritual foundation.

> I believe we [my family] are the only republicans in the entire congregation and we are very strong republicans. So, I always just had this feeling of in school I'm different because I'm Jewish, but in synagogue I'm different because I'm conservative…Humanism and things like that are important to Judaism, but were things my family [didn't necessarily believe in.] So I would go to these classes [at the synagogue] and I was like, this is bull shit. I don't want to sit here…I don't agree with them [the synagogue leaders]…these people are not my friends. They are not fun to be around. And that was probably where it all stemmed from was kind of a hostility towards Judaism mainly because of my experience through my synagogue and feeling kind of like an outcast in a place where I was supposed to feel so welcomed. I did not feel welcomed.

Gwen's experience as a religious minority did not end in high school. Thinking that her acceptance into State University would expose her to a life where she did not constantly have to act as an educator about her worldview, Gwen found herself very disappointed. Being paired with a Christian roommate from a very small rural town in the south, she was immediately put back in the position of minority educator. Gwen recalls this experience below.

When [my roommate] would ask me questions, I would feel almost offended.

I wanted to shake her, and be like "Are you stupid? I'm American!" It felt…I don't

know, this might be a bit of a stretch…but [it felt] like racism...I felt like such a

minority. I don't usually feel like that. I'm not walking around saying I'm a minority

but, she made me feel like I was so different and it was like "No I'm really not.

There are people around different areas of the country who are so much more Jewish

than me and you have no idea." I would feel a little angry and pissed off and

saddened. [I was] frustrated that people like this even existed or the fact

that she's asking those questions, it was like "come on, like are you serious?"

However, her feeling of isolation soon subsided when she began sorority recruitment at State

University. Having a sister who was a part of a Greek Letter Organization, Gwen knew that

she wanted to give sorority life a try. Throughout the process, she was pleasantly surprised

to find others who shared her worldview; however, she struggled with the somewhat forced

conformity of the recruitment process. Exemplifying the theme of rebellion, Gwen discusses

her recruitment experience below.

I was excited about [sorority recruitment]. I didn't want to lose my individuality

throughout it. I kind of fought it a little bit internally. It's like they are telling us

what to wear and I was like, "I don't want to do this" Even though part of me

likes that kind of stuff, I like belonging to a group, but also I like showing off maybe

my style you know. They tell you like to look this certain way, but you can still bring

in your own little style to it, and I liked that, but I also like, "I would do it, if only

they weren't telling me to do it." You know?

As Gwen continued to recount her memory of sorority recruitment, she revealed that having sorority sisters who shared her Jewish heritage was important in her recruitment decision process. Seeing that particular sororities had Jewish sisters within their membership greatly appealed to her, as she would have a greater network of people who shared her cultural experiences.

> …But I met cool girls during the [recruitment]. I did meet some Jewish girls in the sorority during rush, like in Zeta Zeta Zeta, and in my [spiritual autobiography] I talk about rush. During those five or six days, I really did look out for Jewish girls in other sororities and I didn't see them in other organizations. There were a couple [sororities] where I knew that a girl was Jewish or I had seen her in my youth group before, and I was definitely more interested in those sororities than I was in other ones.

The theme of rebellion continued into Gwen's new member education experience, where she once again was asked to do something she did not agree with. In this case, she was asked to attend a seminar at the very last minute.

> In the beginning of joining the sorority, it was an issue with authority. The New Member Institute was something that State University puts on. I don't think we were really told that we had to attend. I didn't go because I was like, "I don't care, I'm not doing that. I've got something better to do." I just didn't go to things, which is not cool, but I didn't find the need to because they were keeping us so in the dark. I was like, "if you are not going to explain then I'm not going to do it."

50

Despite these somewhat negative experiences, Gwen very much enjoyed being a new member in her sorority. Particularly, throughout her experience, she recalled a wide variety of leadership experiences that she was exposed to as a result of being a Zeta including coordinating the homecoming committee, and serving as a key officer within the sorority's executive council. Her experiences helped her to develop key areas of leadership such as setting goals, encouraging others, and forming an action plan. Gwen felt these experiences were quite salient to her overall experience in her sorority as it deepened her connection to the organization, and provided her an opportunity to make her organization better.

> I was the home coming chair. That was kind of like my first kind of like venture in
> doing something to give back for the sorority. I mean, I went to everything my
> freshman year, which was cool, but it was kind of like observing. And think I think it
> was really when I ran for a significant position, that I was finally given the
> opportunity to have this vision and like actually do things because I am a big picture
> person…I have this vision for our sorority and I know what we can do and
> I know our strengths…and what our sorority needs and what it doesn't. So I think
> that I have definitely grown as like a leader and as a listener.

As Gwen began to form connections with her sorority sisters, conversations about her worldview began to resurface. Although these conversations still left her in the role of educator, she felt that these conversations were a positive experience. Specifically, when she moved into the sorority house, she began exploring her worldview with her new roommate, Sarah, who, like her previous roommate, came from a very traditional Christian background. However, she felt a sense of mutual respect between herself and Sarah in

regards to their personal beliefs. Gwen recalled spending time with Sarah's family, and the mutual learning that took place when they shared stories about their religious beliefs. Below, Gwen describes another instance when she spoke with multiple sorority sisters about her worldview.

> I lived in the house as a sophomore. I brought a menorah into the house during Hanukkah and everyone loved it. They asked me questions and I answered them and I felt well respected. That same winter the power once went out at the sorority house and a bunch of us sat in the hallway and had a very interesting conversation about Judaism. I pretty much had to explain what exactly it was, what I believed and how it was different from Christianity. I only felt respect and curiosity, nothing negative. Again, that same winter I went on Birthright to Israel so I answered a lot of questions about what that trip was and why it is so special.

Gwen continued to find support in her sisters throughout her time in Zeta. During a particularly frightening incident, she recalls relying on the loyalty and support of her sisters to see her through the crisis.

> …I got a bug bite on my foot. I thought was just a big bite. All of a sudden I was like, "I don't think this is just a big bite, I'm getting kind of hot." I broke out in hives all over. My throat started to like close up and then the panic attack started. I went back downstairs to my [sorority] sister, who is a CNA [Certified Nursing Assistant]. So I was like, "Jill, oh my god, I don't know what's going on." And she was like, "Okay, you are having an allergic reaction. It's okay." They brought me to urgent care, and the doctor told me I needed to go to the hospital. It was crazy. It was so

intense. It was awful. They [my sorority sisters] stayed with me like the whole time.

