Mu Kappa Chapter, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.: An Ethnographic Study of Academic Persistence and Personal Development

Joseph Cordero
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Mu Kappa Chapter, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.: An Ethnographic Study of Academic Persistence and Personal Development

Abstract
The scarcity of empirical research on the impact of Black Greek letter organizations on academic achievement and personal development remains problematic. The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic study was to discover the role of Kappa Alpha Psi in the academic persistence and personal development of eight alumni members over the last 30 years from one high achieving chapter located at the State University of New York Center at Binghamton. Participation was delimited to those who joined the organization no later than their sophomore year of college. The study utilized a purposeful sample technique to identify and select the eight chapter participants who participated in individual structured open-ended interviews. Five themes emerged from the data collected during the interviews – the importance of brotherhood, achievement, personal development, mentoring, and community service. Peer expectations, mentoring and active participation in community service created an atmosphere of academic achievement and personal development amongst the members. This study provided empirical support to the idea that involvement Black Greek letter organizations can breed the qualities that colleges and universities are spending considerable amounts of funds and human resources to develop.

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Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by
Janice Kelly, Ph.D.
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St. John Fisher College

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Dedication

To my wife Ragi, who inspired and supported me throughout this process. Her belief in me allowed me to flourish academically. She has made me a better man.

To my son Milan, whose birth during this process gave me the resolve to model what perseverance and hard work allows us to achieve. He is my daily reminder of the importance of life and all that it has to offer.

To my grandparents Carmen and Victor, who navigated the world with a third and fifth grade education. Their work ethic was passed on to me and although they are now in heaven I know they are smiling down on me.

To Phyllis Opochinsky my high school teacher, who bestowed upon me her love for learning at a young age and made me believe I was more than a statistic.

To Mu Kappa chapter, who taught me that achievement is not a buzz word but a way of life. May we continue to pass down this tradition.

To my team Vanessa, Nireata, Pamela and Achil, each of you served as an integral part of this process. I have been blessed to have each of you in my life.

To Dr. Janice Kelly, Dr. Byron Hargrove, Dr. Craig Wilder and Mr. Jason Gerald whose assistance as mentors, advisors and friends provided me with invaluable knowledge and guidance to complete this monumental process.

To Dr. Claudia Edwards and Dr. Michael Robinson, who provided the academic and scholarly vigor that reignited my passion to become lifelong learner.
Biographical Sketch

Joseph E. Cordero is currently the Director of Student Support Services at the Harlem Children’s Zone’s Promise Academy 1 Upper Elementary School. Mr. Cordero attended the State of New York Center at Binghamton from 1985 to 1992 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1990 and Master of Arts degree in 1992. He attended the State University of New York Center at Albany from 1992 to 1994 and graduated with a Master of Sciences degree in 1994. He came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2010 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Mr. Cordero pursued his research titled Mu Kappa Chapter, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.: An Ethnographic Study of Academic Persistence and Personal Development under the direction of Dr. Janice Kelly and Dr. Byron Hargrove and received the Ed.D. degree in 2012.
Abstract

The scarcity of empirical research on the impact of Black Greek letter organizations on academic achievement and personal development remains problematic. The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic study was to discover the role of Kappa Alpha Psi in the academic persistence and personal development of eight alumni members over the last 30 years from one high achieving chapter located at the State University of New York Center at Binghamton. Participation was delimited to those who joined the organization no later than their sophomore year of college. The study utilized a purposeful sample technique to identify and select the eight chapter participants who participated in individual structured open-ended interviews. Five themes emerged from the data collected during the interviews – the importance of brotherhood, achievement, personal development, mentoring, and community service. Peer expectations, mentoring and active participation in community service created an atmosphere of academic achievement and personal development amongst the members. This study provided empirical support to the idea that involvement Black Greek letter organizations can breed the qualities that colleges and universities are spending considerable amounts of funds and human resources to develop.
Mu Kappa Creed

Achievement to us is not a buzz word. It is the essence of who we are. Understand the essence of what Kappa truly is, not what other people make it to be. Define yourself by those standards; live by that creed and you will be the best man you can be (N. Hite, personal communication, July, 7, 2009).
# Table of Contents

Dedication ........................................................................................................................... ii

Biographical Sketch ........................................................................................................... iii

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. iv

Mu Kappa Creed ................................................................................................................. v

List of Tables ...................................................................................................................... v

List of Figures ................................................................................................................... vii

Chapter 1: Introduction ....................................................................................................... 1

   Statement of the Problem ................................................................................................. 1

   Establishment of Black Student Led Organizations. ...................................................... 5

   Theoretical Rationale .................................................................................................... 15

   Problem Statement ....................................................................................................... 19

   Statement of Purpose ................................................................................................... 21

   Research Questions ....................................................................................................... 22

   Significance of Study ................................................................................................... 23

   Definition of Terms ....................................................................................................... 24

   Chapter Summary ......................................................................................................... 26

Chapter 2: Literature Review. ............................................................................................ 28
Introduction and Purpose ........................................................................................................ 28
Review of the Literature ........................................................................................................ 29
Studies of Historical Black Fraternities ................................................................................ 30
Theories of Student Involvement .......................................................................................... 37
Chapter Summary ................................................................................................................. 45
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology .......................................................................... 47
Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 47
Williams-Scurlock Methodology .......................................................................................... 47
Rationale and Description of the Ethnographic Approach .................................................. 48
Research Context .................................................................................................................. 50
Research Participants .......................................................................................................... 51
Purposeful and Random Sampling Procedure ...................................................................... 56
Profiles of the Eight Alumni Participants ........................................................................... 58
Instruments Used In Data Collection .................................................................................. 59
Sample Procedure ................................................................................................................. 61
Chapter Summary ................................................................................................................. 62
Chapter 4: Results .................................................................................................................. 63
Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 63
Data Analysis and Findings ................................................................................................. 66
Summary of Results ............................................................................................................. 99
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1</td>
<td>Mu Kappa Chapter Membership and Selection by Decade</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.2</td>
<td>Objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi and Categories Used for Data Analysis</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.3</td>
<td>Semester Initiated by Decade into Mu Kappa Chapter</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.4</td>
<td>Ethnic Composition of Mu Kappa Chapter</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.5</td>
<td>Degree Attainment</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.6</td>
<td>Respondent Codes and Length of Time in the Fraternity</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1</td>
<td>Categories and Interview Questions</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2</td>
<td>Data Collection Index Examples</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.3</td>
<td>Student Involvement and Leadership Outside and Inside the Fraternity During College Years</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.4</td>
<td>Leadership Positions Held Outside of Kappa Alpha Psi</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.5</td>
<td>Leadership Positions Held Inside of Kappa Alpha Psi</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.6</td>
<td>Key Terms Used to Identify Themes Related to Uniting College Men of Culture, Patriotism and Honor in a Bond of Fraternity</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.7</td>
<td>Key Terms Used to Identify Themes Related to Encouraging Honorable Achievement in Every Field of Human Endeavor</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.8  Key Terms Used to Identify Themes Related to Promoting the Spiritual, Social, Intellectual and Moral Welfare of Members

Table 4.9  Key Terms Used to Identify Themes Related to Assisting with the Aims and Purposes of Colleges and Universities

Table 4.10  Key Terms Used to Identify Themes Related to Inspiring Service in the Public Interest

Table 5.1  The Relationship between the Research Questions and Interview Protocol
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Template for coding an ethnography</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Academic achievement is an elusive goal for many men of color. Colleges and universities spend countless hours attempting to determine a course of action that would integrate the student into the classroom, as well as, the campus community. Student involvement is one vehicle used to retain students year after year. For students of color on predominately white campuses, student involvement is tantamount to finding commonality and creating a safe haven that will allow students to develop both academically, as well as personally. The genesis of this dissertation can be traced to a discussion that took place with the researcher’s former college roommate and fraternity brother. During the discussion the brother stated, “The chapter kept me in school. I came back year after year for the chapter. Getting my degree was a byproduct of my desire to remain active in the chapter” (P. Bartholomew, personal communication, February 14, 2005). This simple yet eloquent statement has resulted in the following study.

The purpose of this study is to determine the role of Kappa Alpha Psi, a historically Black-Greek letter fraternal organization in the academic persistence and personal development of black students attending at the State University of New York Center at Binghamton. Mu Kappa Chapter has a 97 percent graduation rate during the last three decades. The unusually high success rate in an era when Black and Latino men are experiencing declining attendance and graduation rates merits further investigation.
Over the past 30 years undergraduate enrollment of all male students has dropped from a high of 58 percent of total enrollment to 44 percent across the United States. The U.S. Department of Education (2005) reported that between 1977 and 2003 Black male degree attainment had grown only 0.2 percent, while simultaneously Black women grew by 2.6 percent. Harper (2006) illustrates the downward trend by providing four snapshots of degree attainment in four separate decades for Black men. In 1977, Black men represented 43.5 percent of all the degrees awarded within the Black community, in 1985 the number dropped to 40 percent, followed by 36 percent in 1995 and lastly 32.9 percent in 2003. According to the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2007), a mere 43 percent of Black males were graduating from four year colleges in comparison to 61.4 percent of their white male counterparts. “As the minority population grows in the United States, low college graduation rates become a threat to national prosperity” (Thomas & Wingert, 2010).

The existence of Black fraternities on college campuses have long provided minority students with an outlet to become engaged in the campus and surrounding community through service, socialization and leadership. The indoctrination process creates expectations associated with the over-arching culture of the organization. “The mission of the Black Greek-letter society was from the very beginning to give leadership to a struggling people, to pull together the best trained Black minds to lead the Black community” (Freeman, 1988, p.15). These standards are permeated throughout the group’s identity creating a culture of altruism, leadership and academic achievement. “Historically, Black fraternities have provided opportunities and access to leadership
development. College student leadership has been shown to positively affect academic success, retention, and eventually graduation” (Williams-Scurlock, 2005, p. 59).

**College enrollment trends.** The increase of Black college enrollment coincided with the Black Power movement of the early 1970s. Enrollment doubled between 1964 and 1970. According to Colon (1991), by 1978 more than 50 percent of all Black college students were attending white colleges, however from 1980 to 1984 they were the only group to have declining enrollments in college. By 1979 Black freshmen at predominately White colleges represented 70 percent of the total enrollment of Black freshmen.

The state of New York as of 2008 has the dubious distinction of representing three out of ten lowest graduation districts in the nation for Black males (Given half a chance: the Schott 50 state report on public education and black males., 2008). New York City, Buffalo and Rochester are the lowest performing districts in the state. In New York City, Black males have the lowest graduation rates of 32%. Black and Latino students in New York maintain the lowest graduation rates for any ethnic group at 39% and 38% respectively. This issue is compounded by the fact that both groups represent the highest incarceration and longest sentencing rate in the state. The gap between Black and White males stands at 37%, thus White males are outpacing their Black counterparts 75% to 39%.

**Life on predominately White campuses.** Race relations on college campuses tend to reflect race relations in the greater community. Not surprisingly various ethnic and racial groups tend to congregate amongst themselves with very few bucking the trend to create more diverse relationships on campus. Social obscurity for Black students is not
uncommon on predominately White campuses. Race, class, gender and culture play a significant role in contributing towards full integration into campus life (Colon, 1991).

