

RACIST PERCEPTIONS ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS: INTERSECTIONALITY OF
GENDER, RACE, AND GREEK AFFILIATION

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BY

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DEDICATION

This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to my husband, Miles, who has been my source of inspiration, and who filled my heart with laughter when I thought of giving up. Without you, none of this would have been possible.

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The completion of this project could not have been possible without the assistance, encouragement, and support of so many. I owe a debt of gratitude to many people who have helped me throughout my journey in graduate school. To my husband, Miles, and my parents, LynAnn and Laura, thank you for encouraging me to not give up and for pushing me across the finish line.

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ABSTRACT

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This paper analyzes whether and how gender, race, and Greek affiliation, along with symbolic and traditional racial attitudes, are associated with racist perceptions on a college campus located in the deep south of the United States. To answer this question, we used survey data collected in 2013 from undergraduate students enrolled in a large Southern, including in our sample 1,003 Greek affiliated students and 2,176 non-Greek affiliated students. Using multivariate data analysis, our results showed that White and male participants had higher levels of racist perceptions than Black and female participants, and that the race and racist perceptions relationship was much stronger among Greek-affiliated than non-Greek respondents. Lastly, the two racial attitudes factors were found to mediate the relationships between social status factors and racist perceptions. From a critical race theory perspective, this study results should shed light on the importance of viewing Greek life in the broader context of society, considering the impact of racist perceptions within our higher education system.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Greek Sorority and Fraternity membership has been studied through many different lenses and perspectives and found to be associated with different behavioral problems in college (Kingree and Thompson 2017; Patterson and Goodson 2017; Stuhldreher, Stuhldreher, and Forrest 2007). A very extensive amount of research has examined the relationship between alcohol use and fraternity/sorority membership. Many researchers have approached this topic through a quantitative analysis. The findings suggest that within the first year of membership Greek affiliated students are much more likely to participate in binge and risky drinking behaviors as compared to non-Greeks (Larimer et al. 2004; Park et al. 2009; and Cashin, Presley, Meilman 1998). Less research, however, has linked Greek membership to racism and racist perceptions (Muir 1991; Ray 2013).

The current study examined how widespread racist perceptions are on a college campus located in the deep South of the United States. Three major goals characterize this study. The first goal was to examine if race, gender, and Greek affiliation are associated with racist perceptions. The second goal evaluated whether racial attitudes including symbolic and traditional racism mediate the relationships between the three social status factors and racist perceptions. The third major goal of this study was to

examine whether Greek affiliation moderates the racist perceptions' associations with the social status factors as well as racial attitudes.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Currently, scholarly research has given limited attention to racial discrimination within sorority and fraternity organizations. This proposed study added to the literature on Greek life studies in general and severity of racial attitudes within Greek affiliated organizations in several ways.

The first significant contribution of this study was a thorough literature review linking structure of the organizations to members' characteristics, which provides a context to explain levels of different measures of racism. The first Greek letter organization was founded in 1825 at Union College in Schenectady, New York. These secret societies were created to make space for autonomy, exclusivity, and brotherhood apart from the other students on campus. In response to a competitive job market, Greek letter organizations created a network of likeminded individuals who worked together to ease the anxiety of an unpredictable job market. Over the last two centuries, these organizations have become institutionalized at their respective campuses due to the historic nature of sororities and fraternities. Greek life is now ingrained in the college experience and often reinforced by the faculty and staff to continue a structure of exclusivity. Along with other factors, Greek life reinforces racial segregation through recruitment processes, and therefore aids in racist attitudes and behaviors (Syrett 2009).

The second major contribution was that this study is the first study to look at the intersectionality of race, gender, and Greek affiliation in explaining racist perceptions on

college campuses. Currently, several studies discuss the concepts of race, gender, and Greek affiliation separately (Dickson 2010; Johnson and Arbona 2006; Ray and Rosow 2012). However, to date, there have not been studies that include all the aforementioned concepts as well as examine the intersectionality of these variables.

The last significant contribution was that many of these Greek affiliates hold important political positions in the government and large corporations in our society—implying for whether and how racism may continue to permeate in our societies without securitization. At least half of all America's presidents belonged to a fraternity before they came into power (Groff 2009). This fact is important to note due to the ideals, attitudes, and behaviors the commander in chief hold while in office. Due to the historical nature of segregation, legacy, elitism, and racial discrimination within Greek letter organizations it is important to question how Greek alumni impact our laws and policies

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

This review seeks to analyze scholarly literature relevant to racist perceptions and racial attitudes linked to race, gender, and Greek organization affiliation by reviewing literature first on voluntary organization participation. This is followed by a brief history of both historically White fraternities and sororities, and historically Black Greek letter organizations (BGLOs), Greek recruitment efforts, and finally, a review of the theoretical frameworks and hypotheses.

VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION PARTICIPATION AND GREEK ORGANIZATIONS

Voluntary organizations create the larger network of organizations in which sororities and fraternities reside. For the purpose of this review, information pertaining to specific aspects that relate to conformity and social status is discussed.

When people are around others who share similar interests, they feel a sense of power, and like they are part of the ‘in-group’ (Galam and Moscovici 1995; Redmond 2008). Being treated as part of a group has been suggested by Knoke to have several positive personal effects including higher levels of self-esteem and community orientation (1981). Additionally, individuals actively engage in voluntary organizations in order to uphold their social perception of status to themselves and others (Redmond

2008).