They called my mom, and she eventually came by. They went to the hospital with me

and that was like, I mean, that was more than just being a friend…those are my

sorority sisters. [The experience] made me definitely associate positive things [with

my sorority sisters], you know, because they were like my close friends, but I know

any other [sorority sister] would have done that and I don't have any doubt about that.

Although Gwen felt that her experiences within her sorority were very positive, even in

regards to her worldview, it seemed that a lot of this positivity stemmed from her acclimating

to the culture of her organization as opposed to the organization adjusting to hers. For

instance, she spoke about adjusting her perception of a prominent Christian symbol used

during sorority's ritual. Instead of focusing on the direct religious connotations, she instead

chose to view the symbolism in more general terms.

In our rituals, sometimes things are brought up that are a little bit more religious

sounding, but I kind of take [differently]. [When it says] Jesus Christ, I'm thinking

just God, which I do believe in. Having faith is more important in my organization

than like one belief [system], which is cool. That's how I felt. I think there's a faith

and [sorority sisters] talk about it and it's definitely there. But it's not very specific.

It's not exclusive. It's just the idea of having faith and being a strong woman and, I

think it's like for hope, for strength, for life. People find their hope and strength in

different things. [For] a lot of the girls, it's their religion. So that's when I would say

it [religion/faith] would come up. But it doesn't really come up a lot, and when it

does, I kind of just take it how I want to look at it.

In a conversation about the potential experience of a more conservative Jewish person within her organization, Gwen reflects on the potential difficulties a member may expect.

So the tradition of Shabbat is like Friday night and then Saturday morning.

So if I were to go to synagogue on a Friday night, just like people go to church on Sunday when no [sorority] events are planned, and there was a required event planned I might get a little bit of flack. They'd be like, "Why? No, you need to come. You need to be there," and I'd be like "No, I'm going to synagogue." But I don't [go to synagogue], so I guess, if somebody were to join who did go to like synagogue I think it would go to our honor board, but I think [the absence] would be excused. I don't think it would be directly excused. I think I would have to explain it. Like that's kind of B.S., but I think if a person came [into the sorority] with those traditions, I think [the sorority] would be respectful.

Currently Gwen has decided actively explore her worldview. Gwen expressed a desire to regain the connection she had with her religious beliefs when she was younger, and hopes to make her worldview a more prominent priority in her life.

So I went through like a period of contemplation and really questioned everything and took religion classes and I find that right now I'm closer to my religion. I did not ever think that was going to happen. I went to Israel recently with a group of Jewish peers. That was an awesome experience mainly because it was my first time leaving the country. I didn't have any religious revelations there or anything, but maybe it was just the exposure, that was the catalyst [for my renewed interest]. A lot of my sorority sisters are very Christian, and they pray and put a lot of faith in

54

God, and I don't know what that means. I don't pray, and I don't have faith in

God. I'm Jewish, but what does that mean?

Gwen confessed that she tried joining an on-campus religious organization, but she found it

hard to connect with the membership. However, she was able to find a connection with an

off-campus religious organization for college students that she attends with a friend from

high school.

> I started getting involved in an on-campus Jewish organization., but I'm not involved
>
> in the religious organization on campus anymore because I think that they're kind of
>
> nerdy and I'm super involved in my sorority, why do I need to get involved with
>
> something else; granted, I have wanted to try and connect with Judaism on campus.
>
> So I joined this other organization this semester and that's definitely exposed me
>
> more, at least it's been in the forefront of my mind more now, so maybe those are all
>
> reasons why I feel like I'm getting closer and closer to God and like my religion or at
>
> least, wanting to.

At the close of our interview experience, Gwen explained what being a part of Zeta Zeta Zeta

meant to her.

> Zeta Zeta Zeta means I know I have a support system wherever I go. I depend on
>
> the friends I made in Zeta for emotional support, advice, and fun and I know that if I
>
> ever move anywhere else, I can depend on my Zeta sisters in another city to help me
>
> out or be there for me. Also, it's been one of the greatest teachers I've ever had.
>
> Participating in Zeta by going to events, running for positions, and leading the chapter
>
> has taught me so much about myself. I've learned that I'm not a stickler for

perfection, unless it's my program of course haha, and that I need to work on working in a group. I've grown as a leader in Zeta and as a role model I think. Zeta has definitely helped me become a better person.

Bobby Smith (Gamma Gamma Gamma)

Bobby Smith is an extremely energetic, vocal, and thoughtful young man who has been juggling leading his fraternal organization as he navigates a new academic major. During his interview three themes became very apparent: Acceptance of others, respect, and fraternity as source of support. He grew up in a state in the Deep South, and was raised by parents who came from very different religious backgrounds. Bobby described himself as never being very religious, but he appreciated the beliefs of others and attempted to understand others' perspectives by reading about various religions.

My mom was raised Jewish. My father was raised Episcopalian, and his worldview I guess you could say, religious view, is very similar to mine at this point [in my life]. My sister who was Jewish, is now a practicing Catholic and married a Catholic. So I guess you could say I've been around the block with religions. I've [studied] the Torah, and have studied the Bible through Boy Scouts, which I guess is kind of – they don't say it's a [religious] organization, but being a Boy Scout in the south, you're going to be exposed to what most southerners are [Christianity]. And most southerners are Baptist. It can be kind of oppressive if you don't share their belief in their religion. [They tell you] you're going to get, burned or whatever. They feel like you're going to burn [in hell], and you're not going to be happy for the rest of your life. My response [to them] has always been like, "that's your opinion"

56

Upon entering college, Bobby roomed with one of his childhood best friends, Aaron, for two years. Both Bobby and Aaron were somewhat introverted, and spent much of their free time playing video games. Before college, Bobby's only perceptions of fraternity and sorority life was what he saw on television, and his first experience with fraternity life did little to dispel the stereotypes to which he had been exposed. Bobby shared that he saw evidence of what he believed to be hazing when two of his suitemates arrived back to their common area covered in a putrid substance. Below he shares his experience with fraternity and sorority life during his first and second years at State University.

> I guess as a freshman I found out from my suitemates that I really didn't want to be involved in a fraternal organization. So the following sophomore year I had a friend who was like, "well you should try out this other organization." I decided that I really didn't like the fit. I mean I just felt like I was just a number. I was like, "
>
> Well, I'm sure as hell not going to be a number. You're not getting my money and having me as a number. You've got to give me something." I was like "well, you know, if you still want to Rush me so bad, then you know, you've got to show that you're interested in me – not just me being interested in you."