Black males on predominately white college campuses struggle with identifying support networks that provide access to participation and integration into campus life. Fleming (1983) identified issues that lead to increased feelings of isolation including the lack of connection with most of the social, psychological and academic aspects of campus life. The very concept of being a minority in a predominantly white environment created undue stress for students who did not possess coping mechanisms to navigate through unfamiliar terrain. For example, professors were often considered to be unfairly harsh in grading Black males and did not invest the time to nurture the academic performance of these students. To counter these feelings of alienation and despair, support systems are necessary for “the maintenance of individual self-esteem and life satisfaction; increasing social and academic competence and environmental master and the management of stress and coping” (Allen, 1992). The inability of a student to either develop coping mechanisms or establish support systems would lead to frustration, isolation and ultimately attrition. Durkeim referred to this as anomie.

Durkheim’s (1961) theory of anomie is described as the lack of social stability, including personal unrest, alienation and uncertainty that come from a lack of purpose or ideals. He asserted that regulation was necessary for an individual to maintain a level of emotional homeostasis within society. In addition to Anomie, Durkheim introduced of concept of altruism as the ultimate form of integration. If anomie was a sense of emotional void, then altruism would represent the other extreme as an individual’s ability to be thoroughly integrated into their surroundings. Integration was considered to be the
highest form of regulation because the “members possess a “common conscience” of shared beliefs and sentiments; interact with one another, and have a sense of devotion to common goals” (Johnson, 1968).

Durkheim postulated that education serves several key functions in the development of individuals within society. The first function was to teach and reinforce social solidarity. Individuals are taught the contributions and sacrifices of others in order to learn altruism and realize a sense of insignificance that can be remedied through contribution. Furthermore, social solidarity promotes allegiances which make groups less likely to break the rules. The second function of Durkheim’s theory postulated that schools represent a microcosm of greater society. They provide a hierarchy within the institution, including rules and regulations, rewards and consequences and role related expectations. Durkheim argued that the training received in school provided the basis for role play that all individuals are expected to fulfill professionally and personally. The third function provided a mechanism by which placement in labor divisions could be created. The students are distinguished by ability in order to identify those fields which students are best suited.

Establishment of Black Student Led Organizations

In New York, colleges and universities have created state and federally funded programs specifically designed to attract, recruit and retain minority students. Programs such as TRIO (Greer, 1982), SEEK (CUNY The City University of New York, 2012) and EOP (SUNY, 1970) attempt to address academic deficiencies through remediation and social development by providing counseling services specifically for students accepted into these programs. These endeavors provide a portal to which students that were
academically and economically hindered from disadvantaged backgrounds could be admitted to schools that may have not otherwise provided such a window of opportunity. Admittance and remedial programming continues to provide allow students to enter college with academic resources.

College sponsored retention programs continue to provide the greatest opportunities for minority students to be accepted and obtain a quality education, however their inability to acclimate students to the environment coupled with the perception of the environment as being hostile or uncaring has led to high levels of attrition.

The lack of communal resources that promote racial and cultural awareness has left countless young men and women feeling isolated in a community that is unaware, incapable or unwilling to embrace the cultural, economical and academic divide that exists in society. Cultural unions and historical Black Greek letter organizations fill the environmental void for members and non-members alike on predominately white campuses. These organizations provide a culturally relevant forum for student development through involvement and leadership opportunities.

**Cultural unions.** The Civil Rights movement followed by the Black Power movement afforded Black students with the opportunity to reevaluate and demand changes to the education being provided by predominately White colleges and universities (PWCU). Equipped with tools of organizing freedom rides and public protest, students found themselves actively pursuing change. Black unity and the celebration of culture led to increased dissatisfaction of the status quo. “Black students organized demonstrations against racist and discriminatory school policies and worked to
create social and academic support systems whose goals was to help ensure their survival and success at PWCUs” (Williamson, 1999). Feelings of isolation and frustration led two students to forming an advocacy group to address the needs of Black students. These efforts led to the first Black Student Union San Francisco State University in 1966. Two years later the first Black Studies department would be created at the same institution.

The emergence of Black Student Unions promoted the psychological and emotional of its members. Exum (1985) identified several characteristics common with Black Student Unions. These services met the needs of students whom took it upon themselves to develop support services for an underserved and often excluded population. He stated Black Student Unions were necessary because they:

1. Met social, psychological, and academic needs not being met through traditional university mechanisms;

2. Provide a safe forum for the exploration of identity issues;

3. Enabled the development of collective Black student values and ideological beliefs;

4. Helped develop a sense of collective competence and ability;

5. Enabled collective action and behavior on issues relevant to Black students; and

6. Provided a training ground for the development of political organization, participation, and leadership.

**Historical black Greek letter fraternities and sororities.** Historical Black fraternities have a long and storied history that is interwoven into the fabric of American colleges and society in general. The prominences of their members provide a veritable
Who’s Who of contributors over the last 100 years can be counted within the ranks of these organizations (Kimbrough, 1996).

In the early 1900’s the majority of Black college students were located at what are now known as the historical Black colleges. The earliest Black Greek Fraternity created in 1903 can be traced to Indiana University, a predominately White institution. According to Bryson (2003) Alpha Kappa Nu Greek Society was founded in 1903, however due to the lack of Black males on campus the organization was short lived. Due to the racial climate of the era, it should not be surprising that two of the five fraternities would be established at predominately White institutions. Alpha Phi Alpha at Cornell University and Kappa Alpha Psi at Indiana University provided solace for Black male students in an otherwise hostile environment. Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority provided a similar venue for Black women at the predominately White Butler University.

The remaining members of what is referred to as the Divine Nine were founded at two historical Black colleges, Howard University and Morgan State University. The historical Black-Greek fraternal organizations coexist under the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC). The NPHC was founded in 1922. It consists of five fraternities and four sororities. The fraternities and the founding date are; Alpha Phi Alpha (1906), Kappa Alpha Psi (1911), Omega Psi Phi (1911), Phi Beta Sigma (1914) and Iota Phi Theta (1963). The sororities are Alpha Kappa Alpha (1908), Delta Sigma Theta (1913), Zeta Phi Beta (1920) and Sigma Gamma Rho (1922). All of the aforementioned organizations make a case for involvement in order for the participants to develop a sense of solidarity with the institution. Social integration is viewed as a key component student retention and success. Fleming (1983) discussed several factors that affected the
achievement and retention of Black students. Most notably was the fact that Black males often exist in social isolation. Fleming concludes, “they must therefore find constructive means of encouraging helpful peer contact rather than mutual avoidance” (p.156).

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The pledge process: A rite of passage. Colleges and Universities have long struggled to find a balance between the benefits that historical Black Greek organizations provide with regards to community service and the concern over the pledge process or hazing many must endure to become members. Van Gennep’s (1909) theory is used to review the process of metamorphosis an individual experiences, from potential candidate to pledge and finally membership. The development of a formalized Black Greek letter pledge process originated in 1919 at Ohio State University (Bryson, 2003). The Scroller’s Club was created to train individuals seeking membership into Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. For 71 years the Scroller’s Club served to indoctrinate pledges with the necessary skill sets needed to analyze, adapt, and overcome adversity.

Due to countless injuries, deaths and lawsuits, on April 14, 1990 the National Pan-Hellenic Council, which serves as the umbrella organization for the then eight (now nine) national Black Greek letter organizations (BGLO) decided to ban pledging as a
requirement for initiation. Since then pledging has become an underground sub-culture for members and initiates alike that want to be initiated through traditional methods. “Pledging is a process for taking a non-member of an organization and bringing him into membership. It does not officially exist among BGLOs, but from an outsider perspective it is arguably the centerpiece of their existence” (Foster, 2008). Despite the argument that the hazing that accompanies the process makes it both intolerable and unnecessary, Black and Hispanic males in these organizations are enduring the process and graduating at a higher rate than their non-affiliated peers.

Van Gennep (1909), a noted ethnographer and father of French folklore espoused the belief that an individual must encounter transitional phases in order to achieve generalized socialization. He posed that these 3 phases that an individual experienced would ultimately culminate with the individual’s introduction to the world as a contributor. The rites of passage an individual encounters serve as rituals to become part of the whole. Van Gennep stated, “I propose to call the rites of separation from a previous world, preliminal rites, those executed during the transitional stage liminal (or threshold) rites, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world postliminal rites” (p. 21).

The individual’s ability to successfully navigate through stages of their life in a manner that promotes social stability and orderly movement over the course of their life is a recurring theme. The customs, traditions, ceremonies and rituals associated with each of these stages helped to mark periods of time, communal acceptance and cultural stability. Tinto (1993) states, “He saw life as being comprised of a series of passages
leading individuals from birth to death and from membership in one group or status to another” (p. 92).

For college students pledging within the first two years of college provides the individual provides a sense of stability because, “during the six to eight week pledge period, pledges learn the fraternity’s traditions, and are treated like recruits in military boot camp: as second-class citizens, subordinating their autonomy and identities to the members” (Kiesling, 1998, p. 73).

Durkheim (1961) would argue that schooling served as a instrument of solidarity, whereas Van Gennep (1909) proposed that incorporation into society would require that the individual be separated from what they are accustomed to, in this case home, and be exposed to an unfamiliar environment where they would be forced to deal with a plethora of differences that could allow for an enlightening experience. In his theory, for example, leaving home and moving into dormitories presents the first phase of change. He referred to this stage as the preliminal rite.

The second phase of the ritual or the liminal stage involved the individual’s ability to define themselves within their environment. Thrust into the unknown environment, the term Durkheim coined “anomic” becomes a prevalent consideration. The ambiguity of both the environment and people can lead to a sense of loneliness and isolation. Successful navigation of this phase will ultimately determine whether the individual will become immersed in their environment as a participant or become withdrawn and reclusive. Immersion will promote what Durkheim referred to as solidarity (Durkheim, 1961, p. 240).
Acceptance and successful navigation of the rites of passage ultimately leads to the final phase of Van Gennep’s theory, postliminal rites or reincorporation into the larger society.

Having completed the rite and assumed their 'new' identity, one re-enters society with one's new status. Re-incorporation is characterized by elaborate rituals and ceremonies, like debutant balls and college graduation, and by new ties signs: thus 'in rites of incorporation there is widespread use of the "sacred bond", the "sacred cord", the knot, and of analogous forms such as the belt, the ring, the bracelet and the crown (Van Gennep, 1909, p. 166).

Acclimating individuals with a sense of tradition and solidarity creates a sense of community and bond that is not easily replicated outside of the fraternal experience within college.