HISTORY OF GREEK ORGANIZATIONS AND RACISM

The first Greek letter organization was founded in 1776 at William and Mary College in Virginia (Torbenson and Parks 2009). These organizations were for White males only, and laid the framework for historically White Greek fraternities, sororities would come later. These secret societies were created to make space for autonomy, exclusivity, and brotherhood apart from the other students on campus (Syrett 2009). It was not until the 1830s that more women were attending colleges and receiving an education outside of the home (Torbenson and Parks 2009). During this time, women in college became more interested in joining fraternities with men, however, were excluded based on gender (Torbenson and Parks 2009). Not long after, the first sorority was founded at the Kentucky Military Institute in 1861, as a companion organization to the fraternities (Torbenson and Parks 2009). Each sorority and fraternity were founded on the similar views and ideals held by a select few (Torbenson and Parks 2009). As Torbenson and Parks describe, in the early 1800s, college students had little academic or social freedom which created tension between the students and the faculty (2009). In an attempt to create a social outlet, fraternity participation began to flourish (Torbenson and Parks 2009). By 1902, the National Panhellenic Conference was established as an umbrella organization for all historically White sororities to come together for the advancement of the “sorority experience” (National Panhellenic Council 2017).

During the 1900s, fraternities and sororities began taking on a more national approach (Syrett 2009). Greek organizations were being founded at universities all across

the United States. In 1910, the umbrella organization the North-American Interfraternity Conference was founded which created an association for all historically White fraternal organizations. As these organizations became more widespread, the membership became more exclusive. Acceptance into these organizations was based on prestige, reputation, and wealth (Syrett 2009). As the organizations grew, so did their membership. In an attempt to regulate membership and uniformity of branches, alumni associations were established (Syrett 2009). Greek alumni associations began hiring their own alumni to create fraternity and sorority “magazines, newsletters, and catalogues” for both alumni and active members (Syrett 2009). These associations created a broader network so that alumni members could serve as a much needed connection for both business and social reasons to the current Greek members. In the 1960’s, in response to a more competitive job market, Greek letter organizations created a network of likeminded individuals who worked together to ease the anxiety of an unpredictable job market (Syrett 2009). Over the last 2 centuries, these organizations have become institutionalized at their respective campuses due to the national organizations social policies, and practices. Greek life has now become ingrained in the college experience and is often reinforced by college administrators to continue a structure of exclusivity (Syrett 2009). Along with other factors, Greek life reinforces racial segregation through recruitment processes, and therefore aids in racist attitudes and perceptions (Syrett 2009).

Previous research on Greek affiliation historically has ignored the history, structure, and differences in perceptions between historically White Greek organizations and Black Greek organizations. Mainly working-class men established Black secret

societies, known as masonic organizations, within communities as early as the 1700s. Goals of these organizations consisted of creating sacred meeting spaces, establishing close-knit communities, and even freeing enslaved people of African descent (Kimbrough 2003; Whaley 2009). After the Civil War, these organizations worked to aid those who had been freed of slavery, but were still facing discrimination and racism on the economic and social fronts (Whaley 2009). Unlike the traditionally White Greek organizations, Black secret societies were open to all socioeconomic backgrounds and tended to focus on social outreach and advancement of African American people (Whaley 2009). At the turn on the twentieth century, Black secret societies made their way to historically Black colleges, such as Howard University and founded themselves as Greek organizations (Whaley 2009). Within the span of twenty years, nine different Black sororities and fraternities were founded at Howard University, which created the Divine Nine, also known as the umbrella organization the National PanHellenic Council. This council differs from the National Panhellenic Conference, and the North-American Interfraternity Conference (Whaley 2009). The National PanHellenic Council functioned primarily in conjunction with a historical movement to support and promote Black culture and politics within established social institutions such as colleges (Whaley 2009).

Today, there are four categories of Greek organizations that include the following: North-American Interfraternity Conference, the National PanHellenic Council, the National Panhellenic Conference, and the National Multicultural Greek Council (Torbenson and Parks 2009). The specific Greek organizations that belong to each council/association vary by university. It is important to note the differences in these

councils, due to the differences in history, experiences, and racial makeup of membership. The North-American Interfraternity Council includes traditionally White fraternities and does not include Multicultural, PanHellenic, or Panhellenic organizations. Multicultural Greek letter organizations pride themselves on diversity and the inclusion of all cultures. The National PanHellenic Council is an umbrella term used to describe historically Black Greek letter organizations. Similarly, to the North-American Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic organizations include historically White sororities and do not include multicultural, PanHellenic, and Interfraternity organizations. The Interfraternity and Panhellenic organizations are often referred to as White Greek letter organizations.

MODERN SORORITY AND FRATERNITY MEMBERSHIP

The National Panhellenic Conference promotes sororities as an opportunity to participate in community service and gain access to career networking, and a way to build leadership skills and make lifelong friendships (National Panhellenic Council 2017). Similarly, the North-American Interfraternity Council encourages potential members by harboring a sense of leadership development, heightened educational standards, and national networking (National Panhellenic Council 2017). However, as voluntary organizations, historically White sororities and fraternities are often accused of perpetuating dangerous and risky behavior such as binge drinking, partying, hazing, and in the case of fraternities, sexual assault (Armstrong, Hamilton, and Sweeney 2006; Richardson, Wang, and Hall 2012; Wechsler, Kuh, and Davenport 2009). While these issues are important, the perception of racism within sororities and fraternities is often

overlooked or ignored in the literature (Poteat and Spanierman 2012; Sydell and Nelson 2000; Vaccaro 2010).

There are many reasons why students choose to become members of fraternity and sorority organizations, such as: campus identity and involvement, family connections, and status representation. When attending a university, you can easily become lost amongst the crowd. Regardless of minority status, Greek organizations are seen as a way to establish an identity on campus (Krueger 2013; Thompson 2000; Hughey 2010). Due to an exclusive selection process, members of Greek organizations often experience pride from their membership, which in turn furthers their campus identity (Krueger 2013). In addition, once a student becomes a member, they gain access to exclusive social events, a group of peers who have similar interests, and membership status to an organization that has a long-standing reputation at the institution (Krueger 2013). This reputation means that new Greek members automatically assume a group identity without having to contribute much personal effort (Krueger 2013). This assumed identity can be very convenient when navigating through college life.

Another important reason students decide to join Greek letter organizations is to become more involved on campus (Krueger 2013; Hughey 2010). An aspect of this involvement includes philanthropy and community service projects where money is raised for specific causes. This gives members a sense of purpose and feeling that they are contributing to society.