At first, Bobby seemed to have an ideal living situation, but over the course of two years, the arrangement disintegrated when his best friend, Aaron, began experiencing extreme episodes of depression and was eventually removed from the university by his parents. This experience had a significant effect on Bobby, as he had to reconcile the distress of witnessing a close friend's suffering. Bobby identified this as a catalyst in joining his fraternal organization.

I guess when I went to go join I was kind of going through an entire change in my

life. My old roommate was going downhill on I guess you could say the mental path,

who'd been my best friend my whole life. It was terrible. I mean, watching someone

that you've known since the fourth grade, and you've lived with for two years…We

had played videogames [together] and he'd been my best friend my whole life. And

then he was like – you could just see where he went [downhill]. I mean, he got

depressed. He wasn't eating. And whatever else – his parents made him move home.

And it was a really traumatizing thing for me. But thankfully near the tail end of it,

Gamma Gamma Gamma came into [my life], so obviously I decided that I needed

new friends, and I'm a very social person. I wasn't being a very social person [my

first two years of college], and I wanted to move on in my life. I really wasn't going

anywhere with my life. All I was doing was [playing] videogames. And I really

wanted to have a change. I wanted to be social.

When Bobby eventually decided to explore joining a fraternity, he did not limit his pursuits

to one organization. Instead, he surveyed a few fraternities to see where he would fit best.

As mentioned, his perceptions of most of the organizations were that they were trying to fill a

certain quota, and that he would be just another number on the fraternity's membership

roster. Almost ready to give up on joining a fraternity, Bobby was invited to rush Gamma

Gamma Gamma. He described his experience with the brothers of GGG as being very

natural, but because of his previous negative experiences, he remained wary of joining the

organization. However, a very impactful ski trip finally convinced him.

…I had another friend who said you should come tailgate with us. And I tailgated

with them, and they were all really nice. My friend Brett was like, "This is my friend

Bobby. You know, he's thinking about Rush? Hook him up with some burgers."

And they were just straight open with me from the start. Everybody wanted to talk

about things, and told me very forthright about what their ideals were, what they

wanted to do, where they want to go…To me, it was the whole chapter which

appealed to me. And then I was kind of on the fence, whatever…Then to seal the

deal, Brett took me skiing, where he and I stopped at [GGG] headquarters on the way,

and that's when I kind of just saw it was so much more than just like a fun, you know,

boys party together at a club. That it actually meant more that – as a national

organization it stood for a lot more than that, and seeing headquarters really helped

me with that…

Bobby quickly became entrenched within the brotherhood of Gamma Gamma Gamma,

taking on leadership roles and developing deep connections with his brothers. When asked

what role his fraternity played in his life, Bobby responded:

You know, last night I was watching the championship game and I'm sitting at

a sports bar with twenty of my brothers, and that's what I do. I do everything with

them on weekends. It's been great with them. You know, I'm there when they have

problems. They're there when I'm having problems. Like when I was basically

switching majors and they all knew that it was not – you know, that's something that

I thought I was going to do my whole life, and all of a sudden I was changing it. And

you know, they're all there for that. They're there for fights with your girlfriend.

They're there for me just when I'm bored or hanging out, and you know, we can talk

about anything, and you know, I eat lunch with them. I eat dinner with them. I go to

movies with them. Like I say, I go on vacations with them.

However, being a member of the fraternity did not come without its challenges. Bobby

described a couple of particularly negative experiences that tested just how deep the bonds of

brotherhood could go. At one point during his membership, Bobby ended a long term

romantic relationship and found out that one of his brothers began to date the same young

woman soon after. This did not sit well with Bobby, as his brother and his ex-girlfriend were

not forthright about their relationship. Bobby eventually confronted the both of them and

resolved the conflict. In the passage below, Bobby describes another difficult experience

when he had to hold a brother accountable for discriminatory actions. The matter ended up

being brought before the entire fraternity's judicial board. The theme of accepting others and

respect are illustrated in this passage, as Bobby later reflected how he had an educational

moment with that particular bother about discrimination.

Recently I had to do something that I felt was you know, strictly based on honor, and

I really hated doing it. A brother decided it would be funny to send out a [prank]

email to the chapter linking to a gay pornographic website. He meant to send it to a

couple of brothers, just like as a joke, but instead he managed to send it to everyone.

I told him I expect your apology letter to be in my email so I can send it out to the

alumni. Because even if they haven't responded or haven't opened it, you need to

apologize. I talked to him in person, and he said, "I figured you'd be the most angry

person in the entire chapter. I mean, but you're not angry at me." And I was like,

"Look, I'm not angry at you. I'm disappointed in you being my brother, one of my closest friends, and as vice president you're suppose to be the example of internal discipline. And you're going off sending gay porn to everyone on the email list. That's not cool."

Throughout his time in Gamma Gamma Gamma, Bobby recalled a few times where he discussed his worldview with his brothers or reflected on his worldview in regards to the fraternity. Being non-religious and having had some negative experiences with the Baptist denomination, Bobby found his conversations with his Baptist roommate very redeeming. During the interview, he repeatedly stated how his brothers were respectful of his worldview and the worldviews of all the brothers; however, he did acknowledge there were many Christian based activities in the organization, such as bible studies and the use of the bible during ritual. He stated that he chose not to participate in those activities and did not receive any negative backlash from his brothers. Again the themes of respect and acceptance are found within these narratives, as Bobby describes his relationship with a brother who happens to be a roommate.

> I mean I think it's kind of like they [fraternity brothers] understand. You know, one of them is not really religious, and the other one is I would say spiritually religious, but not like your normal southern Baptist that you would see. He's very, very spiritual on his own, but he's not the oppressing type thing that I've come to characterize Southern Baptist with…of pushing their religion. So again, it's one of those things where we've respected each other's choices. I obviously don't make derogatory comments about his religion. It's just that you don't make derogatory

61

comments about that sort of stuff. It's one of those things where – to us [fraternity brothers], anything as physical like race or gender, or sexual orientation, or whatever else you want to say…you know, it's just another thing. And you learn to respect people because of who they are, and I think that's what most of the chapter has done.