**Historical background: from Kappa Alpha Nu to Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.** In the fall of 1910, Elder Watson Diggs transferred from Howard University along with founder Byron Kenneth Armstrong to the campus of Indiana University. “Their presence along with eight other Black men was almost completely ignored by white students” (Bryson, 2003, p. 1). The scarcity of Black students led to increased feelings of isolation. Students could literally walk around campus for weeks without seeing another Black face. Black students were “denied use of entertainment and recreational facilities and only in track and field were allowed to show their athletic prowess” (p. 1). Due to the marginalization of Black students on campus, 11 young men came together to form a fraternal organization. These college students included Elder Watson Diggs, Byron K. Armstrong, Marcus P. Blakemore, Henry T. Asher, Paul W.
Caine, Ezra D. Alexander, John M. Lee, Edward G. Irvin, Guy L. Grant, George W. Edmonds and Frederick Mitchell. Ultimately the fraternity would be initiated by 10 of the students since, “Mitchell subsequently withdrew from school and never returned, hence never became a member” (Bryson, 2003, p. 2).

Kappa Alpha Nu Fraternity was founded January 5, 1911 at Indiana University. It holds the distinction of being the only lasting historical Black fraternal organization to be founded in the Midwest and is the second oldest surviving Black Greek fraternity in the United States. It is also the first Black national fraternity, incorporated on April 15, 1911. Fraternity folklore tells a story where two of the founders were watching a member participate in a track meet when they overheard a White student state that the Black track runner was a member of Kappa Alpha Nig. The comment infuriated the founders and they resolved to change the name of the fraternity to reflect Greek affiliation. The fraternity changed its name from Kappa Alpha Nu to Kappa Alpha Psi on April 15, 1915 in order to showcase a recognizable Greek letter, as well as a tribute to the school itself. From its initial formation the purpose of the organization has been to “raise the sights of Black youths and stimulate them to accomplishments higher than might be realized or ever imagined” (Bryson, p. 2). In the years preceding World War II the fraternity grew beyond the campus of Indiana University by members transferring or acceptance into graduate programs at other schools.

The founders of the organization represented a variety of socio-economic classes, ages and academic fields of study. The basis of their belief system was formulated on high Christian ideals and academic achievement. The fundamental purpose of Kappa
Alpha Psi remains achievement in every field of human endeavor. The objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi are to:

- Unite college men of culture, patriotism and honor in a bond of fraternity.
- Encourage honorable achievement in every field of human endeavor.
- Promote the spiritual, social, intellectual and moral welfare of members.
- Assist the aims and purposes of colleges and universities.
- Inspire service in the public interest (Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, 1983).

The Kappa Alpha Psi international headquarters is located in Philadelphia, PA. The fraternity is led by the Grande Polemarch or national president. The fraternity consists of undergraduate and alumni chapters. These chapters comprise 12 provinces or regions. All chapters including the executive, province, alumni and undergraduate chapters mirror the same organizational structure which includes a Polemarch (President), a Vice Polemarch, Keeper of Records (Secretary), Keeper of Exchequer (Treasurer), Strategus (Sergeant at Arms), Historian and Parliamentarian. There are currently over 100,000 members.

Mu Kappa Chapter, State University of New York Center at Binghamton. The location for this dissertation is with members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Mu Kappa chapter whom are alumni of the State University of New York Center at Binghamton, a predominately white college located in upstate New York. In the fall of 1981, there existed few opportunities for students to engage in activities that represented their interests. Alfonso Rodriguez, Donell Simmons, Norris Hite Jr., Robert Thompson and Glenn Belgrave endeavored to become members of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity and
establish a chapter on The State University of New York Center at Binghamton’s campus.

In order to establish a new chapter, pledges must be indoctrinated and initiated by members in a preexisting chapter. The founders of Kappa Rho colony were inducted into the fraternity on May 15, 1982 by members of Kappa Rho chapter located at the State University of New York at Albany. On October 15, 1985 Kappa Rho colony received its own chapter charter and the name was changed to Mu Kappa chapter. Since its inception, Mu Kappa chapter has initiated 60 members into the fraternity.

Similarly to the founders of the fraternity in 1911, these students found themselves isolated from participating in a dominant white campus environment. Student extracurricular programming focused on the needs of the majority or white students on campus. Black students were left to create, develop and implement their own programming interests. The formation of historical Black Greek organizations (BGO) provided additional resources created by the students themselves in order to meet the needs of a small yet growing population. Minority student interest and concerns were passively ignored by the campus and school administration. Sports, school radio and cultural organizations provided Black students with the only real opportunities to be involved in campus life. Cultural organizations such as the Black Student Union, Latin Student Union and Caribbean Student Association worked diligently to fill the void.

**Theoretical Rationale**

This study examines the role of Kappa Alpha Psi (Kappa), a historically Black-Greek letter fraternal organization as it applies to academic persistence and personal development for Black men who attended The State University of New York Center at
Binghamton utilizing Astin’s Student Involvement Theory (1984). His Student Involvement Theory model of Input-Environment-Output examines both persistence and personal development.

Student Involvement Theory defines student involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (Astin, 1984, p. 518). Input variables include involvement in student organizations and leadership opportunities, measure personal development and academic persistence. Environment plays an important role for Black males on a predominately white campus. This variable has proven to be of considerable importance because the success of minority students often correlates with the existence of a visible community of students on campus (Tinto, 1993). Outcome variables of this study include personal development as obtaining leadership positions in student organizations on campus and persistence as graduation from college.

Thus persistence and the level of personal as well as academic development the student obtains can be directly tied to the student’s involvement within their environment. Fraternity members are indoctrinated to work collectively towards goals. Beginning with the pledge process, candidates are held accountable for one another. The candidate is expected to see themselves as a unit rather than an individual. “Expectations can also be expressed in concrete ways through formal and informal advising. Knowing the rules, regulations and the informal networks that mark campus life are part and parcel of student success” (Tinto V., 1993, p. 6). Over time the belief becomes routine as well as the expectation to support one another.
The five fundamental tenets of Student Involvement Theory include the amount of physical and psychological energy used in any endeavor, the level of involvement over a period of time, the quantitative and qualitative features associated with involvement, the amount of student learning and personal development associated with being involved and the effectiveness of the practice and how it is directly related to the increased student involvement (Astin, 1984).

Whereas the student may have initially been motivated by the logic of going to college or the expectation of family, there is a force intrinsic to the individual that drives a sense of purpose. “The theory of student involvement is more concerned with the behavioral mechanisms or processes that facilitate student development” (Astin, p. 522). Fraternity members often enforce their own role related expectations. How students involve themselves inside and outside of the classroom, as well as, what campus or community projects they are working on defines one’s worth to the organization.

Astin’s study concluded “those students who join social fraternities and sororities or participate in extracurricular activities of almost any type are less likely to drop out” (Student Involvement: A developmental theory for higher education, p. 523). He cites that a sense of belonging to the group is more important amongst minority groups than Whites. A number of researchers have come to the conclusion that fraternity/sorority makes students more engaged in their individual development (Asel, 2009, p. 1). These activities include philanthropic projects, student organizations and campus activities.

From 1982 to present Kappa Alpha Psi, Mu Kappa chapter has provided a number of services to the community. Members are expected to be fully engaged in strategizing, planning, and executing programs that are beneficial to the community. These activities
include blood drives, DWI forums, tutoring/mentoring at the Urban League, study skills workshops, leadership training and Black Male forums. The level of involvement expected and the objectives set in place by the chapter provides members with not only an opportunity to develop organizational skills, but also the expectation that in time all will become leaders either within the chapter or on campus. There is an expectancy that perseveres and persists that the chapter must maintain a level of quality. This reminder is a poem that is committed to memory by every chapter member, “Be strong, for we are not here to play dream or drift. We have hard work to do and heavy loads to lift. Shun not thy struggle for it is God’s gift. Be Strong” (Babcock, 1901).

The concept of persistence. Persistence is often perceived as “an act of enduring continuance, usually evokes an image of a desirable, even admirable, quality or characteristic” (Meier, 2003). It has also been referred to as goal-directed behavior (Lewin, 1954) or planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen argues that planned behavior is directly correlated to an individual’s desire to perform a certain behavior. He further explains that “to the extent that a person has the required opportunities and resources, and intends to perform the behavior; he or she should succeed in doing so” (Ajzen, p. 182). This theory contains three stages of planned behavior. The first is the attitude an individual has towards the behavior. The second considers the perceived social pressure to perform or the consequence of not performing the behavior and lastly, the perceived ease or difficulty associated with performing the behavior.

Another approach for defining persistence can be attributed to Atkinson’s Theory of Achievement Motivation (1964). The crux of Atkinson’s theory was the expectancy of success within a given task. Therefore the intention to perform a behavior coupled with
the effort to complete the task and the expectation to achieve the desire goal can be described as persistent behavior. Kuh and Whitt (1988, pp. 12-13) explained persistence as “the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and groups in an institute of higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus.”

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination are omnipotent. The slogan "press on" has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race (Coolidge, 1933).

Problem Statement

The existence of Black fraternities on college campuses have long provided minority students with an outlet to become engaged in the campus and surrounding community through service, socialization and leadership (Astin, 1993; Kimbrough, 1995; Williams, 2004; Williams-Scurlock, 2005). Much of the literature regarding minority males within higher education focuses on causes for leaving school, rather than examining the reasons why some succeed. Feelings of alienation due to under-prepared academic training, a lack of a support network, finances and culture shock lead many students to fall short of reaching their goal of achieving an academic degree. While the concepts of race, ethnicity and economic class should be considered set in place (Allen, 1992), culture can be nurtured and conformed to include achievement as a basic tenet of
existence. Geertz (1973, p. 89) defines culture as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.”

This study serves to extend the existing research in the understanding of how student involvement promotes academic persistence and personal development for students in Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity at The State University of New York Center at Binghamton. Across the United States, countless organizations collectively spend millions of dollars to investigate, evaluate and address declining enrollment of students of color. Particularly alarming is the continuing downward spiral of Black male college graduates. Black male degree attainment has had insignificant growth over the last 30 years. Colleges are judged by their ability to graduate students within a six year time frame.

The United States once had the highest graduation rate of any nation. Now it stands 10th. For the first time in American history, there is the risk that the rising generation will be less well educated than the previous one. The graduation rate among 25- to 34-year-olds is no better than the rate for the 55- to 64-year-olds who were going to college more than 30 years ago (Thomas & Wingert, 2010).

Student involvement in peer driven programs has shown itself to be a successful model for student retention (Astin, 1984). Black-Greek letter organizations are peer driven organizations that provide students the opportunity to develop networking resources, social outlets, mentoring, business practices and leadership. “For more than 30 years, there has been controversy within the academic community on the potential
benefits from fraternity involvement, and covertly there has been speculation on whether
the college Greek system adheres to its stated tenets” (Williams, 2004, p. 1).

“Researchers such as Horowitz (1987), Maisel (1990) and a host of others claim that
fraternities and sororities have no redeeming value and are detrimental to the
development of college students” however, most of these studies have focused on white
Greek-letter organizations (as cited in Kimbrough, 1995, p. 63). Thus, the literature
remains unclear on the impact of historical Black-Greek organizations with regards to
persistence and overall impact of these groups on their members.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the role of Kappa Alpha Psi, a
historically Black-Greek letter fraternal organization as it applies to academic persistence
and personal development in higher education at The State University of New York
Center at Binghamton. Black students on predominantly white campuses report high
levels of alienation and social isolation. Black males continue to have the highest
attrition rates of all college students. Colleges continue to struggle with identifying
programs and practices that will help to alleviate the issue of alienation and thereby find
ways to stymie high levels of attrition (Allen, 1992). Black males are often less prepared
academically and socio-economically than their white peers and overall attainment is
substantially lower. Therefore more studies are needed to examine the phenomena
related to high retention and degree completion.