For many sorority and fraternity organizations, membership status runs in families (Krueger 2013; Berbary 2013; Park 2012). Typically, a student is referred to as a legacy

if their immediate family members were pledged members of a Greek organization. Being a legacy has its perks. Because sororities and fraternities encourage families to pass on membership in the same organization, legacies are greatly sought after by current members during the recruitment or rush process. Due to the North-American Interfraternity Council and the National Panhellenic Conference recruitment norms, it is much more difficult for a legacy to be dismissed from the recruitment process than a non-legacy (Rohrbauck Stout 2002). It is not uncommon, especially in the south, for a student to decide to join a Greek letter organization because they are a legacy or have been encouraged by their parents to join (Berbary 2013; Park 2012).

With heavy price tags on monthly membership dues, and a culture of consumerism, joining a sorority or fraternity serves as a status symbol (Krueger 2013; Gibbs 2011). The added expense of monthly dues that can range from \$110-\$700 per month seems outrageous for many non-Greek students. This along with the existing knowledge that most sorority and fraternity members come from middle to upper class families facilitates the class and status separation between Greek and non-Greek students. This social class distinction serves as a sense of pride for many fraternity (Torbenson and Parks 2009) and sorority members (Rohrbauck Stout 2002).

Greek Recruitment Efforts and Racial Discrimination

This section will discuss the perpetuation of predetermined stereotypes, image portrayal, and the influence of conformity on the National Panhellenic Conference sorority recruitment and the North-American Interfraternity Council fraternity recruitment process. Several studies (Krueger 2013; Gibbs 2011; Rolnik, Engeln-

Maddox, and Miller 2010) have shown that members rate participants higher during recruitment if they reflect the physical appearance of the majority of existing members. Members may dismiss participants who do not conform to stereotypical beauty norms i.e. in good physical shape, White, good skin, and good style (Krueger 2013).

Members also typically recruit participants who portray their image accurately (Rolnik, Engeln-Maddox, and Miller 2010). Enanoza suggests that racial/ethnic minorities are often excluded from Panhellenic sororities and North-American Interfraternity Council fraternities because they do not contribute to this certain image due to the color of their skin and also difference in cultural values (2013). The same can be said for the historically Black fraternities and sororities as well. Allen suggests that historically Black Greek organizations today have members who are overwhelmingly minority, meaning that there are few White members (2013). This may be partially due to the suggestion that Black students, specifically at predominantly White campuses, may have a harder time adjusting to the campus community and therefore participate in predominantly Black extra-curricular activities such as Greek life (Allen 2013). This motivation creates an expectation that historically Black Greek organizations will continue to have predominately Black members, and historically White Greek organizations will continue to have predominately White members in the future.

During sorority and fraternity recruitment, it is not uncommon for the members to all wear a similar outfit that portrays a sense of conformity. For sororities, the portrayal of conformity through clothing, makeup, and style during recruitment shows the willingness of the members to “adhere to accepted standards of appearance” (Krueger

2013). For fraternities this conformity manifests itself in physical fitness regimens aimed at displaying adequate masculinity and a predetermined style appropriate for recruitment (Seabrook, Ward, and Giaccardi 2018).

In addition to image, social norms and values also play a part in the recruitment process. Those who are more aligned with the organizations values, are more likely to be accepted into the organization (Krueger 2013). These values can include monetary, religious, and social hierarchy views (Krueger 2013). These values are important to mention, due to the racial and social homogeny that makeup fraternity and sorority organizations. Individuals who do not perfectly align with the values of those who are White, middle to high social class, and wealthy, will not be accepted in the organization (Krueger 2013). This perpetuates the racial divide between historically White sororities and fraternities, and the general population of the college campuses in which they reside.

PERPETUATION OF RACIST PERCEPTIONS WITHIN SORORITIES AND FRATERNITIES

In the last two decades, racist behavior and perceptions within historically White sororities and fraternities have been a commonplace in local and national news headlines. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, historically White Greek organizations began facing criticisms from university administration as well as the general public for depicting racists stereotypes as costumes for Greek house parties (Whaley 2009). These costumes depicted many harmful racial stereotypes such as Vietnamese sex workers and GI's, Fiji Island cannibals and island women, Latino gang members, and several instances of fraternity and sorority members dressing in blackface and using gang signs (Whaley

2009). Although, this behavior is nothing new, as Whaley explains, more recently this behavior has become a national issue due to the invisibility of Whiteness (2009), where Whiteness is recognized as the center of the racialized world. In other terms, White sorority and fraternity members are granted a privilege to function in the world unencumbered by personal racial discrimination. Because of this privilege, White Greek members have historically not been held accountable for their actions in terms of racial perceptions and behaviors.

As Ray and Rosow explain, the history of racism within historically White fraternities and sororities has largely been ignored by the universities in which they reside due to the creation and sustainment of normative institutional arrangements (2012). These arrangements provide social contexts to why certain behaviors are more or less acceptable, and certain structures hold individuals more or less accountable for their actions (Ray and Rosow 2012). An example of a normative institutional arrangement would be Greek housing.

On most college campuses, historically Black sororities and fraternities do not have Greek houses like their White counterparts (Ray and Rosow 2012). Greek members affiliated with the North American Interfraternal Council and the National Panhellenic Conference often have their own Greek homes to live at on campus, which allows a level of privacy that is unachievable by other students (Ray and Rosow 2012). This privacy and exclusivity of Greek housing creates an insular environment that validates White sorority and fraternity values and ideals and marginalizes the values of others (Ray and Rosow 2012). This allows Black Greek organizations to be scrutinized at higher levels by

college administration and university student peers. While many college campuses do not have historically Black Greek housing, the university from which the sample of this current study came from does.

In addition to university housing, social exclusion and norms also play a role in explaining the perpetuation of racist perceptions within sororities and fraternities.