Despite Bobby's appreciation for the diversity of worldviews within his chapter, he recounts very obvious forms of religious privilege within his experience, such as the use of the Bible within fraternity rituals, and fraternity sponsored Bible studies. However, Bobby once again accepts his role as a religious minority and accepts the customs and traditions of the religious majority, while it is unclear if his organization would make the same accommodations of him.

One of [the fraternity's] public objects is the Bible, and I think that a lot of fraternities probably use Bibles, but I just see it as a respected object of human beings. I don't think any human being would disrespect a Bible. I feel like you just don't do that. It's the same as when I would go into a courtroom. I would definitely put my hand on a Bible and swear by it because I know that it's one of those things where I'm swearing on something that people respect. Sort of similar to like the Constitution, or the American flag, or the Quran, or the Torah. It's one of those things. You respect it and you don't make derogatory comments about it even if you don't think that same way. I mean, we have a Bible study, but you know, I just don't go, and they don't get mad at me. There's plenty of people that don't go. I think it's one of those things that if they do find out, they're just like, "Okay, whatever." They like me for who I am. It's not like a major deal breaker I guess you could say.

Currently, Bobby is adjusting to his new major and continuing to develop his leadership style within his organization. He looks back on his fraternal experience and realizes how much he has changed in regards to his level of confidence in his abilities to lead a group and be a social person.

Cross-Narrative Themes

Although a few salient themes arose within each participant's narrative, several themes were revealed when cross analyzing the narratives for reoccurring themes. These themes included: Support from organization, Connectedness, Expectations not matching Experiences, Exploring worldview with others of a different worldview, and Religious privilege within the organization.

Perhaps the most frequent theme found was that of support from the fraternal organization. Jake exemplified this in his retelling of a drug-induced seizure; Gwen exemplified this when she was transported to a hospital because of an allergic reaction; and Bobby exemplified this as he dealt with his best friend's psychological breakdown. All three emphasized that they believed that the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood created a support network that traditional friendship would not have provided. Related to the theme of support was the theme of connectedness, the second most frequent theme found across the narratives. It seemed that each participant experienced a lack of connection with their collegiate peers before joining their organization. Once joining the organization, all three participants quickly became completely immersed in the culture of their fraternity or sorority, taking on leadership positions and spending the majority of their free time with their brothers/sisters.

Bobby's narrative expressly illustrated this theme as he spoke about spending mealtime, study time, and recreational time with his brothers, as well as living with his brothers.

Another repeated theme was how the experiences of the participants frequently did not match their original expectations. All three participants had a certain perception of fraternity and sorority life before joining their organizations; yet, their experiences turned out to be very different than what they expected. It seemed that they thought joining their organizations would only affect them socially, when in fact their overall personal development was greatly impacted. However, this theme did not only apply to their fraternal experience. For instance, Gwen's expectation of what college would be like in regards to her worldview was definitely not met as she dealt with the feelings of being a religious minority on campus.

Additionally, all of the participants recalled several times when they discussed their worldviews with people with those of a different worldview. Jake's discussion with a Jewish new member, Gwen's discussion with her Christian roommate from her sorority house, and Bobby's discussion with his Baptist roommate all seemed to be positive experiences for the participants. Interestingly, all of these conversations took place with members of their fraternal organizations. It appeared that similar conversations that took place with individuals outside of the organization were not as civil, as illustrated by Gwen's frustrations with her first roommate and Bobby's discussions with individuals from his childhood.

Finally, it became apparent within each of the narratives that the religious majority was noticeably privileged within the organizations. Gwen's narrative directly addresses this

theme as she spoke of potentially needing to seek excuses from chapter events that conflicted

with Shabbat, whereas Christian sisters never had to worry about meetings or events being

held during the morning on Sundays. She also spoke of the difficulty of keeping kosher

while living in the sorority house. Bobby reflected that it was commonplace for Bibles and

other religious imagery to be used during fraternity rituals; however, he accepted this aspect

of fraternity life, choosing to interpret the symbols to fit his own worldview. In Jake's

narrative, anti-Semitic jokes, as well as other forms of discrimination became apparent.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the experiences of religious/worldview minorities in historically Christian fraternities and sororities and how these students make meaning within the context of their fraternal organizations. In this section I will present the findings from Chapter 4 as they relate to the research questions through the lens of Parks' Theory of Faith Development. Following this, I will discuss the practical and theoretical implications of the findings, and then close with a discussion of the limitations and areas for future research based on this study. It is important to note that references to and implications for fraternities and sororities within the chapter refer primarily to local chapters. This is due in large part to the fact that fraternity and sorority chapters greatly differ at various institutions due to the make-up of individual campus populations.

Summary of Findings

In this section I will summarize the findings of chapter four as they relate to each of the research questions, as well as revisit the findings through the lens of Park's Theory of Faith Development.

Research question one.

The first question addressed in this study aimed to reveal the experiences of religious minorities in historically Christian fraternal organizations. Each of the participants experienced their fraternal organizations in a different way. Jake's experienced his fraternity as a source of stability and support when struggled with transferring from a community college to State University. Gwen experienced her sorority as a means for personal development and a safe space through her varied leadership positions and the many personal

conversations she had with her sisters. Bobby experienced his fraternity as a source of social support and leadership development as he took on major leadership roles and recalled the abundance of time he spent with his fraternity brothers. While each of their experiences was different, there were several common experiences that emerged from their narratives. Each participant perceived their organization to be a source of support, and expressed a deep loyalty toward their organization as they developed deep connections with their fraternity brothers/sorority sisters. However, it also became apparent in the narratives that while they felt comfortable enough to converse with their brothers and sisters about their worldviews, their organizations were not necessarily inclusive of their worldview. In Jake's case, the organization directly contradicted his worldview. Overall, the participants perceived their experiences as positive, and seemingly dismissed some of the negative experiences, choosing to acclimate themselves to the culture of the organization.

Research question two.

The second question addressed in this study sought to answer how religious minorities make meaning of their worldview within the context of their fraternal organizations. Bobby and Gwen both had similar adolescent experiences in that they experienced discrimination because of their particular worldview, Gwen being Jewish and Bobby being non-religious. However, Jake had a mostly positive adolescent experience in regards to his worldview, which may be because he spent the majority of this childhood within a Christian denomination. These experiences, whether positive or negative, laid a foundation for how the participants began to make meaning of their experiences, either developing a tendency to acclimate themselves to the dominate culture, as with Gwen and

Bobby, or challenging norms as with Jake. This translated into their fraternal experiences as

Gwen and Bobby adjusted their worldviews to the overall cultural of the organization. While

Jake struggled with the same adjustment, he began his experience challenging the norms of

his fraternal organization, but quickly found himself adjusting to the culture of the

organization as his fraternity brothers disregarded Jake's opinions. Below, I continue discuss

how participants made meaning of their experiences through the lens of Park's Theory of

Faith Development.