Student involvement, social and professional networking opportunities, mentoring
and positive self-images have proven to develop more favorable outcomes for Black
males (Allen, 1992). Membership in fraternities allows students to develop leadership
skills, as well as, provide members with a sanctuary in an environment they perceive to be indifferent towards their attendance. Kimbrough (1996) conducted a quantitative study to discern how membership in historically Black fraternities and sororities affected Black student involvement and leadership. Williams (2004) replicated Kimbrough’s (1996) study and identified the need to focus on the impact of leadership skills, traits and roles attained through membership in Black Greek letter organizations. Williams-Scurlock (2005) utilized both of the aforementioned studies as a foundation, however used a qualitative approach to conclude Black Greeks showed greater leadership development and cognitive development overall than their peers due to a fraternal culture that breeds servant leadership attributes.

The scarcity of qualitative research in the area of Black Greek letter organizations is somewhat surprising given that they have existed for nearly a century. Williams-Scurlock (2005) states, “To date there has not been any published, empirical qualitative study on leadership development in historically Black Greek letter organizations.” His qualitative study focused on one particular historical Black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. William-Scurlock offered as a consideration for future research, “Can this data be generalized to other historically Black Greek-lettered organizations” (Williams-Scurlock, 2005, p. 194)? It is the researcher’s belief that a similar study would add substantially to the literature.

**Research Questions**

This study seeks to explore the questions:

1. How did membership in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the personal development of members during their undergraduate years?
2. How did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the academic persistence of members during their undergraduate years?

Significance of Study

Greek letter organizations have long been considered to have no redeeming qualities; however the vast majority of these studies examine the relevance of white Greek letter organizations. Kimbrough (1995) examined the role of the historical Black fraternities on predominantly white college campuses in his study titled, Self-assessment, participation, and value of leadership skills, activities, and experiences for Black students relative to their membership in historically Black fraternities and sororities. In his findings, he discussed the value of leadership, experiences and the ability to have access to leadership experience. He states, “if being a Greek is a viable means for increasing students’ motivation and performance as well as enhancing their cognitive and leadership development, then assessment of Black students’ involvement in these organizations on predominantly white campuses seems particularly warranted” (p.64).

It is the belief of this researcher that minority male students affiliated with Black Greek letter fraternities are more likely to adopt a culture of persistence and therefore complete their education due to stronger social networks, increased organization involvement and peer to peer expectations. This concept although closely aligned to motivation, which is considered to be a psychological state (Astin, p. 522), is applicable to producing more useful results for practitioners within institutions of higher education. Academic institutions, student organizations and organizations seeking to identify issues that positively influence student achievement can benefit from this study. An increased
understanding of how the institution can assist minority males make the transition to college can be gleamed from this study.

**Definition of Terms**

**Achievement:** obtaining an undergraduate degree.

**AKA:** a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority.

**Alpha:** a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity.

**Bond:** a term indicating shared brotherhood among members.

**Black Fraternities:** Alpha Phi Alpha (Alpha), Kappa Alpha Psi (Kappa), Omega Psi Phi (Omega), Phi Beta Sigma (Sigma), and Iota Phi Theta (Iota).

**Black Sororities:** Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA), Delta Sigma Theta (Delta), and Sigma Gamma Rho (SG Rho).

**Black students:** students of African and Caribbean descent.

**Brotherhood:** a sense of belongingness and family

**Chapter:** a division within the fraternity affiliated with a school or geographic area.

**Colony:** a division of a chapter located at a different college campus.

**Community Service:** providing services to the campus and outside community.

**Culture:** a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.

**Delta:** a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

**Divine Nine:** a pseudonym for the nine historical Black fraternities and
sororities.

Fraternity: a local or national organization of male students, primarily for social purposes, usually with secret initiation and rites and a name composed of two or three Greek letters.

EOP: Educational Opportunity Program.

Greeks: a term meant to describe members of a Greek-letter organization. Historical Black Greek-letter organizations: predominately Black fraternities and sororities originating in the early 20th century.

Iota: a member of Iota Phi Theta fraternity.

Leadership: a term used to describe the acting of guidance or authoritative influence.

Mentoring: providing guidance to others academically, personally and professionally.


Nupe: a nick name for a member of Kappa Alpha Psi that is regarded as a worker for the fraternity.

Omega: a member of Omega Psi Phi.

Personal development: activities and influences that develop increased awareness, identity, build skills, socializations and networking opportunities that leads to greater mobility.

Pledge: a candidate for admission to a fraternity or sorority.

Pledging: The indoctrination process a pledge must go through in order to
become a member of a fraternity or sorority.

PWI: Predominantly White Institutions.

PWCU: Predominantly White Colleges and Universities.

Rites of Passage: Any of numerous ceremonial events, existing in all societies that mark the passage of an individual from one social or religious status to another.

Sands: Individuals who joined the organization within the same semester.

SEEK: Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge.

Sigma: a member of Phi Beta Sigma fraternity.

SG-Rho: a member of Sigma Gamma Rho sorority.

Sorority: a local or national organization of female students, primarily for social purposes, usually with secret initiation and rites and a name composed of two or three Greek letters.

TRIO: Three federally funded programs named Upward Bound, Talent Search and Student Support Services.

White students: individuals of European or Caucasian ancestry.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a foundation for considering the role of Kappa Alpha Psi (Kappa), a historically Black-Greek letter fraternal organization as it applies to academic persistence and personal development in higher education at The State University of New York Center at Binghamton. It introduced various theories regarding the impact of student involvement and leadership as tools for academic persistence and the role of the fraternity as it relates to Black male students in higher education.
Chapter two will provide a review of the literature related to the study. It will offer theoretical concepts related to student involvement and an analysis of literature regarding Black-Greek letter organizational studies. Chapter three will describe the methodology, instrumentation, data collection techniques and analysis used for this study. Chapter four will provide a review of the research questions, data analysis and research findings. Finally chapter five will discuss the implications of the findings, limitations and recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the role of Kappa Alpha Psi (Kappa), a historically Black-Greek letter fraternal organization as it applies to academic persistence and personal development in higher education at The State University of New York Center at Binghamton. In the year 2000, in New York State, Black males between the ages of 18-24 represented 8.6 percent of the population, however the State University of New York system only 3 percent of these men are enrolled in college. Colleges continued to struggle with the retention of Black males. Black males represent the highest attrition rates of any group in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Nationally more than 67 percent of Black males enrolled in college do not graduate (Harper, 2006). Since 1985 Black women have outshined their male counterparts in every academic level from associates to doctoral degree. Within the Black community Black males represent 33.8 percent of total Blacks attending college. This number was almost doubled by Black women at 66.2 percent.

The impact of student involvement has on persistence serves as the central theme for this study. For the purpose of this student involvement includes student leadership, organization membership and altruistic activities within the community. Persistence is a process that promotes goal-directed behavior and embodies the following:

First, persistence is situational, specific and a process oriented construct.

Second, persistence is behaviorally sensitive to personality dimensions.
Third, persistence taps motivational dimensions. Finally, persistence is a cognitive process. These qualities of persistence enable the development of both a functional definition of persistence and a conceptual model of the persistence process (Meier, 2003).

Several researchers (Kimbrough, 1996; Williams, 2004; Williams-Scurlock, 2005) have studied the impact that student involvement in historical Black Greek letter organizations have on overall academic achievement and persistence. There exists a minimum amount of literature that examines Black fraternity membership and the impact that membership has on overall persistence.

Review of the Literature

The existence of Black fraternities on college campuses have long provided minority students with an outlet to become engaged in the campus and surrounding community through service, socialization and leadership. The indoctrination process creates expectations associated with the over-arching culture of the organization. These standards are permeated throughout the group’s identity creating a culture of persistence, leadership and academic achievement. “Historically, Black fraternities have provided opportunities and access to leadership development. College student leadership has been shown to positively affect academic success, retention, and eventually graduation” (Williams-Scurlock, 2005, p. 59).

Several contemporary studies regarding historical Black fraternities were investigated to provide the researcher with the necessary foundation for conducting this study (Kimbrough, 1996; Williams, 2004; Williams-Scurlock, 2005). The first study was Kimbrough’s (1996) work on leadership as it relates to student retention. Kimbrough’s
research brought about a renewed interest in the phenomena of Black Greek-letter organizations. His insight as a member (Alpha Phi Alpha) and research findings help to lay the foundation upon which others have begun to investigate. Kimbrough’s provides detailed analysis of the Black Greek organization (BGO) experience as it relates to student retention.

**Studies of Historical Black Fraternities**

**Walter Kimbrough.** Walter Kimbrough is considered to be the foremost scholar within the study of historical Black fraternities in the United States. His dissertation (1996) examined the impact Historical Black Greek organizations had on members and non-members at historical Black colleges and predominately White Colleges. The study measured student involvement, leadership, behaviors, and student perceptions as it related to involvement in organizations.

The purpose of Kimbrough’s (1996) study was to study the impact of historical Black Greek organizations on student involvement and leadership development. His independent variable, similar to this study, examined the organizations ability to develop leadership skills, along with the effect of campus environment on student development. His quantitative study selected from a pool of 1,400 potential participants a targeted population of 50 Greek and 50 non-Greek students. He utilized Chi-square tests to determine differences found in his non-parametric tests. Ultimately his findings presented several interesting conclusions. First, Greek members were more likely to be more involved in organizations and hold leadership positions within them. Secondly, high school and freshman year were not indicative of whether a student would be involved later on, however Greeks showed significant involvement as they became more
invested in the college environment. Lastly, Greeks scored higher in all leadership skill areas, however non-Greeks did not adhere to the premise that student organizations allowed for the development of leadership skills.

While Kimbrough’s study is considered to be substantial contribution to the literature concerning the impact of Black Greek letter organizations, his study did not provide for explanation or reflection. Student perceptions were not investigated and questioned to gain greater understanding of why and how Black Greeks developed greater leadership skill sets or how students came to select the organizations they chose to join. This study allows for participants to tell their story from their own perspective. It allows for the participant to describe and reflect on their involvement both as a member of the organization and a leader on campus.

“Credibility of BGOs continues to be validated by the historical and ongoing prominence of so many of their members” (Kimbrough, 1996). Historical Black Greek letter organizations make a case for involvement in order for the participants to develop a sense of solidarity with the institution. Social integration is viewed as a key component student retention and success. Fleming (1983) discussed several factors that affected the achievement and retention of Black students. Most notably was the fact that Black males often exist is social isolation. Fleming concludes, “They must therefore find constructive means of encouraging helpful peer contact rather than mutual avoidance” (p. 156).