Rohrbauck Stout (2002) explains that newcomers, or those outside of the organization may be excluded and marginalized due to several reasons including race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, or inability to demonstrate organizationally appropriate and acceptable behavior. For sororities and fraternities this acceptable behavior may include how to speak, dress, behave in public, and how to treat others. Non-Greek students are often excluded from Greek activities such as parties, meetings, and other social gatherings due to their lack of Greek socialization (Rohrbauck Stout 2002).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND HYPOTHESES

Often there is a misconception that racism is an overt act that no longer applies to our society today, and that we now live in a “color-blind society” where all are treated equally (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Critical race theory (CRT) would suggest that racism is ingrained in our society, and instead views racism as a permanent part of the American societal structure that permeates all hierarchal structures including political, social, and economic realms (DeCuir and Dixson 2004). Although CRT has historically been used in legal research studies, it has also expanded into other disciplines such as education. CRT acknowledges that whiteness is a privilege and is often used to maintain power and entitlement both consciously and subconsciously (DeCuir and Dixson 2004). Using a

CRT framework when analyzing racist perceptions in fraternities and sororities illustrates the ways in which the subtleties of race and racism can be illuminated within higher education, and our larger society.

Symbolic and Traditional Racism

The term “symbolic racism” or “modern racism” has been used to describe racist perceptions and attitudes in the post-Civil Rights era (Zamudio and Rios 2006). Instead of the government-legitimated violence used against people of color to maintain White social power as in the pre-Civil Rights era, symbolic racism focuses more on a colorblind view of the racialized world (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Meaning that in today’s modern society, very few people will admit to holding racist ideation. Instead, it is hoped that individuals are judged by their character and determination, instead of by skin color (Bonilla-Silva 2006). As Bonilla-Silva suggests, this leads to Whites insisting that if people of color would simply work harder, complain less, and stop talking about our racist past, then we would no longer have an issue with race in our country (2006).

Historically the term “traditional racism” has been used to describe overt racist behaviors and attitudes that persisted in the pre-Civil Rights era (Bonilla-Silva 2006). However, that is not to say that these attitudes do not still exist today. This behavior would include openly using racial slurs, participating in crimes that are explicitly motivated by race, and openly stating that one particular race is superior to others (Zamudio and Rios 2006).

Hypotheses

Currently, several studies discuss the concepts of race, gender, and Greek affiliation separately. However, to date, there have not been studies that include all the concepts as well as examine the intersectionality of these variables. This study sought to bring all of these variables together to examine the moderating role of Greek affiliation in relationships between social status factors and racist perceptions.

H1: Greek affiliated students will have higher level of racist perceptions than non-Greek affiliated students.

H2: White students will have higher level of racist perceptions than Black students.

H3: Male students will have higher level of racist perceptions than female students.

H4: The higher the symbolic racism level, the higher the level of racist perceptions.

H5: The higher the traditional racism level, the higher the level of racist perceptions.

H6: Greek affiliation moderates racist perceptions' associations with the social status factors.

Since literature has indicated that racist perceptions may be related to familial income, class standing, education level of mother, and education level of father (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1996; Gillborn 2017; Yancy and Kim 2008), these variables were included as control factors in the present study. The inclusion of both on campus survey and classroom survey has also prompted us to include the survey format as an additional control variable

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

DATA AND SAMPLE

The data of this proposed study were generated from a campus wide survey conducted in a southern university in Spring 2013. In response to the 50th anniversary of admission of African American students to campus, this southern university conducted a survey aimed to examine race relations as well as students' racial attitudes and perceptions. Two survey formats, online survey and on-campus survey, were employed to capture responses from all undergraduate students.

Survey responses were first collected on campus, in classrooms with pen and paper at the beginning of the Spring semester. The on-campus survey drew 2,140 participants, generating an overall response rate of 73.7 percent for the classes visited. After the campus data collection was complete, the link to the online survey was sent to all undergraduate students with email addresses in the university's student directory. Initially, an invitation to participate was sent to this group with a request that anyone who had completed the paper-and-pencil survey in class not participate this time. A second invitation was sent nine days later, again asking students not to participate if they had done so already. The online survey was administered using Qualtrics, respondents accessing the survey via a link in the email. The study invitation with this link was sent to

24,570 e-mail addresses; after accounting for respondents taking the survey in class, the response rate for the online survey was 10.3 percent ($N = 2,311$). In either format, the survey took 10 to 15 minutes to complete. On campus and online surveys alike were completed anonymously with no personal identifiers recorded. After removing data from several surveys completed by graduate students, incomplete instruments missing key data, and responses from students not identifying as White or Black race/ethnicity, the researchers obtained a final sample of 3,219 undergraduate students, 54 percent of whom took the on-campus survey, 46 percent the online survey.

In 2013 when the survey was conducted, the undergraduate enrollment of this southern university was 28,026. On this university campus, undergraduate students were mostly traditional students with 92 percent of undergraduates being younger than 25, most living on or near the institution's traditional, residential campus. Of these undergraduates, 59 percent were in state students, 38 percent came from other states, and 3 percent came from outside of the U.S. The majority of undergraduate enrollment was female (54 percent) and White (82 percent), followed by African American (12 percent). Due to the purpose of this study, the sample was limited to only African American and White students, all other races/ethnicities were excluded. Other descriptions of this campus wide survey are included in previous research (Lo et al. 2017).

MEASURES

Dependent variable

To measure racist perceptions, a 5-item index of conceptually related items was created. Students answered, indicating an assessment of racial circumstances on campus,

by each of the following whether: (a) African American students would be happier at a historically Black college or university (HBCU) than at a historically White college or university; (b) members of ethnic minorities need to adapt to the ways and culture of the majority White students in order to have a smoothly functioning campus; (c) their college has been lowering academic standards to admit African American students; (d) commitment to diversity is overemphasized at their college; and (e) as long as no physical harm is done, language that expresses disapproval for a racial/ethnic group is protected by freedom of speech. Response choices were recoded as 1 (*disagree strongly*), 2 (*disagree somewhat*), 3 (*neither agree nor disagree*), 4 (*agree somewhat*), and 5 (*agree strongly*). The index summed the scores of all items, and it demonstrated a moderate reliability ($\alpha = .70$). The higher the score of racist perceptions index, the higher the levels of racist perceptions.