Findings in relation to conceptual framework

To briefly review, Parks' Theory of Faith Development addresses the way in which

young adults make meaning of their lived experiences.   The term young adult is used to

describe an emergent stage of human development between adolescence and adulthood. The

theory addresses four stages (Adolescence, Young Adult, Tested Adult, and Mature Adult)

that experience development through three forms: knowing, dependence, and community

(Evans et al, 2010). The narratives of Jake Powers, Gwen Jackson, and Bobby Smith clearly

demonstrate the early stages of this theory as they construct their worldviews in relation to

their collegiate and fraternal experiences.

Knowing.

In all three narratives, a strong sense of familial influence permeated the early

formation of each participant's worldview. Whether it was testing out various churches in

Jake's family, or attending synagogue with Gwen's parents, all three participants

demonstrated the *authority-bound* form of knowing as they depended on their parents for the

formation of their beliefs. As they entered adolescence the three began to question their

beliefs and started explore their belief systems as they entered form of *unqualified relativism*. Bobby exemplified this when he took it upon himself to educate himself about other world religions such as Christianity and Islam, and   Gwen patterned this behavior as she saw the political dynamics that unfolded within her synagogue. Throughout their collegiate experience Jake, Gwen, and Bobby found themselves moving into *probing commitment* as they started to critically think about their values and commitments they made. This was evidenced by Gwen's periodic involvement in a campus religious organization, and the decision to change her major, as well as Bobby and Jake's decisions to test out various fraternal organizations before committing to their current organizations, and Bobby's decision to change majors late in his collegiate career.

Dependence.

Using the adolescent experiences of Jake, Gwen, and Bobby, the *dependent/counterdependent* form of dependence is made clear. As Gwen began to realize the fallibility of the leaders she looked up to within her faith community, she began to rebel against her belief system, thus exemplifying counterdependence. However, both Jake and Bobby were encouraged by their parents to explore the questions they had about their belief systems and did not find their transition out of dependant/counterdependent as tumultuous as Gwen. As the participants entered college they began the process of moving into the *fragile inner dependence* form of dependence. Jake clearly represented this stage of development as he was forced to reconcile his own beliefs about discrimination with the beliefs of his fraternity brothers. Gwen began her transition into this form as she interacted with her first college roommate who knew little to nothing about Gwen's worldview, which challenged

Gwen by forcing her to communicate on a more regular basis with someone with a more limited worldview.

Community.

During the beginnings of Jake, Bobby, and Gwen's narratives they found themselves in *conventional communities* formed during their adolescence. This community involved peer groups from high school, parents and family, and/or members of their faith communities or organizations. However, upon entering college each began searching for a different community as their views began to mature and change, demonstrating the *diffuse community*. For the participants, this search led them to participate in fraternity/sorority recruitment. However, both Bobby and Jake came to this stage later than Gwen, as Jake did not transfer into a four-year college until his sophomore year, and Bobby did not begin to explore fraternity life until after his traumatic roommate experience later in his collegiate career.

While these fraternal organizations could have acted as *mentoring communities* that lent support as Gwen, Bobby, and Jake explored their beliefs and others' beliefs, the organizations ended up falling short. Each participant highlighted the support they felt in regards to their personal lives, as Jake mentioned his failed experimentation with drugs, as Bobby described his experience on his fraternity's executive board, and as Gwen found acceptance of her religion within her sisterhood; however, these forms of support were more individual/sporadic experiences. It appeared that the fraternal organizations did little to support or challenge individuals to explore their worldviews; instead it was evidenced that the organizations privileged the religious majority through various means. Even in the case of Gwen feeling supported in talking about her worldview with her sorority sisters, the

support seemed to stem from Gwen's beliefs being more of a novelty to her sisters than a sustained effort for Gwen to integrate her personal beliefs into that of the chapter's.

Those who are not affiliated with fraternal organizations, or those with varied fraternal experiences, may ask why participants continue their membership in an organization that does not support their worldviews, as in Jake's experience with racial/religious discrimination. The findings of this study suggest that the participant's identities as a brother or sister within a fraternity/sorority chapter, in some ways were of greater priority than their personal beliefs. This priority led the participants to accept their place within the brotherhood/sisterhood, so as to not cause any disturbance within the organization.

Exemplifying this concept, Parks (2000) states, "The power of any network of belonging is twofold. First, the sense of connection and the security it offers affords the freedom to grow and become. Second, every network of belonging has norms and boundaries that one cannot cross and still belong. Thus every network of belonging, simultaneously represents freedom and constraint...Transformation in the meaning of self, therefore, may also require transformation of the social world—a mutual recomposing" (pg 90). Each participant felt connected and secure within his or her organization. They also felt that they were able to grow in some aspects of their lives, primarily their leadership abilities as a result of their organizational membership. However, the social norms of the organizations (constraints) privileged the religious majority and created obstacles in the positive development of the participants' worldviews. As Parks suggests, for transformation to occur within the development of the participants, the organizational culture must change.

Implications

In addressing how to create a more positive fraternal experience for all fraternity and sorority members, specifically religious minorities, administrators, alumni, and chapter advisors have much to contribute. Each participant had experiences sharing their worldview with those outside of their fraternal organizations, as well as those within their organization. As evidenced by the cross-narrative theme of connectedness and narrative theme of support, participants felt that their organizations were environments where they felt more comfortable discussing their worldviews openly, in contrast to the negative experiences of sharing their worldview with those outside of the organization. The Social Change Model of Leadership describes this recognition of differences and the ensuing open dialogue about worldview differences, "controversy with civility" (Wagner, Ostick, and Komives, 2009). All stakeholders involved in fraternity/sorority life can make use of this controversy with civility to better foster dialogues about religious diversity, as well as other aspects of identity.

However, this observation is tempered by the fact that it seemed that the organizations mentioned in this study did have some level of negative unperceived influence on the behaviors of the individual participants; for example, Jake eventually gave up on correcting his brother's racist behaviors. This level of perceived trust and openness within the organization should be used in assisting students in their meaning making process through facilitation of discussions and programs. Below I have highlighted how Fraternity & Sorority stakeholders can specifically assist students in their meaning making processes.