Greek letter organizations have long been considered to have no redeeming qualities; however the vast majority of these studies have examined the relevance of white Greek letter organizations. Kimbrough also examined the role of the historical Black fraternities on predominantly white college campuses (1995). In his findings, he
discussed the value of leadership, experiences and the ability to have access to leadership experience. In Kimbrough’s study he states, “if being a Greek is a viable means for increasing students’ motivation and performance as well as enhancing their cognitive and leadership development, then assessment of Black students’ involvement in these organizations on predominantly white campuses seems particularly warranted” (p.64).

“Researchers such as Horowitz (1987), Maisel (1990) and a host of others claim that fraternities and sororities have no redeeming value and are detrimental to the development of college students” (as cited by Kimbrough, 1995, p.63). Most of these studies have focused on white Greek-letter organizations. Researchers (Kimbrough, Williams and Williams-Scurlock) have concluded that the mission of historical Black fraternities and sororities are vastly different from their white counterparts. “Historically, Black fraternities have provided opportunities and access to leadership development. College student leadership has been shown to positively affect academic success, retention, and eventually graduation” (Williams-Scurlock, 2005, p. 59).

The methodology utilized to collect data was probability sampling, which he felt would offer the opportunity to produce a generalizable study, however would also produce a low response rate. This method was chosen over a convenience sample because “it is a method that cannot be readily yield generalizability to the target population” (Kimbrough W., 1996, p. 11), although the return rates would be greater. The survey instrument sought to examine students on three scales. The first scale measured student involvement and leadership in student, community, and civic organizations, as well as, leadership positions that were held by students in those organizations. The second scale measured self-reported scores on 32 behaviors managers
found to be of value. The final measured student perceptions with regards to student organizations and leadership positions to develop their personal skills sets. Kimbrough asserts “further study is needed on the impact of Black Greek letter organization with regards to student involvement and leadership skill development” (1996, p. 104).

**Kourt D. Williams.** Williams (2004) built upon Kimbrough’s through his examination of leadership development of members in Black Greek-letter organizations. He refers to Black Greek-letter organizations as “an environment without peer on college campuses” (2004, p. 8). Similar to Kimbrough’s (1996) study, Williams decided a quantitative study would yield the results he sought to collect. Utilizing Kimbrough’s (1996) quantitative survey instrument to collect data, Williams decided to go in a different direction and obtain a purposeful sample. Williams sought to document how fraternal involvement translated into skills members would use in the workforce.

Williams (2004) study of a Black-Greek historical organization at a predominately white college sought to discover the impact fraternity involvement had on developing and acquiring leadership, with regards to leadership skills, traits and roles. He also examined member perception of fraternity importance with regard to their overall educational experience and future success. Williams built upon Kimbrough’s work and evaluated the benefits of fraternal involvement post undergraduate years. His usage of a Likert-scale survey instrument further strengthen the initial findings that fraternal involvement has a significant impact on individuals during as well as post college years. His findings found that in addition to developing skills sets that were perceived as desirable in the workforce, the social networking obtained through membership enhanced the resolve members had to succeed.
Williams employed a random sample technique and mailed 1000 surveys utilizing a three section Likert-scale survey. His study investigated four skills as independent variables, namely communication, negotiation, organization and time management, as well as nine traits (courage, decisiveness, dependability, judgment, sensibility, loyalty, enthusiasm, endurance and initiative) and eight roles (monitor, coordinator, director, producer, innovator, broker, facilitator and mentor). His dependent variable included perception of preparation as an essential component.

Williams study determined that members perceived leadership development to be an essential contributor to their educational experience that positively translated to future success. Similar to Kimbrough, Williams’ use of a quantitative technique did not present the ability to delve in deeper to understanding individual psyche or provide participants with a vehicle in which they could share their own history. Both Williams and Kimbrough provided a level of validity due to the sheer size of their samples; however both were limited by their inability of a quantitative study to provide voice to the particular experiences membership afforded each of the participants. This study seeks to provide description as it relates to individual perceptions and experiences as members of the organization.

In his survey, Williams identified four skills, nine trait factors and eight role factors associated with fraternal membership that promote future success. The four skill traits were time management, organization, communication and negotiation. The nine trait factors included loyalty, initiative, dependability, endurance, enthusiasm, courage, judgment, decisiveness and sensibility. The eight role factors listed were mentor, coordinator, innovator, facilitator, director, producer, monitor and broker. “Achieving an
effective and efficient balance between academic, social, personal, and other aspects of
the collegiate experience is a major component of the fraternity’s development program”

Remarkably Williams received responses for 956 out of 1000 surveys. He
attributed the success to being a member of the organization he chose to study.
Surprisingly the survey address did not student involvement directly, but rather assumed
it was intrinsically interwoven in what could be gleamed from participant responses.
Overall the study found fraternity involvement to have a statistical significance with
regards to the acquisition of leadership skills, traits and roles amongst members.

Williams concludes the direction of future research should be a qualitative
approach to determine why fraternal member’s perspectives were similar. He assessed
that mining the data would produce patterns that would be of value and ultimately
provide a better understanding of the phenomena. Furthermore, the support network
created by fraternal membership “certainly warrants consideration as future
investigations explore the relevance and value of the Greek system in modern-day
colleges and universities” (p. 44).

Michael Williams-Scurlock. Williams-Scurlock (2005) approach towards the
study of Black fraternal organizations extended the study of fraternal organizations by
using a qualitative multiple-case study approach to investigate how Alpha Phi Alpha, the
oldest historical Black fraternity demonstrated servant leadership attributes. Servant
leadership attributes include pioneering, modeling, appreciation of others, empowerment
and vision. The study categorized members into three distinct groups; members who
were initiated 30 years ago, 20 years ago and at least 10 years ago. In total 38 members
of the organization were interviewed. The purpose of the distinctions was to ascertain the similarities and differences of members in the various eras.

Williams-Scurlock’s (2005) study of servant-leadership in a historical Black fraternity. His objective was to investigate how servant leadership attributes had been demonstrated by the historical Black Greek fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha. His work is differentiated from the first two because of his examination of fraternal involvement was approached from a qualitative rather than quantitative perspective.

Williams-Scurlock’s approach was different from the first two studies. He decided to utilize a qualitative multiple case-study approach. His study sought to examine three generations of fraternity members that spanned a 30 year period to discover similar themes that remained constant over time. His qualitative approach yielded more personal and insightful information than the aforementioned that utilized Likert-scales to collect data. His investigation was able to identify similarities, as well as, differences that were seemingly associated with generational differences. The one constant he determined was associated with modeling proper behavior and expectations.

During the course of his interviews several themes emerged, the first was the expectation that members would be involved in student run organizations not affiliated with the fraternity. Team sports, cultural organizations, student government, residential life, campus ministries and academic clubs were several of the organizations members claimed to participate in. The second theme was the expectation of members to be student leaders on campus and active in the community. The third theme was to be regarded as trendsetters who pioneered and set trends for the betterment of the campus community. The fourth theme addressed the need to be role models and set a positive
example for members and non-members to follow. The fifth theme was the encouragement of members to inspire, support and mentor one another. The sixth and final theme was adherence to a strong work ethic. From these themes he explained that brotherhood and long lasting friendships are successfully nurtured.

Williams concluded his study by asking several questions that could prove interesting in future research. Most notable was whether the data he gathered could be generalized to other historical Black Greek letter organizations. He states, “the phenomenon of servant leadership beliefs and attributes has not been examined within the context of other student leadership organizations so further research is called for to explore the generalizability of this model to other student organizations” (p. 194).

This researcher sought to extend Williams-Scurlock’s qualitative multiple-case study by examining the role of Kappa Alpha Psi (Kappa), a historically Black-Greek letter fraternal organization as it applies to persistence in higher education at The State University of New York Center at Binghamton.

Theories of Student Involvement

Student involvement studies. The aforementioned studies all utilized Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement to examine the impact of student involvement on persistence. Astin (1984), Tinto (1993) and Bean (2000) offer contemporary theoretical approaches to understand the dynamics involved with regards to student involvement within an underserved student population and the student’s ability to develop coping skills to thrive in an unfriendly environment.

Additionally Durkheim’s (1961) work on morality is examined to interpret how discipline and autonomy create a culture of achievement and persistence within the
organization. Finally Lewin (1954) is included to analyze how group dynamics play an integral role in the formation of identity.

The works of these theorists serve as a foundation for a generalized understanding of how the dynamics associated with the indoctrination process, fraternal culture, and organization relationship with the academic institution impact minority male persistence on predominantly white campuses.

Theorists such as Alexander Astin, Vincent Tinto and John Bean have added to the theoretical landscape through their examination of student involvement as a catalyst toward overall student achievement. All three include persistence as a determining factor in a student’s decision to remain or leave. Astin postulates that student involvement is a central motivating factor towards persistence. Tinto theorizes that organizations must be committed to engaging the student in meaningful activities and structure that ultimately lead to a sense of belonging for the individual. Bean adds to Tinto’s conjecture by adding that students need to obtain the necessary skill sets needed to survive in the environment.

Van Gennep (1909) discussed the intrinsic value of experiencing a ceremonial process or rites of passage and the result of having gone through such an endeavor. His work is pivotal to understanding why individuals capitulate and defer to the whims of others in order to gain acceptance into the communal body.

Durkheim’s (1961) research concerning the role of public schools as a social system with emphasis on educating students with regards to morality, conduct and authority culminates into a synthesis he refers to as discipline. Durkheim’s explanation of the concept of discipline illuminates ideologies that provide better understanding of the
culture and expectations of Black Greek-letter organizations. These elements are passed on from one member to the next through a ceremonial and ritualistic process.

Lewin (1954) drew inspiration from Durkheim and Van Gennep. As a social psychologist, Lewin argued that social factors both institutional, as well as personal, impact and influence an individual. He examined social influences such as group memberships and social interactions, while also considering personal factors such as social status, role and social class. Lewin’s work on field research examined socio-economic as well as other demographic factors which must be considered to understand academic preparedness, affiliations and the social significance that is provided through membership.

**Alexander Astin: Student Involvement Theory.** Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement (1984) focuses on the amount of time and energy students devote to their college experience and how it correlates to overall persistence. This theoretical framework can be generalized and applied to all segments of the population, however for the purpose of this dissertation; the researcher is examining a tangible applied model that could possibly serve to assist Black male students in their academic pursuits. A growing body of scholarly literature (Kimbrough, 1996; Williams, 2004; Williams-Scurlock, 2005) has begun examining membership in historical Black fraternal organizations and the impact that membership has on persistence. Several of the factors cited for maintaining enrollment include student involvement in fraternities, government and cultural organizations.

Alexander Astin (1984) defined student involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518).
Thus the level of personal and academic development the student obtains can be directly tied to the student’s involvement within their environment.

Many of the theories examined are driven by outcomes, whereas “the theory of student involvement is more concerned with the behavioral mechanisms or processes that facilitate student development” (p. 522). This concept although closely aligned to motivation, which is considered to be a psychological state (p. 522), is applicable to producing more useful results for practitioners within institutions of higher education.