Independent variables

There are three sets of independent variables that were included in this study: social status factors that include gender, race, and Greek affiliation; racial attitudes that include an index of symbolic racism and an index of traditional racism; and control variables that include familial income, on campus survey, class standing, education level of mother, and education level of father. Below each variable is described in detail.

The variable Greek affiliation was measured as a dichotomous variable and reflected each participant's yes-or-no answer to a question on whether he or she is a member of or is currently pledging a fraternity or sorority. Greek affiliation was dummy coded (0 = non-Greek affiliation, 1 = Greek affiliation). Measured as a dichotomous

variable, gender was dummy coded (0 = male and 1 = female). Only two race groups were included in the proposed study with 0 indicating White/Caucasian and 1 indicating Black, African, or African American.

To measure racial attitudes, we developed two indexes. Symbolic racism is a 5-item index of conceptually related items concerning reasons as to why White people seem to get more of the good things in life. Students indicated their levels of agreement on each of the following statements: (a) “Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. African Americans should do the same without any special favors”; (b) “It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if African Americans would only try harder they could be just as well off as Whites”; (c) “Some people say that because of past discrimination, African Americans should be given preference in hiring and promotion. Others say that such preference in hiring and promotion of African Americans is wrong because it gives African Americans advantages they have not earned”; (d) “Should the government in Washington see to it that African American people get fair treatment in jobs or is this not the federal government’s business?”. Response choices for these items were recoded as 1 (*disagree strongly*), 2 (*disagree somewhat*), 3 (*neither agree nor disagree*), 4 (*agree somewhat*), and 5 (*agree strongly*). The last item in the index asked (f) “How much does racial discrimination in the United States today limit the chances for African Americans to get ahead?” with response choices recoded to (1) *none at all*, (2) *just a little*, (3) *some*, and (4) *a lot*. The index summed the standardized scores of all items, and it demonstrated a

moderate reliability ($\alpha = .79$). The higher the score of symbolic racism index, the higher levels of symbolic racism.

To measure traditional racism, a 4-item index of conceptually related items was created. Each item refers to a continuum of stereotypical characteristics with students indicating where African Americans in general should be placed. These items are (a) from (1) *lazy* to (7) *hard-working*; (b) from (1) *unintelligent* to (7) *intelligent*; (c) from (1) *not violence-prone* to (7) *violence-prone*; and (e) from (1) *poor* to (7) *rich*. The index summed the scores of all items, and it demonstrated a moderate reliability ($\alpha = .77$). The higher the score of traditional racism index, the higher levels of traditional racism.

The last group of independent variables is the control variables, which include: (a) familial income, (b) survey completion, (c) class standing, (d) education level of mother, and (e) education level of father. (a) Familial income was treated as a continuous variable reflecting the respondent's report of in general, their family income and categorized as follows: (1) *far below average*, (2) *below average*, (3) *average*, (4) *above average*, (5) *far above average*. (b) The variable on campus survey was measured as a dichotomous and was dummy coded (0 = *online completion*, 1 = *on campus completion*). (c) Class standing was treated as a continuous variable with the following response categories (1) *freshman*, (2) *sophomore*, (3) *junior*, and (4) *senior*. (d) Education level of mother was treated as a continuous variable with response categories ranged from (1) *less than 12 years*, (2) *12 years (high school graduate)*, (3) *some college or vocational school*, (4) *graduated from college*, and (5) *graduate or professional degree*. (e) Education level of father was also treated as a continuous variable with same categories used for education level of mother.

DATA ANALYSIS

Linear regression was used to explain the outcome variable, racist perceptions. We developed the regression via two stages. In Model 1, the outcome variable was regressed on the social status variables (race, gender, and Greek affiliation) and control factors (familial income, on campus survey, class standing, education level of mother, and education level of father). In Model 2, symbolic racism and traditional racism were added to the model.

To examine the intersectionality of race, gender, and Greek affiliation in explaining racist perceptions, we evaluated whether Greek affiliation moderated the effects of race, gender, symbolic racism, traditional racism, and other control factors on racist perceptions. In our data analysis, we developed two linear regression models for each Greek affiliation subgroup (Greek and Non-Greek), explaining racist perceptions. *T*-test results were then used to examine whether differences of each of the coefficients for the two subgroups are significant. Significant differences found for a particular independent variable mean that Greek affiliation interacts with this independent variable in explaining racist perceptions. The following *t*-test formula was used: $t = ((b1 - b2) / \sqrt{se1^2 + se2^2})$

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of all included variables among Greek affiliated students. Of the entire subsample ($N=1,003$ students) representing Greek affiliated survey participants, 5.4 percent identified themselves as Black and 94.6 percent identified as White. Additionally, 64.3 percent of respondents identified as female. For the variable symbolic racism, the minimum score reported was -9.02, while the highest score reported was 6.37. On average, respondents scored 0.85 on the symbolic racism index. For the variable traditional racism, the minimum score reported was 4, while the highest score reported was 28. On average, respondents scored 15.94 on the traditional racism index. For the variable racist perceptions, the minimum score reported was 5, while the highest score reported was 25. On average, respondents scored 13.13 on the racist perceptions index. As expected, higher levels of racist perceptions were reported by respondents who completed the survey online than those who completed the survey in the classroom. Respondents whose father received a college education reported higher levels of racist perceptions. Participants who reported higher levels of family income also reported higher levels of racist perceptions. Black respondents reported lower levels of racist perceptions than their White counterparts. Females reported lower levels of racist

perceptions than males. Higher levels of racist perceptions were found to be associated with higher levels of traditional racism and of symbolic racism.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of All Included Variables Among Greek Affiliated Students (N=1,003).