Administrators.

Professionals within offices of fraternity and sorority life are in a unique position to view fraternal communities as a whole, as opposed to the narrow view of students and

student leaders whose perspective rarely extends beyond his or her chapter experiences. Therefore, it falls upon these administrators to help create the mentoring community Parks describes as critical to the faith development of young adults. In creating these communities, campus advisors should facilitate and encourage discussion of the history of the fraternal movement, specifically addressing the concept of religious privilege. Also providing opportunities for specific groups of minority students to dialogue about their fraternal experiences, for example establishing a forum for Jewish fraternity members to share their experiences. These opportunities do not necessarily need to be planned as individual programs, but can instead be incorporated into leadership retreats or established programs that provide opportunities for fraternity/sorority leaders to come together. For example, many offices of fraternity and sorority life host retreats for chapter presidents and other fraternity/sorority leaders, as well as programs for emerging fraternity/sorority leaders. These retreats provide perfect forums for reflection about how fraternal communities can become more inclusive. During the retreats the use of voluntary student panels could be used, featuring students identifying as religious minorities

Another area in which administrators can better serve religious minorities in the fraternal community is to be more transparent of the make-up of campus fraternal communities by publishing demographic data. Many Fraternity/Sorority Life Programs already post statistics about race, majors, grade point averages, and gender. However, by publishing the various worldviews of those within the fraternal community, religious minorities could potentially find themselves represented within organizations, perhaps

making them more likely to join a fraternal organization. This idea is exemplified in Gwen's search for other Jewish women during her sorority recruitment experience.

The findings of this study suggest that due to the high level of connectedness among the members of the fraternal community, these organizations are in a unique position to take the lead in fostering/modeling civil dialogue about worldview differences. This was evidenced by the fact that each participant felt comfortable speaking candidly about their worldviews with members of their organizations, while they did not appear to share the same openness with others outside of their organization. In considering the implications of this study, administrators can advance their fraternity and sorority communities to become true mentoring communities.

Chapter/Faculty advisors, national organizations, and alumni.

Chapter/Faculty advisors, officers within national organizations, and alumni members also have an important role to play in creating inclusive environments for their membership, and particularly religious/worldview minorities within their chapters. Parks points out the need for support and mentoring of young adults, as they experience the *fragile inner dependence* form. From scheduling chapter meetings and social events to meal selection within chapter houses, much could be done to provide an equally meaningful experience to fraternity and sorority members, without them having to adjust their personal beliefs. This could be accomplished through providing alternative meal options for those with dietary restrictions, and spreading out events throughout the week and/or avoiding making members submit absentee excuses for missing events due to religious purposes. Some organizations have gone as far as removing all religious imagery/symbolism from their rituals and

traditions; however, because of the deep rooted traditions of many of the organizations, it may be just as helpful to merely be more transparent about the organization's historically Christian roots. This would allow potential members to understand where the organization's values and traditions come from.

Moreover, Poon and Hune (2009) suggest that mentoring is critical in the success of minority students in college. It could be quite helpful to foster a sense of connection and mentorship by setting up opportunities for undergraduate members to meet and connect with alumni members who share similar worldviews, whether it is chapter specific events or at regional/national conferences.

Through this study, it was clear that organizational culture played a large role in the development and meaning making process of the participants. While organizational culture is often very individualized from chapter to chapter, Fraternity/Sorority advisors and National Organizations have large roles in shaping the culture of each chapter. In considering these implications for practice, National Organizations and advisors can set chapters up for success in fostering a community of inclusion.

Theory.

Resulting from this study, researchers and administrators have a greater understanding of the experiences of religious minorities in historically Christian fraternal organizations, as well as how they make meaning on their worldviews in the context of their fraternal organizations. As mentioned in the literature review, much of the research regarding fraternity and sorority life focuses on discrimination within college fraternities and sororities, whether it is racial, sexual orientation, or gender discrimination (Case, Hesp, and

Eberly, 2005; Hesp and Brooks, 2009; Kalof & Cargill, 1991; Lloyd, 2009). This study mirrors many of those studies whose results show that the homogeneity of fraternal organizations results in covert and overt acts of discrimination of members, and non-members, who do not identify within a majority social identity, e.g. those that do not identify as white, male, Protestant, or straight. For instance, Case, Hesp, and Eberly (2005) surveyed over 500 GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender) fraternity/sorority members, and found a high rate of GLBT members encountered homophonic or heterosexist attitudes within their chapters that lead to discriminatory actions such as barring membership to perceived GLBT potential new members.

However, this study is set a part from the previous literature in many ways. Unlike many studies that have been conducted in regards to fraternity and sorority life, I have explicitly used a conceptual framework to help better focus the findings of this study. Extending Park's Theory of Faith Development to the fraternity/sorority community created a framework to better understand how religious minorities made meaning of their worldviews within fraternal organizations. The use of Park's theory as a conceptual framework also addressed other areas of development beyond that of social identity including cognitive development (knowing) and interpersonal development (dependence).

Conceivably the most obvious factor that sets this work apart is its emphasis on college student worldviews. No other study has attempted to illustrate the experiences of college students in regards to their personal belief systems. Also, as opposed to other aspects of human identity, the amount of variation between each person's worldview is quite vast, mainly because the term worldview is meant to encompass such a broad range of beliefs.

Finally, while other areas of identity are subject to change and development as one discovers what it means to identify, or not identify, with a particular race, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, etc., one's worldview is perhaps the most malleable of all identities. Arguably, one's worldview could expand/change/shift from day to day as a person is exposed to various experiences. This study demonstrated the malleability of worldviews through the narratives of the participants as their worldviews were shifted through attending college and joining a fraternal organization.

Limitations and Future Research

Because this study was based on the narrative inquiry tradition, the findings and implications may not be generalized to populations outside of the fraternity and sorority community of the involved participants. Also, in the tradition of narrative inquiry, I have examined the lived experiences of individual people, which impedes the replication of this study to obtain identical findings. Furthermore, only three fraternal organizations were represented in this study, two being affiliated with the North American Interfraternity Conference and one being affiliated with the National Panhellenic Conference. Finally, because of the wide variety of worldviews college students possess, the scope of this study was very narrow as only three worldviews were investigated.