Whereas the student may have initially been motivated by the logic of going to college or the expectation of family, there is a force intrinsic to the individual that drives a sense of purpose. Astin’s study concluded “those students who join social fraternities and sororities or participate in extracurricular activities of almost any type are less likely to drop out” (p. 523). A number of researchers’ have come to the conclusion that fraternity/sorority makes students more engaged in their individual development (Asel, 2009, p. 1). These activities include philanthropic projects, student organizations and campus activities. Researchers (Kuh, Pascarella & Wechsler 1996) argue that skills sets that are obtained by fraternal life are over generalized; they lack openness to diversity and do not necessarily hold leadership positions in any organizations including their own.

One’s ability to adapt the environment, successfully navigate the terrain and ultimately find a way to reach their destination can be encapsulated in one word, persistence. The need for connectedness is ultimately tied to what Tinto describes as “the single most significant predictor of persistence (as cited in Harper & Quaye, 2009, p.4).

**Vincent Tinto: Student Integration Model.** Vincent Tinto (2006), a foremost authority of student retention introduces several conditions for student success.
The first condition states an institution must be committed through both resources and incentives. Institutional commitment is more than just words, more than just mission statements issued in elaborate brochures; it is the willingness of the institution to invest resources and provide the incentives and rewards needed to enhance student success. Without such commitment, programs for student success may begin, but they rarely prosper over the long term (p.6).

The student’s ability to find a niche can determine whether they see themselves as part of the institution, leading to what Durkheim (1961) would refer to as social solidarity. Involvement in the classroom and social activities allows the student the opportunity to acclimate and integrate themselves into the community. Failure of a student to identify with the institution is a contributing factor more to dropping out (Simmons, 2010).

Tinto’s Student Integration Model (1993) postulates that institutions must be willing to invest resources in order to increase retention rates, however cultural organizations are school funded and do not produce the desired effect. Student Attrition Theory examines the coping mechanisms students need to successfully navigate around obstacles they experience.

The next condition the institution must provide is to set high expectations that focuses on academic achievement and provides the structure upon which such standards can be met regardless of academic aptitude. “Simply stated, no student rises to low expectations. Regrettably, it is too often the case that institutions expect too little of students, especially during the critical first year of college” (Durkheim, 1961, p. 6). He further states, “Expectations can also be expressed in concrete ways through formal and
informal advising. Knowing the rules, regulations and the informal networks that mark campus life are part and parcel of student success” (p. 6).

Tinto identifies three types of support needed for students (2006). Academic support provides students with resources to hone their skill sets. Social resources provide students with a safe haven and a sense of familiarity that serves as a point of entry to the institution. Lastly he explains the need for financial resources citing students need support outside of the classroom that is linked to the classroom experience. “For them, as well as for others, the availability of academic support in the form of developmental education courses, tutoring, study groups, and academic support programs such as supplemental instruction is an important condition for their continuation in the university” (p. 7). His final condition is involvement. “The more students are academically and socially involved, the more likely they are to persist and graduate” (p.7). Tinto theorizes that the institutions ability to meet the aforementioned criteria will lead to greater institutional impact on student persistence, culminating with graduation.

**John Bean: Student Attrition Model.** Bean (2000) counters that Tinto’s sociological approach to the issue of student involvement and departure should be shifted toward a psychological explanation. Whereas Tinto (2006) explains this adjustment as social integration, Bean examines the collection of coping mechanisms a student utilizes to adapt to their environment. For example stress that is caused by perceived threats or a sense of inferiority can lead to a student leaving school prematurely or responding to a situation negatively.

Upon entering the university, students are guided in many cases by what can be described as action-behavior theory, that is, the “attitude (desire to receive an education)
toward the behavior (attending college), where attitude is based on beliefs about the consequences (receiving an education) of the behavior” (Bean, 2000, p.50). Attitude and behavior lead the transition students experience during what Van Gennep (1909) referred to as the liminal stage. Bean measured this by determining a student’s level of involvement, motivation and ultimately persistence.

He found students who integrated themselves into holding offices in campus organizations or involvement in Greek life displayed positive social approach behaviors. These students ultimately felt a sense of belonging. Students who are able to successfully navigate around obstacles, “are less likely to leave college before graduating” (Bean, 2000, p.51).

**Emile Durkheim: Moral Education Model.** Emile Durkheim’s lecture series titled *Moral Education*, in 1903 examined the role of education in teaching morality and the prevention of anomie in French society (1961). He introduced of concept of altruism as the ultimate form of integration. If anomie was a sense of emotional void, then altruism would represent the other extreme as an individual’s ability to be thoroughly integrated into their surroundings. Integration was considered to be the highest form of regulation because the “members possess a “common conscience” of shared beliefs and sentiments; interact with one another, and have a sense of devotion to common goals” (Johnson, 1968).

In his lectures, Durkheim postulated that education serves several key functions in the development of individuals within society. The first function was to teach and reinforce social solidarity. Individuals are taught the contributions and sacrifices of others in order to learn altruism and realize a sense of insignificance that can be remedied
through contribution. Furthermore, social solidarity promotes allegiances which make
groups less likely to break the rules. The second function of Durkheim’s theory
postulated that schools represent a microcosm of greater society. They provide a
hierarchy within the institution, including rules and regulations, rewards and
consequences and role related expectations. Durkheim argued that the training received
in school provided the basis for role play that all individuals are expected to fulfill
professionally and personally. The third function provided a mechanism by which
placement in labor divisions could be created. The students are distinguished by ability
in order to identify those fields which students are best suited (Durkheim, 1961).

**Kurt Lewin: Social Conflict Theory.** Lewin (1954) expands upon the
theoretical framework provided by Durkheim and Van Gennep by examining factors
inherent in both theories. Durkheim considered the individual to be influenced and
created by society, while Van Gennep countered individuals create society thus they have
the power and influence to change it. He provided a common ground with his own
theory of the psychological and sociological problems minority groups face within
society. His theory examines the social influences such as group memberships and social
interactions, as well as, individual factors such as social status, role and social class.

Lewin addressed the psycho-sociological problems of a minority group in his
work titled *Resolving social conflicts* (1954). “During most of his life the adult acts not
purely as an individual but as a member of a social group.” He goes on to say, “There are
persons whose whole life-situation is characterized by such uncertainty about their
belonging, resulting from standing near a margin of groups” (Resolving social conflicts:
selected papers on group dynamics, 1954, p. 147). The sense of marginalized position he
describes compels the individual to either assimilate or withdraw from the environment unless a connection can be established with a social group. Finding a social group that allows for a connection, whether it is racial, religious or cultural, provides the individual a place of belonging.

This study utilizes Astin’s Student Involvement theoretical model of Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) to investigate inputted variables, level of involvement and graduation as an indicator of persistence outcomes. Research questions will investigate each of these variables.

**Chapter Summary**

The review of literature highlights those factors relevant to student involvement, such as the ability to transition and adapt to a new environment. Black male students are especially vulnerable to feelings of isolation on predominately white campuses. Establishing friendships, joining organizations and taking on leadership roles develop a sense of belonging to the larger community. Students are often to left on their own to navigate their new surroundings. Fraternities provide a sense of familiarity for their members. The literature indicates that students involved in extracurricular activities not only allow students to learn and hone many skills, but also increase the overall rate of persistence.

This research project is being developed with the intention of examining the causes of academic persistence and personal development for members of a historical Black Greek letter organization. The researcher is hopeful that the identification of variables that allow for young men of color to succeed in higher education will add to the literature regarding persistence, retention, role modeling, leadership and achievement.
Chapter three will discuss the rationale of using a qualitative methodology to explore the role of Kappa Alpha Psi (Kappa), a historically Black-Greek letter fraternal organization as it applies to academic persistence and personal development in higher education at The State University of New York Center at Binghamton.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of Kappa Alpha Psi, a historically Black-Greek letter fraternal organization as it applied to academic persistence and personal development in higher education at Binghamton University over the past 30 years. Based on the objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi, the researcher sought to answer the following questions:

1. How did membership in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the personal development of members during their undergraduate years?
2. How did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the academic persistence of members during their undergraduate years?

Williams-Scurlock Methodology

This researcher sought to replicate and further investigate Williams-Scurlock(2005) hypothesis that “members show greater leadership development and increased cognitive development” (p.4), as well as, “organizations contribute to the development of students’ leadership and social skills, promote academic achievement among members, and foster college/university completion” (p. 4). His decision to apply a qualitative approach allowed him to identify members over three decades and codify common themes and beliefs consistent with the culture of the group that is transmitted and transferred over time. His study concluded with the questioning whether Black
Greek letter culture contributes towards the personal development of their members in other similar organizations as it does with the selected members of his study.

Similar in approach to Williams-Scurlock’s (2005) study, this ethnographic study explored the perception of how the organization served as a catalyst for academic persistence and personal development over the past three decades. The rationale to utilize a qualitative approach was as Williams (2004) explained, “To date, there has not been any published, empirical qualitative study on leadership development in historically Black Greek-letter organizations” (p. 4). In order to capture information of how membership in a fraternity increases an individual’s desire to remain in school and become a citizen of the college community, the usage of interviews provides the best opportunity to capture critical information that could otherwise be lost with a non-interactive survey (Williams, 2004). Findings from several research studies from Kimbrough (1996), Williams (2004) and Williams-Scurlock (2005) have encouraged the use of a qualitative method to further investigate various phenomena related to membership within historical Black Greek organizations.

**Rationale and Description of the Ethnographic Approach**

This researcher has been a member of the organization for 26 years. The rationale to use an ethnographic design was rooted in the native perspective and intimate knowledge as alumni member of Mu Kappa chapter. While Williams-Scurlock’s (2005) study was qualitative, he applied a random sample to cover a section of the United States. There was no personal relationship with the participants of his study, whereas this researcher chose a more microscopic view that would center on the intimate relationship and culture of an individual chapter. It was the belief of this researcher that this approach
would provide greater insight because, “Ethnography is a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs and language of a culture sharing group” (Creswell, 2007, p. 68).

![Figure 3.1. Template for coding an ethnography. Adapted from Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design by J. Creswell, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, (p.171). Copyright 2007.](image)

The most important aspect of ethnography is the ability of the ethnographer to identify and explain behavior from a native perspective. Creswell (p. 218) describes a good ethnography as including:

- The clear identification of a culture-sharing group
- The specification of a cultural themes that will be examined in light of this culture-sharing group
- A detailed description of the cultural group
- Themes that derive from an understanding of the cultural group
- The identification of issues that arise “in the field” that reflect on the relationship between the researcher and the participants, the
interpretive nature of reporting, and sensitivity and reciprocity on the co-creating of the account

- An explanation overall of how the culture-sharing group works
- A self-disclosure and reflectivity by the researcher about her or his position in the research.

When examining culture, anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) explained the need to use “thick description” to provide exceptional detail to understand a phenomenon. He described culture as, “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.” (p. 89). The multiple case study approach is pivotal in assessing the shared cultural values of the group. For the purpose of this study, it will allow individuals with a variety of perspectives to offer insight regarding the shared culture of the organization.

**Research Context**

The researcher conducted a qualitative multiple case-study investigating members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Mu Kappa Chapter (Appendix E and F) who attended Binghamton University from 1982 through 2010.