Variables	Correlations									Mean	SD
	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)		
Classroom Survey (1)	0.02	0.002	.102**	0.016	0.032	0.032	-0.003	-.068*	-.076*	0.606	0.489
Class Standing (2)	1	.137**	-0.023	-.105**	-0.045	-0.026	-0.051	-0.022	-0.061	2.498	1.070
Black (3)		1	0.049	-.254**	-.097**	-.212**	-.319**	-.186**	-.264**	0.054	0.226
Female (4)			1	-0.05	-0.042	-.067*	-.151**	-.189**	-.226**	0.643	0.479
Father Education (5)				1	.372**	.317**	0.055	.086**	.087**	4.033	1.007
Mother Education (6)					1	.217**	-0.007	0.025	0.034	4.028	0.843
Family Income (7)						1	0.025	.111**	.105**	3.888	0.750
Symbolic Racism (8)							1	.453**	.476**	0.846	3.283
Traditional Racism (9)								1	.528**	15.942	4.353
Racist Perceptions (10)									1	13.125	4.003

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics of all included variables among non-Greek affiliated students. Of the 2,176 non-Greek affiliated survey participants, 19.3 percent identified themselves as Black and 80.7 percent identified as White. Additionally, 55.7 percent of respondents identified as female. For the variable symbolic racism, the minimum score reported was -9.02, while the highest score reported was 6.37. On average, respondents scored -0.345 on the symbolic racism index. For the variable traditional racism, the minimum score reported was 4, while the highest score reported was 28. On average, respondents scored 14.64 on the traditional racism index. For the variable racist perceptions, the minimum score reported was 5, while the highest score reported was 25. On average, respondents scored 11.99 on the racist perceptions index. The higher the class standing, the lower the levels of racist perceptions reported by these non-Greek affiliated survey participants. Participants who reported higher levels of family income also reported higher levels of racist perceptions. Black respondents reported lower levels of racist perceptions than their White counterparts. Females reported lower levels of racist perceptions than males. Higher levels of racist perceptions were also associated with higher levels of traditional racism and of symbolic racism.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of All Included Variables among Non-Greek Affiliated Students (N=2,176).

Variables	Correlations									Mean	SD
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)		
Classroom Survey (1)	1									0.490	0.500
Class Standing (2)	-0.009	1								2.569	1.119
Black (3)	-0.006	-.054*	1							0.193	0.394
Female (4)	0.037	-0.014	.157**	1						0.557	0.497
Father Education (5)	-.065**	-.071**	-.207**	-.090**	1					3.587	1.123
Mother Education (6)	-.045*	.121**	-0.007	-0.041	.426**	1				3.698	1.028
Family Income (7)	0.034	-0.038	.142**	.071**	.367**	.297**	1			3.478	0.845
Symbolic Racism (8)	0.028	-0.005	.388**	.111**	0.027	-.045*	.070**	1		-0.345	3.747
Traditional Racism (9)	-0.034	-0.013	.221**	.174**	0.016	0.017	.067**	.451**	1	14.640	4.365
Racist Perceptions (10)	0.029	.074**	.241**	.208**	0.008	-0.024	.067**	.473**	.505**	11.993	3.817

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

When comparing these two tables, many differences can be seen. The percentage of participants who identified as Black is very different between Greek and non-Greek affiliated students. While only 5.4 percent of Greek-affiliated survey participants were Black, almost 20 percent of non-Greek-affiliated survey participants were Black. Among Greek affiliated students, the correlation between classroom survey and racist perceptions was found to be statistically significant. However, the correlation between classroom survey and racist perceptions was not found to be statistically significant among non-Greek affiliated participants. Similarly, the correlation between father's education level and racist perceptions was found only to be statistically significant among the Greek affiliated population but not among the non-Greek affiliated population.

In explaining racist behavior, we used multivariate data analysis to evaluate whether and how gender, race, and Greek affiliation, along with the two racial attitude variables, are associated with racist perceptions. To examine whether the two racial attitudes variables played a mediating role in explaining racist perceptions, we developed two models. Only the three social status factors and control variables were included in Model 1. The two racial attitudes variables were added to Model 1 to become Model 2. We checked the tolerance scores and found that the lowest score was .696 for symbolic racism among the non-Greek affiliated respondents. Multicollinearity poses no serious issue for this study.

Table 3 presents the linear regression results for the two models explaining racist perceptions for the whole sample, including both Greek and non-Greek organization affiliates. In Model 1, each social status factor was found to be significantly related to

racist perceptions. Black respondents reported lower levels of racist perceptions than White participants by 2.4 units. Greek affiliated participants reported higher levels of racist perceptions higher than non-Greek affiliated participants. Additionally, female participants reported lower levels of racist perceptions than male participants.

Table 3. Linear Regression Results Explaining Racist Perceptions (N=3,179).

Variables	Racist Perceptions				
	Model 1		Model 2		
	b	Beta	b	Beta	
Control Factors					
Classroom Survey	0.009	0.001	0.08	0.01	
Class standing	-0.282 **	-0.08	-0.225 **	-0.064	
Father Education	-0.154 *	-0.044	-0.061	-0.017	
Mother Education	-0.097	-0.025	-0.067	-0.017	
Family Income	0.244 **	0.052	0.129	0.028	
Social Status Factors					
Black (ref: White)	-2.403 **	-0.219	-0.528 **	-0.048	
Greek (ref: Non-Greek)	0.905 **	0.108	0.338 **	0.04	
Female (ref: Male)	-1.474 **	-0.186	-0.879 **	-0.111	
Racial Attitudes					
Symbolic Racism			0.299 **	0.279	
Traditional Racism			0.316 **	0.356	
Constant	14.062 **		8.613 **		
F-test	52.173 **		183.219 **		
Adjusted R2		11.40%		36.40%	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Respondents who had a higher class standing reported lower levels of racist perceptions. Respondents whose father received higher levels of college education was negatively related to respondent's racist perceptions. Participants who reported higher levels of family income also reported higher levels of racist perceptions. With all the

control and social status factors incorporated into our Model 1, the independent variables explained 11.40 percent of the variance of racist perceptions.