In addressing these limitations, a variety of research areas emerged. NPHC organizations have a strong historic tie to the Christian faith; therefore, investigating the narratives of religious minorities in these organizations may shed light on the experiences and meaning making processes of these students. In addition, replicating this study with participants of different worldviews would broaden the understanding of the experiences of

religious minorities within NIC, NPC, and NPHC organizations. Other topical areas worth investigating include the membership persistence of religious minorities in historically Christian organizations or the impact of having religious minorities in historically Christian organizations on acceptance or inclusion of minority students.

Summary

As the student populations of American colleges and universities become more diverse, it can be expected that students will interact with others who may have very different worldviews. It is becoming increasingly important that students, staff, and faculty learn how to create effective communities of learning as institutions become increasingly pluralistic. Because of the impact that fraternities and sororities have on their undergraduate members, and their history of excluding those that did not share a Protestant-Christian worldview it is important for professionals within fraternity and sorority life to help organizations become more inclusive of various worldviews. This study helped to clarify what religious minorities experience within historically Christian fraternal organizations, and how they make meaning of their experiences. Through understanding these experiences, fraternal organizations, and their stakeholders, can begin to modify/create policies and practices that are more inclusive of these individuals.

References

Alva, S.A. (2007). Self-reported alcohol use of college fraternity and sorority members. *Journal of College Student Development*, *39*(1), 3-10.

American Council on Education. (1983b). The student personnel point of view. In G. L. Saddlemire & A. L. Rentz (Eds.), *Student affairs—A profession's heritage: Significant articles, authors, issues and documents* (American College Personnel Association Media Publication No. 25, pp. 122-140).

Arnold, J.C., & G.D., Kuh. (1992). Brotherhood and the bottle: a cultural analysis of the role of alcohol in fraternities. Informally published manuscript, Center for the Study of the College Fraternity, Indiana University-Bloomington, Bloomington, ID.

Astin, A. (2004, Spring). Why spirituality deserves a central place in liberal education. *Liberal Education*, *90*(2), 34-41.

Astin, A., Astin, H., & Lindholm, J. (2010). *Cultivating the spirit: how college can enahnce students' inner lives*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass .

Astin, A., Astin, H., Lindholm, J., Calderone, S., & Szelényi, K. (2003). *The spiritual life of college students: a national study of college students' search for meaning and purpose*. Informally published manuscript, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, Los, Angeles , CA. Retrieved from: http://spirituality.ucla.edu/publications/research-reports/

Barry, A.E. (2007). Using theory-based constructs to explore the impact of greek membership on alcohol-related beliefs and behaviors: a systematic literature review. *Journal of American College Health*, *56*(3), 307-315.

Belzen, J.A., & Antoon, G. (Ed.). (2008). *Autobiography and the psychological study of religious lives*. New York, NY: Rodopi.

Berman, L.C. (2005). Review: going greek: jewish college fraternities in the united states, 1895-1945. *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, *95*(2), 400-405.

Bryant, A. N. (2005). "Evangelicals on Campus: An Exploration of Culture, Faith, and College Life." *Religion and Education* 32, 1-30.

Bryant, A. N. (2008). The developmental pathways of evangelical Christian students. *Religion and Education*, 35, 1-26.

Buzzanell, P.M. (2009). Spiritual mentoring: embracing the mentor-mentee relational process. In K. Hendrix (Ed.), *New directions for teaching and learning: as the spirit moves us: embracing sprirituality in the postsecondary expereince* (pp. 17-23). Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Byer, J. L. (1998). *Fraternity members' perceptions of how involvement in a fraternity and involvement in student government has influenced their college experiences* Retrieved fromhttp://search.ebscohost.com.www.lib.ncsu.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED421956&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Callais, M.A. (2005). Helping fraternity and sorority members understand ritual. *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity Advisors*, *1*(1), 1-6.

Capeheart-Meningall, J. (2005). The role of spirituality and spiritual development in student life outside the classroom. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, *104*, 31-36.

Caron, S.L., Moskey, E.G., & Hovey, C.A. (2004). Alcohol use among fraternity and sorority members: looking at change over time. *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education*,

47(3), 51.

Caudill, B.D., Crosse, S.B., Campbell, B., Howard, J., Luckey, B., Blane, H.T. (2006). High-risk drinking among college fraternity members: a national perspective. *Journal of American College Health*, *55*(3), 141-155.

Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, F.M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Cohen, A. (1998). *The shaping of american higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cooper, J. (1997). Marginality, mattering, and the african-american student: creating an inclusive college environment. *College Student Affairs Journal*, *16*(2), 15-20.

Current, R.N. (1990). *Phi beta kappa in american life: the first two hundred years*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

DeSantis, A.D. (2007). *Inside greek u.: fraternities, sororities, and the pursuit of pleasure, power, and prestige*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky.

Dudley, T. (2010). *Harvard charter of 1650*. Unpublished raw data, University Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Retrieved from http://hul.harvard.edu/huarc/charter.html

Evans, N.J., Forney, D.S., Guido, F.M., Patton, L.D., & Renn, K.A. (2010). *Student development in college*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Finegan, T. G., Hines, P. A., & Commission on Fraternity Research of National Interfraternity Conference and College Fraternity,Secretaries Association. (1971). *American fraternities: An agenda of needed research. an annotated bibliography of*

empirical research relating to the american college fraternity, 1950-1970 Retrieved

from

http://search.ebscohost.com.www.lib.ncsu.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric

&AN=ED065021&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Fong, M. (2009). The spirit moves where there is a need in higher education. In K. Hendrix

(Ed.), *New directions for teaching and learning: as the spirit moves us: embracing*

sprirituality in the postsecondary expereince (pp. 87-95). Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Fontana, D. (2003). *Psychology, religion, and spirituality*. Malden, MA: Blackwell

Publishing Ltd..

Fowler, J.W. (1981). *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for*

meaning. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers

Gehrke, S.J. (2008). An empirical exploration of spirituality and leadership in college

students. *Journal of College Student Development*, *49*(4).

Geiger, R.L. (2005). The ten generations of american higher edcuation. In P. Altbach (Ed.),

American higher education in the twenty-first century (pp. 38-70). Baltimore, MD:

The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Gilliat-Ray, S. (2000). *Religion in higher education: The politics of the multi-faith campus*.

Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Goodchild, L.F., & Wechsler, H.S. (1989). Colonial Higher Education in the Americas

(1538-1789). *Association for the study of higher education reader on the history of*

higher education. Needham Heights, MA: Ginn Press.