The study was delimited by the fact that all survey participants are from a single historically Black Greek-letter organization located on a single predominately white college campus. The organization is selective based on personal character, academic transcripts; letters of recommendation and community service are reviewed for candidacy. The researcher is a member of the organization being studied and an alumnus of the undergraduate chapter being used in the survey.
The high rate of degree completion for this particular group warrants an investigation that could offer personal perspective or testimony on the impact of the fraternity on individual degree completion. The ethnographic approach is designed to capture information that identifies shared cultural practices and objectives.

**Research Participants**

The research participants chosen for this study were initiates of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, Mu Kappa chapter. The study utilized a purposeful and random sample technique to identify chapter participants that were interviewed for the study. This study used a qualitative approach similar to Williams-Scurlock (2005) to examine the impact of Kappa Alpha Psi, Mu Kappa chapter in three distinct eras. Participants were classified into three categories: Brothers with less than 10 years of membership, 20 years and 30 years of membership. The rationale for this approach was to distinguish membership chronologically.

Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, Mu Kappa chapter has existed at the State University of New York at Binghamton Campus for 30 years. Established May 15, 1982, the chapter has maintained an academically focused culture with all but three members graduating from 1982-1996. For 14 years the chapter thrived and was instrumental in providing many programs in the Binghamton community; however from 1996 until 2007 the chapter became dormant. Many of the programs created by the chapter at this time were adopted by other organizations on campus or the university. For 10 years Kappa was a subject many young men would show interest in and research; however there was little desire from the alumni members to reintroduce Kappa to a newer generation. In the spring of 2007 a decision was made by the alumni members of the chapter along with
members of Kappa Alpha Psi residing in the Binghamton community to re-establish the chapter. One of the main concerns at that time was to ensure the culture and traditions of the chapter would be passed on the newest members. Leadership, brotherhood, personal development, mentoring and community service were the qualities Brothers embodied prior to the closing of the chapter. It was important that these traits would be manifest themselves within the newest members.

Since the re-emergence of Mu Kappa chapter, every member has held executive leadership positions on campus, graduated and successfully transitioned to graduate school, professional employment or the military. Regardless of the era, the traits and characteristics that promote a through line of tradition and cultural significance have maintained themselves over time. As indicated in the interviews, regardless of the era terms like community service, achievement and brotherhood or family are key terms that everyone collectively attributed towards being a member of the chapter.

Positive role models and mentoring are integral aspects of personal development. Amongst the members initiated in the Mu Kappa chapter, there is a New York State Senator, Director of Internet Espionage for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and a Christian Bishop. The chapter also boasts having College Professors and Administrators, Corporate Vice Presidents, Law Enforcement Officers, Restaurateurs, a Nurse Practitioner, Lawyers, Elementary and Secondary Vice- Principals as active members of the chapter.

During the time of this study, Mu Kappa chapter had approximately 60 members in chapter. The majority of the members were inducted into the organization during the 1980’s. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the members inducted by decade. Volunteers
were solicited through an email (see Appendix A) that was distributed through the Kappa Alpha Psi, Mu Kappa chapter list serve starting in May 2012. Individuals responded to the request through email and text messages. Fifteen members of the chapter replied within a week of the email. With the exception of one participant (a founder of the chapter) the remaining participant names were drawn from a hat to ensure a simple random sample was used in the selection process. Of the eight participants selected for the study, five became members in the 1980’s, one during the 1990’s and two in the new millennium. Although Creswell (2007) states five participants are sufficient for an ethnographic study, three extra participants were selected to ensure that every decade of the chapter would be represented.

Table 3.1

*Mu Kappa Chapter Membership and Selection by Decade*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Members Initiated</th>
<th>Subpopulation Selected</th>
<th>Percentage of Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1999</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2009</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Mu Kappa membership and selection equally represented in this study based on individuals initiated freshman or sophomore year of college.

The eight participants were classified into three distinct eras. The three eras covered brothers with less than 10 years, 10 to 20 years, and 20 to 30 years of
membership in the fraternity. The researcher identified the participants by era in order to establish a historical perspective, as well as, identify the cultural norms established within Mu Kappa chapter.

The researcher used Microsoft Excel to separate the responses by question and code the interviews. The responses were then sifted through to identify key words that could be associated with the objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi and category headings shown in Table 3.3. The researcher coded responses to the open-ended questions using Microsoft Excel.

Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unite College Men of Culture, Patriotism and Honor in a Bond of Fraternity</td>
<td>Brotherhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage Honorable Achievement in Every Field of Human Endeavor</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote the Spiritual, Social, Intellectual and Moral Welfare of Members</td>
<td>Personal Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist in the Aims and Purposes of Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire Service in the Public Interest</td>
<td>Community Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Themes identified in the interviews were identified as being in accordance with the objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

When coding the interviews, the researcher identified key terms within each of the respondents’ answers (see Tables 4.6 through 4.10). Key terms were highlighted,
Participation was limited to those who joined the organization no later than their sophomore year of college (see Table 3.3). The study was limited to those members who joined the organization within their first two years of college. This limited the sample pool to slightly over half of the total membership of Mu Kappa chapter.

The majority of the members in Mu Kappa pledged in either their freshman or sophomore year of college. According to US News (Bowler, 2009), roughly 30 percent of students that drop out of college do so in their freshman year. That is considered the highest dropout rate in the industrialized world.

Table 3.3

*Semester Initiated by Decade into Mu Kappa Chapter*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1999</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2009</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Breakdown of Mu Kappa membership by decade and year in college.

The members of Mu Kappa come from a diverse background of nationalities and cultures (see Table 3.4). The difference in cultures and upbringing provided members with a greater appreciation and intimate knowledge of cultures that they may never have
been exposed to. Many of the members were first generation college students that came from immigrant families.

Table 3.4

*Ethnic Composition of Mu Kappa Chapter*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Members</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Caribbean American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>African American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Breakdown of the ethnic composition of Mu Kappa chapter membership.

The chapter’s graduation rate of 97 percent over a 30 year period is significantly higher than the national average for students regardless of sex, nationality or socio-economic class (see Table 3.5). Of the 60 initiates, 53 completed the bachelor degree, three completed an associate degree, two dropped out and two (not included) pledged while in graduate school.

**Purposeful and Random Sampling Procedure**

This study explored how members have been impacted by their involvement in the fraternity over the last 30 years. The methodology for this research study was an ethnographic approach utilizing a purposeful and random sample. Purposeful sampling or selection allows the researcher to select individuals, “because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). For the purpose of this study, a member of the original pledge class was selected to provide a baseline of information regarding the practices of the chapter. The remaining members were drawn from a random sample. Creswell does not
recommend more than four or five studies for an ethnographic study (p. 128), however the researcher extended the study to eight participants to ensure all of the eras of the chapter would be represented. The use of case studies allows for several perspectives based on chronological time periods and contexts for the formation and changes of behavior or culture over time.

Table 3.5

Degree Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>BA/BS</th>
<th>AA/AS</th>
<th>Dropped out</th>
<th>Percentage of Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1999</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2009</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>97%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Degrees attained and attrition of Mu Kappa members by decade.

Randomly selected members of Mu Kappa chapter that fell within the desired criteria were interviewed. Creswell (2007) refers to this approach as purposeful sampling within a bounded system. By utilizing a multiple case study approach, the researcher endeavored to minimize bias that may be considered inherent because of the researcher’s affiliation with the organization. It is the contention of the researcher that being an insider provided access to key participants that allowed for investigation and disclosure to issues that would otherwise go unrecognized or not communicated because of the semi-secretive nature of the organization.
Profiles of the Eight Alumni Participants

The eight participants selected for the study represented all three eras of the chapters existence. Of the eight, a member of the founding pledge class was purposefully selected to provide a baseline for the responses collected. The remaining seven alumni participants were selected randomly.

The first participant S82 pledged as a freshman. He has a BA in Sociology. He is a court officer.

The second participant S83 pledged as a sophomore. He has a degree in Business and Economics. He is a professional consultant.

The third participant S86 pledged as a freshman. He has a BA in Political Science and a MS in Science and Teaching. He is a department manager for a wireless carrier.

The fourth participant S87 pledged as a sophomore. He has a BA in Political Science and a MS in Strategic Curriculum. He is an Assistant Principal of an elementary school.

The fifth participant S88 pledged his sophomore year. He has a BA in Philosophy, MS in Education Administration and MA in Administration and Supervision. He is a Vice Principal of a middle school.

The sixth participant S96 pledged his sophomore year. He has a BA in Psychology, MS in Neuroscience and PhD in Neuroscience. He is a research fellow and university professor.

The seventh participant S08 pledged his sophomore year. He has a BA in Business Management. He is a fund manager.
The eighth participant S09 pledged his sophomore year. He has a BS in Finance. He is a fund manager.

**Instruments Used In Data Collection**

The participants were engaged in structured open-ended interviews (see Appendix C – Interview Protocol) that consisted of 10 questions that were conducted in one 20 minute session. The Interview Protocol was an adaptation of Williams-Scurlock's (2005) Interview Protocol. The first question was modified to remove the list of student organizations. The remaining questions were identical with the exception of the organization’s name changed from Alpha Phi Alpha to Kappa Alpha Psi. Here are the final questions:

1. What organizations did you hold membership while in college?
2. What leadership positions (i.e. president, vice president, team captain, etc.) did you hold on campus or within the fraternity?
3. What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.?
4. How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. influenced your spiritual and intellectual growth?
5. How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc influenced your professional development?
6. How has being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. opened doors for you that you may not have had access?
7. What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., has done for you?
8. What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. have on the community while you were in college?

9. What contributions did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. make to the larger society during the last thirty years?

10. How do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.?

In order to capture the information provided during the interviews the following instruments were utilized to accurately record and analyze the data.

1. A pen and marble composition notebook was used to take notes.


3. An audio splitter and audio wires connecting the voice recorder and phone were used to interview.

4. A transcriber was hired to ensure the information was as authentic and accurate as possible.

5. Computer laptop utilizing Microsoft Office programs including Word and Excel to review and separate data.

6. Data collection matrix to organize data (see Appendix G – Data Collection Matrix). The data collection matrix has been modified from Williams-Scurlock's study. The responses were analyzed in correlation to the objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. These objectives include how the organization trained for leadership, modeled achievement, promoted the welfare of members, promoted persistence and inspired service.
Sample Procedure

Members of Mu Kappa chapter who met the selection criteria were contacted through email (see Appendix A – Participant Cover Letter). The participants were notified of their selection through phone calls and text messages. Once the participants were notified of their selection, a mutual time was established for the interview. The Informed Consent letter (see Appendix B) was read to each participant and send to each participant via email for signature. Each of the interviews was approximately 20 minutes in length.

The interviews took place between May 31, 2012 and June 10, 2012. Each of the interviews was voice recorded and notes were taken by the researcher to capture the information. Once the interviews sessions concluded, interview transcriptions were sent to an independent transcriptionist to ensure the words of the participants would be captured accurately and without bias. Interviews were transcribed in their entirety (see Appendix D). The transcriptions were returned in Microsoft Word format. Once the interview transcriptions were completed each participant was assigned a code using the semester and year they became members of the organization. Table 3.6 depicts the era’s that were captured in this investigation.