Model 2 included all control and social status variables as did Model 1, with the addition of two racial attitude variables: symbolic and traditional racism. In Model 2, each social status factor was found to be significantly related to racist perceptions. Participants who identified as Black reported lower levels of racist perceptions than White participants. Greek affiliated participants reported higher levels of racist perceptions than non-Greek affiliated participants. Additionally, female participants reported lower levels of racist perceptions than male participants. In Model 2, each racial attitude variable was also found to be significantly related to racist perceptions. One unit increase in symbolic racism was found to be associated with an increase in racist perceptions by .3 units. Additionally, one unit increase in traditional racism was associated with an increase in racist perceptions by .32 units. Respondents who had a higher class standing also reported lower levels of racist perceptions. With all the control, social status, and racial attitudes incorporated into our Model 2, the independent variables explained 36.40 percent of the variance of racist perceptions.

Across the two models, social status factors were found to be significantly related to racist perceptions, however there are differences between the two models. Once racial attitudes were included in the model, the size of each coefficient of the three social status factors decreased. Once racial attitudes were included in Model 2, father education and family income became non-significantly related to racist perceptions. These results

confirmed that the racial attitude variables play a mediating role in racist perceptions' associations with social status factors.

Table 4 presents, separately for Greek and non-Greek affiliated students, the racist perceptions' associations with social status factors, control factors, and racial attitude variables. In Model 1 for Greek participants, each social status factor was found to be significantly related to racist perceptions. Black respondents' racist perceptions were found to be lower than White participants by 4.26 units. Additionally, female participants reported lower levels of racist perceptions than male participants. None of the control factors were found to be significantly related to racist perceptions. With all the control and social status factors incorporated into our Model 1, the model explained 11.4 percent of the variance of racist perceptions.

Table 4. Linear Regression Results Explaining Racist Perceptions for Greek Subsample and for Non-Greek Subsample.

	Greek				Non-Greek			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	b	Beta	b	Beta	b	Beta	b	Beta
Control Factors								
Classroom Survey	-0.448	-0.055	-0.323	-0.039	0.202	0.026	0.251	0.033
Class standing	-0.114	-0.031	-0.101	-0.027	-0.323 **	-0.095	-0.259 **	-0.076
Father Education	0.011	0.003	-0.015	-0.004	-0.221 **	-0.065	-0.084	-0.025
Mother Education	-0.035	-0.007	0.037	0.008	-0.114	-0.031	-0.097	-0.026
Family Income	0.224	0.042	0.163	0.031	0.231 *	0.051	0.105	0.023
Social Status Factors								
Black (ref: White)	-4.260 **	-0.24	<u>-1.719</u> **	-0.097	-2.174 **	-0.225	<u>-0.410</u> *	-0.042
Female (ref: Male)	-1.726 **	-0.207	-0.895 **	-0.107	-1.369 **	-0.178	-0.868 **	-0.113
Racial Attitudes								
Symbolic Racism			0.319 **	0.262			0.289 **	0.284
Traditional Racism			0.335 **	0.365			0.304 **	0.347
Constant	14.246 **		1.58 **		14.314 **		9.043 **	
F-test	19.469 **		66.187 **		35.425 **		130.739 **	
N	1,003		1,003		2,176		2,176	
Adjusted R2	11.4%		36.9%		10.0%		34.9%	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Note: Bold-faced, underlined figures signify significant interaction effects involving Greek affiliation and the independent variable

Model 2 included all control and social status variables as did Model 1, with the addition of two racial attitude variables: symbolic and traditional racism. In Model 2, each social status factor was found to be significantly related to racist perceptions. Black participants reported lower levels of racist perceptions than White participants. Additionally, female participants reported lower levels of racist perceptions than male participants. In Model 2, each racial attitude variable was also found to be significantly related to racist perceptions. Racist perceptions were positively associated with the two racial attitude variables. With all the control, social status, and racial attitudes incorporated into our Model 2, the independent variables explained 36.9 percent of the outcome's variance. The reduced sizes of coefficients of the social status factors in Model 2 as compared to Model 1 showed that racial attitudes mediated racist perceptions' associations with social status factors.

In Model 1 for the non-Greek subsample, each social status factor was found to be significantly related to racist perceptions. Black and female respondents had significantly lower levels of racist perceptions than their White and male counterparts, respectively. Respondents who had a higher class standing, reported lower levels of racist perceptions. Respondents whose father received higher levels of education, reported lower levels of racist perceptions. Higher levels of family income were associated with higher levels of racist perceptions. With all the control and social status factors incorporated into our model 1, the independent variables explained 10 percent of the variance of racist perceptions.

Model 2 included all control and social status variables as did Model 1, with the addition of two racial attitude variables: symbolic and traditional racism. In Model 2 for all non-Greek respondents, each social status factor was found to be significantly related to racist perceptions. Black and female participants scored lower in the racist perceptions index than their White and male counterparts, respectively. In Model 2, each racial attitude variable was also found to be significantly and positively related to racist perceptions. With all the control, social status, and racial attitudes incorporated into our Model 2, the independent variables explained 34.9 percent of the variance of racist perceptions among the non-Greek respondents

Across the two models, social status factors were found to be significantly related to racist perceptions, however there are differences between the two models. Once racial attitudes were included in the model, the associations of racist perceptions with several independent variables were weakened. Indeed, two of the control variables became not-significant once racial attitudes were added to Model 2. Again, the racial attitudes variables were found to mediate the relationships between social status factors and racist perceptions.

To examine whether Greek affiliation plays a moderating role in explaining racist perception, we used t-test to evaluate the differences in coefficients between Greek and non-Greek respondents in Model 2. When the difference reached a statistically significant level, coefficients are to be bold-faced and underlined in Table 4. In the Greek and non-Greek affiliated subsamples alike, White had higher levels of racist perceptions than Black respondents. However, the race and racist perceptions relationship was much

stronger among Greek-affiliated than non-Greek respondents. Comparing to their Black counterparts, Whites were 1.72 unit and .41 unit higher in their racist perceptions for Greek-affiliated and non-Greek respondents, respectively.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study drew on data collected from a campus wide survey conducted in a southern university in Spring 2013. Our intent was, first, to examine whether and how race, gender, and Greek-Affiliation are associated with racist perceptions controlling for familial income, campus survey, class standing, education level of mother, and education level of father; second, to examine whether these associations vary across different populations (Greek affiliated students and non-Greek affiliated students); and third, to examine whether symbolic and traditional racism act as mediating factors in racist perceptions.