Hendrix, K.G., & Hamlet, J.D. (2009). Introduction: our way of being in the world. In K.

Hendrix (Ed.), *New directions for teaching and learning: as the spirit moves us: embracing sprirituality in the postsecondary expereince* (pp. 3-7). Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Hesp, G.A., & Brooks, J.S. (2009). Heterosexism and homophobia on fraternity row: a case study of a college fraternity community. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, *6*(4), 395-415.

Horowitz, H. (1987). *Campus life*. New York, NY: The University of Chicago Pres.

Kalof, L., & Cargill, T. (1991). Sex roles. *Fraternity and sorority membership and gender dominance attitudes*, *25*(7-8), 417-423.

Kazanjian, Jr., V.H. (Ed.). (2000). *Education as transformation: religious pluralism, spirituality, and a new vision for higher education in america*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

Koltko-Rivera, M.E. (2004). The psychology of worldviews. *Review of General Psychology*, *8*(1), 3-58.

Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning: Inside the national survey of student engagement. *Change, 33*(3), 10.

LeCompte, M.D., Preissle, J., & Tesch, R. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Lindholm, J.A. (2007). Spirituality in the academy: reintegrating our lives and the lives of our students. *About Campus*, *2007*, 10-17.

Magolda, P.M., & Ebben, K. (2006). College student involvement and mobilization: an ethnographic study of a christian student organization. *Journal of College Student Development, 47*(3), 281-298.

Matthews, H., Featherstone, L., Bluder, L., Gerling, A.J., Loge, S., & R.B., Messenger, R.B. (2009). Living in your letters: assessing congruence between espoused and enacted values of one fraternity/sorority community. *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity Advisors*, *4*(1), 1-13.

Mathiasen, R. E. (2005). Moral development in fraternity members: A case study. *College Student Journal, 39*(2), 242. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com.www.lib.ncsu.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric &AN=EJ725569&site=ehost-live&scope=site

McAdams, D.P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology*, *5*(2), 100-122.

Michaelsen, R. S. (1965). *The study of religion in american universities; ten case studies with special reference to state universities*. New Haven: Society for Religion in Higher Education.

Miller, V.W., & Ryan, M.M. (2001). *Transforming campus life: reflections on spirituality and religious pluralism*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing

Nash, R.J. (1999). *Faith, hype, and clarity: teaching about religion in american schools and colleges* . New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Nash, R.J. (2001). *Religious pluralism in the academy: opening the dialogue* . New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

Nuwer, H. (1999). *Wrongs of passage: fraternities, sororities, hazing, and binge drinking*. Indianapolis, ID: Indiana University Press.

Ofstein, J.B. (2007). *Religion, spirituality, and popular culture: where college students learn*

about religion and spirituality. Informally published manuscript, Department of Adult and Higher Education, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC.

Owen, K.C. (1991). Reflections on the college fraternity and its changing nature. In J. Anson (Ed.), *Baird's manual of american college fraternities* (pp. 1-24). Indianapolis, ID: Baird's Manual Foundation, Inc.

Parks, S.D. (2000). *Big questions worth dreams: mentoring young adults in their search for meaning, purpose, and faith*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Poon, O. A., and Hune, S. (2009). Countering master narratives of the "perpetual foreigner" and "model minority": The hidden injuries of race and Asian American doctoral students. In M.F. Howard-Hamilton, C.L. Morelon-Quainoo, S.D. Johnson, R. Winkle-Wagner, and L. Santiague (eds.), *Standing on the outside looking in* (pp. 82-102). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Popp-Baier, U. (2008). Life stories and philosophies of life. In J.A. Belzen (Ed.), *Autobiography and the psychological study of religious lives* (pp. 39-69). New York, NY: Rodopi, B.V., Amsterdam.

Raper, J. (2001). "losing our religion": are students struggling in silence?. In V. Miller (Ed.), *Transforming Campus Life: Reflections on Spirituality & Religious Pluralism* (pp. 13-32). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Rebholz, M.M., & Hoke, S. (2009, Summer). Spirituality: the forgotten precept?. *Perspectives.*, 7-9.

Robinson, D.T., Gibson-Beverly, G., & Schwartz, J.P. (2004). Sorority and fraternity membership and religious behaviors: relation to gender attitudes. *Sex Roles*,

50(11/12), 1-7.

Ross, L.C. (2000). *The divine nine: the history of african american fraternities and sororities*. New York, NY: Kingsington Publishing Corp.

Schaper, D. (2004, November 12). The transcendent role of chaplains. *The Chronicle Review*, p. B24.

Schlossberg, N. (1989). Marginality and mattering: key issues in building community. *New Directions for Student Services*, *1989*(48), 5-15.

Schreck, T. C., & American Coll Fraternity, B. C. (1976). *Toward the year 2000: Perspectives on the american fraternity movement* Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com.www.lib.ncsu.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eri &AN=ED132502&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Shalka, T.R. (2008). *An exploration into differences in consciousness of self and congruence among culturally based fraternity, social fraternity, and non-affiliated college men*. Informally published manuscript, Department of Counseling and Personnel Services, Univeristy of Maryland, College Park, MD.

Stewart, C. (2001). The influence of spirituality on substance use of college students. *Journal of Drug Education*, *31*(4), 343-351.

Syrett, N.L. (Ed.). (2009). *The company he keeps: a history of white college fraternities*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Torbenson , C.L., & Parks, G.S. (Ed.). (2009). *Brothers and sisters: diversity in college fraternities and sororities*. Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp.

Turk, D.B. (2004). *Bound by a mighty vow: sisterhood and women's fraternities 1870-1920*.

New York, NY: New York University Press.

Wagner, W., Ostick, D., & Komives, S. (2009). *Leadership for a better world*. New York, NY: Jossey-Bass.

Webb, B.M., & Mueller, J.A. (2009). Spirituality of college students: an examination of fraternity/sorority member and non-member groups. *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity Advisors*, *4*(2), 1-15.

Wechsler, H., George, K., & Davenport, A.E. (2009). Fraternities, sororities and binge drinking: results from a national study of american colleges. *NASPA Journal*, *46*(3), 395-416.

Windmeyer, S.L. (2005). *Brotherhood: gay life in college fraternities*. New York, NY: Alyson Books.

Windmeyer, S.L., & Freeman, P.W. (Ed.). (1998). *Out on fraternity row: personal accounts of being gay in a college fraternity*. New York, NY: Alyson Books.