Our findings indicate a relationship between race, gender, and racist perceptions for both the Greek and the non-Greek subsamples. Specifically, Black participants reported lower on the racist perceptions index than White participants. Additionally, female participants reported lower on the racist perceptions index than male participants. Our findings confirm that Greek affiliation indeed plays a moderating role in race and racist perceptions, indicating that being Black and level of racist perceptions is much stronger with Greek affiliated students than with non-Greek students. Meaning that Greek students have a broader gap between White and Black students in terms of racist perceptions than their non-Greek counterparts. Although we hypothesized that gender would also play a moderating role in the relationship between Greek affiliation and racist

perceptions, our findings did not support the hypothesis. Lastly, our finding confirms that both symbolic and traditional racism mediate the impact of social status factors on racist perceptions.

Two important interpretations and implications can be derived from our results. First, the results suggest that social structure is important in explaining racist perceptions and behavior. Greek life is a fascinating population to study due to its obvious cluster of specific social statuses such as socioeconomic status and wealth, race, and social power. Although these social statuses do exist and indeed cluster outside of the university setting, there are no other student organizations that attract a cluster of students characterized by all these social statuses quite like Greek life. While fraternities and sororities are voluntary organizations, when you consider the monetary cost, the recruitment process, and the type of individuals eventually selected to become members, it becomes clear that certain personal characteristics can be considered Greek. These Greek individuals are then allowed access to luxury on campus housing, a vast networking group of alumnae, and are often exempt from scrutinization due to normative institutional arrangements (Ray and Rosow 2012; Syrett 2009). These privileges set these individuals up for success at much higher rates than others. Becoming a Greek member further solidifies the individual status in a higher society. It expands their elite connections that drive them into more powerful roles in politics, business, social, or economic realms that non-Greek affiliated individuals may not be privy to. These

connections further the generation of racial inequality by solidifying power and prestige with White, upper class individuals.

Second, based on our findings, we suggest that university policy changes must take place in order to encourage not only acceptance of a more diverse population among Greek affiliated students, but also collaboration between these organization to break down the insular environments that have been created within fraternities and sororities. Currently, many universities have developed their own programming boards and councils that include students from all types of Greek organizations. On the surface, these programs encourage students from both historically White and Black Greek organizations to work together on various projects for Greek life unitedly. However, a key element is missing to break down the insular environment, and that is education on ethnic/racial/cultural sensitivity. Our findings suggested that while class standing significantly reduced racist perceptions among non-Greek affiliated students, the same could not be said of the Greek population. For non-Greek affiliated students, the higher their class standing, the lower they scored on the racist perceptions index. However, the relationship between class standing and racist perceptions was not found to be statistically significant or students associated with a Greek organization. One could assume that during their years in college, students learn valuable information about racism, inequality, and social justice and that this information shapes their perceptions on racism, leading to lower levels of racist perceptions. However, Greek affiliated students as a whole were not found to have experiences this same trend. We suggest that there are two main reasons behind this result. One is that the recruitment process and the

reputation of Greek organizations attract those who have higher levels of racist perceptions as a high school student. Second is that the Greek membership and the culture associated with such membership promote racist perceptions and reduce acceptance of tolerance and inclusive orientation education has so inclined to cultivate into the student population. We suggest that sensitivity training within Greek life could work to correct this.

LIMITATIONS

Two study limitations should be mentioned. First, using a secondary dataset precluded our adoption of measures key to explaining racist perceptions. We managed to include Greek affiliated and non-Greek affiliated populations; however, we are not able to determine which participants went on to join Greek organizations, and which ones simply participated in the recruitment process and later disaffiliated.

Second, despite our sample size of 2,140 participants, our study involved data from only one southern university, therefore the results of our study may not be generalizable. However, the large Greek affiliated student population associated with this particular university provided adequate number of respondents for us to answer research questions relevant to the present study.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Currently, there is very little data that has been collected from universities that involves Greek life that does not focus on alcohol consumption and hazing (DeBard and Sacks 2011; Kimbrough and Hutcheson 1998; Park and Kim 2017). Such data are difficult to collect due to the insular and secretive nature of the Greek organizations. In

light of the dearth of available data, information about Greek life tends to be very general, and lack specific information regarding ideals, opinions, and perceptions of Greek life participants. The present study's results, therefore, have contributed to systematic research in Greek life. Further, such research is needed in the near future.

Furthermore, future research must focus on the link between Greek university culture and the larger society. Currently, Greek life research is limited to impacts of Greek life within the educational sector and would benefit from a broader view. It has been noted that at least half of all-American presidents were pledged to a fraternity before taking office (Groff 2009), and similar membership patterns can be found in various political spheres in the US. Studying the linkage between Greek affiliation, political affiliation, and power may shed light on the significant role of Greek affiliation played in racial/ethnic inequalities long permeated in the political and economic arenas in the US.

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Appendix A.

IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619

940-898-3378

email: IRB@twu.edu

<https://www.twu.edu/institutional-review-board-irb/>

DATE: February 18, 2019

TO: Ms. Kyndal Debruin
Sociology and Social Work

FROM: Institutional Review Board - Denton

*Re: Notification of Approval for Modification for Racist Perceptions on a College Campus:
Intersectionality of Gender, Race, and Greek Affiliation (Protocol #: 20471)*

The following modification(s) have been approved by the IRB:

The title of the study has changed.

Previously Approved Title: *"Intersectionality of Gender, Race, Greek Affiliation and Racial Behavior on a College Campus"*

New Title: *"Racist Perceptions on a College Campus: Intersectionality of Gender, Race, and Greek Affiliation"*

cc. Dr. Celia Lo, Sociology and Social Work