Interviews were dissected to identify data describing participant perspectives of how the fraternity promoted persistence and leadership development throughout the three eras. Dominant objectives and beliefs were identified from each era to illustrate scenarios that promoted retention and professional development. The data from all three eras was used to draw conclusions regarding the impact Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity had on college members.
Table 3.6

Respondent Codes and Length of Time in the Fraternity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20+ Years</th>
<th>11+ Years</th>
<th>Less than 10 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S82</td>
<td>S96</td>
<td>S08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S83</td>
<td></td>
<td>S09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Codes used to identify Mu Kappa respondents by length of time in the fraternity.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the design method used to conduct research, the population of potential candidates and criteria used to identify participants, the approach to collect data, as well as, the data analysis instruments used to collect and analyze the study of Mu Kappa chapter, Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, a historical Black Greek letter Fraternity at the State University of New York Center at Binghamton.

Chapter four provides the data collected thru the structured interviews and an analysis of key terms and objectives related to the study. Lastly chapter four provides further explanation of how members of Mu Kappa demonstrated and identified their cultural ideology over a 30 year span.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to determine the role of Kappa Alpha Psi, a historically Black-Greek letter fraternal organization in the academic persistence and personal development of black students whom attended the State University of New York Center at Binghamton. This chapter provides the data collected through the series of structured interviews conducted and an analysis of key terms and themes related to the study. Lastly, this chapter provides an analysis of the findings used to identify cultural ideology over a 30 year span. The questions for this ethnography investigated how the five objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi allowed for the personal development and academic persistence of fraternal members. Based on the objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi, the researcher sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How did membership in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the personal development of members during their undergraduate years?

2. How did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the academic persistence of members during their undergraduate years?

Prior studies (Kimbrough, 1996, Williams, 2004, Williams-Scurlock, 2005) demonstrated both an understanding of the theoretical frameworks that were applicable, as well as, an insightful perspective of the phenomena due to their membership in the organizations they studied on a macrocosmic level. Similarly, membership in the organization provided the researcher with an opportunity to identify meaning both
individually and collectively from “a culture-sharing group and their core values and beliefs” (Creswell, 2007, p. 92). This researcher sought to investigate the microcosmic level to discover the core values and beliefs of this culture-sharing group by interviewing eight alumni of Mu Kappa chapter at Binghamton University.

The responses from each of the questions were separated and then analyzed for themes and identified in accordance with the objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi (see Table 4.1). The first two questions were identified under the category of leadership. Both questions provided each participant with an opportunity to discuss their involvement on campus as members and leaders of organizations. The third and sixth questions were related to the category of brotherhood. The questions revealed why participants became members and the opportunities that were made available to them because of their affiliation with the organization. The seventh question was identified as achievement. Participants explained the impact being a member had on their ability to succeed. The next category was personal development. The fourth question revealed the impact being a member had on the participants’ spiritual and intellectual growth. The fifth question identified the influence being a member had on professional development. Questions eight, nine and ten all revealed the impact the fraternity had on the community locally, historically and nationally.
Table 4.1

*Categories and Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Question 1: What organizations did you hold membership while in college?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question 2: What leadership positions did you hold on campus or within the fraternity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brotherhood</td>
<td>Question 3: What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question 6: How has being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. opened doors for you that may not have had access?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Question 7: What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. has done for you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Development</td>
<td>Question 4: How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. influenced your spiritual and intellectual growth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>Question 5: How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. influenced your professional development?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service</td>
<td>Question 8: What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. have on the community while you were in college?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question 9: What contributions did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. make to the larger society during the last thirty years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question 10: How do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Themes identified within respondent data and corresponding questions.

The next several sections present responses pertaining to the open-ended questions that were obtained during the interviews (Table 4.2). The responses are presented through a series of objectives. The first theme identifies the organizations and
leadership positions the respondents identified themselves as either being a member or an officer. The second theme covers the emerging categories as they relate to the objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi and key words that were identified through the interviews. Lastly there is a summary of the results.

**Data Analysis and Findings**

**Student involvement and leadership.** The first two survey questions sought to determine the organizations and leadership positions each of the respondents were involved in. The questions were:

- Question 1: What organizations did you hold membership while in college?
- Question 2: What leadership positions (i.e. president, vice president, team captain, etc.) did you hold on campus or within the fraternity?

All of the respondents were members of the various cultural organizations prior and post becoming a member of the fraternity. Every member of the fraternity interviewed participated in cultural unions. It was not uncommon for minority students to become members of cultural unions since it provided students with a sense of belongingness and community in their freshman year. Four of the participants were members of the Black Student Union, three were members of the Caribbean Student Association and one was a member of the Philippine American League.

In addition to being members of cultural organizations, respondents became members of student run organizations and most eventually became leaders within each of the respective organizations (see table 4.3 and 4.4). The organizations were diverse. Participation in academic, social and competitive organizations was seen throughout the three eras.
Table 4.2

Data Collection Index Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Involvement</th>
<th>S82</th>
<th>S96</th>
<th>S08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What organizations did you hold membership while in college?</td>
<td>I held membership in the Black Student Union actually I was president and vice president of the organization. I served as an associate member of NYPIRG, New York State Public Research Group. I also held office in the Black Greek Council and I was also an officer in the Harper College Martial Arts Program</td>
<td>What organization, Black Student Union, Ronald E. McNair Scholarship Program, and also with the EOP as a intern in the summer.</td>
<td>Kappa Alpha Psi while at Binghamton University. Yes I was also a member of National Family Council Executive Board as well as the Philippine-American League.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Terms

- Black Student Union, NYPIRG, Black Greek Council, Harper College Martial Arts Program
- Black Student Union, Ronald E. McNair Scholarship Program, EOP
- Philippine American League, National Family Council Executive Board

*Note.* Example of data collection index identifying key words in respondent data.
### Table 4.3

**Student Involvement and Leadership Outside and Inside the Fraternity During College Years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Organization Membership</th>
<th>S82</th>
<th>S83</th>
<th>S86</th>
<th>S87</th>
<th>S88</th>
<th>S96</th>
<th>S08</th>
<th>S09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean Students Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippine American League</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State Public Research Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harpur College Martial Arts Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter Greek Council</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Greek Council</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald E. McNair Scholarship Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men of Color Scholastic Society</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Family Council</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bert Mitchell Minority Management</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Society of Black Accountants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Binghamton Enrichment Program</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* List of student organizations in which Mu Kappa respondents held membership.

Each of the respondents held positions within Mu Kappa Chapter with some holding as many as four positions throughout their undergraduate years (see table 4.5).

All of the respondents held leadership positions inside and outside of the fraternity.

During the undergraduate years it was expected that members would take on positions of leadership.
Table 4.4

*Leadership Positions Held Outside of Kappa Alpha Psi*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>S82</th>
<th>S83</th>
<th>S86</th>
<th>S87</th>
<th>S88</th>
<th>S96</th>
<th>S08</th>
<th>S09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance Committee</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcommittee Member</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutor</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Relations Chair</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Coordinator</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Coordinator</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Positions held by members of Mu Kappa chapter in outside student organizations.

The responsibility of providing leadership began with the founding of the chapter. In the early 1980’s the necessity was directly tied to the lack of programming by the campus for the minority population. Over time the needs to ensure quality programming on campus coincided with being considered an active member in the organization.

Respondent S82 stated:

I held membership in the Black Student Union actually I was president and vice president of the organization. I served as an associate member of NYPIRG, New
York State Public Research Group. I also held office in the Black Greek Council and I was also an officer in the Harper College Martial Arts Program (Spring 1982).

While respondent S09 shared a similar explanation nearly 30 years later stating:

Within the fraternity the first academic school year after I crossed the full academic school year would be the 2010-2011 school year, I was keeper of records at the school, what we call secretary. The centennial year of 2010 through 2011 I was the polemarch, what we call the president at the Mu Kappa chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi. It was also the same academic year that we won chapter of the year for the university. I was also a membership coordinator 2011-2012.

On the outside of the fraternity I held two different positions in the Caribbean Student Association, I was the political coordinator and I was also the activities coordinator. The role of the political coordinator was responsible for bringing speakers such as well-known author and educator from Cornell University to the school and also as activities coordinator hosting some of the mainstream events that the university doesn’t have any more, but they once had a carnival which at the time was the largest student run concert in all of northeast schools. That was something I organized and I was also the chair for Medical and Science Society. That was an organization where we dealt with workshops and different forms of writing most to assist Black and Latino males on campus with their writing, professional dress, to finding appropriate housing off campus. I was also the leader of the National Association of Black Accountants (S09).
Table 4.5

*Leadership Positions Held Inside of Kappa Alpha Psi*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>S82</th>
<th>S83</th>
<th>S86</th>
<th>S87</th>
<th>S88</th>
<th>S96</th>
<th>S08</th>
<th>S09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeper of Records / Secretary</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeper of Exchequer/ Treasurer</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean of Pledges</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Dean of Pledges</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide Right / Community Service</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategus / Sergeant at Arms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Membership Intake Coordinator</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Positions held by members within Mu Kappa chapter.

**Brotherhood.** The next set of questions were asked to inquire what attracted individuals to seek membership in Kappa Alpha Psi and more specifically what has been the most significant thing they had gained from membership. The first question asked, what made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.? The second question addressed the impact being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi had the respondents. Some of the key terms identified throughout the various interviews (see table 4.6) discussed concepts such as a sense of belongingness, family and networking.

Question 3: What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.?
Question 6: How has being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. opened doors for you that you may not have had access?

Question 7: What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., has done for you?

I sought out membership in those organizations because they had a strong tie to the community as well as to some memberships and they viewed their memberships as lifelong commitments was very attractive to me and just the way they carried themselves and the way they acted toward one another. It was impressive. Then I guess coupled with going to a highly competitive university and then being able to get a chance to become I guess a part of a chapter that was away from the city is where I viewed them would put us in the atmosphere that actually I think that bonds and ties with the university would even grow even further (S83).

Another respondent discussed the importance of role models who happened to be members of the organization as having an impact on their decision to become a member.
Table 4.6

*Key Terms Used to Identify Objectives Related to Uniting College Men of Culture, Patriotism and Honor in a Bond of Fraternity.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Terms</th>
<th>S82</th>
<th>S83</th>
<th>S86</th>
<th>S87</th>
<th>S88</th>
<th>S96</th>
<th>S08</th>
<th>S09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Sense of Belongingness</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Like-minded</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Key terms identified as being associated with brotherhood.

When I observed Greek organizations at other campuses like Syracuse and Cornell University I saw them in a different context, you know, community
service, social activities and you know healthy academic rivalry amongst Greek organizations. So when I got to Ithaca and I saw the chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi I was intrigued and I inquired further and found that a lot of the idols that I had Arthur Ashe, Bill Russell, Percy Sutton and others were members of the organization and the personalities in character of the organization is what attracted me (S82). Most members alluded to the structure of the organization, as well as, the relationships that are formed, nurtured and maintained over time.

Kappa Alpha Psi has been a structure in which they succeed in sustainability of relationships and it’s very much social and also an opportunity to be in contact with those people that you associate with. So where you might drift apart some people that you just casually meet because of the bond of the fraternity and the business aspect of the organization it will keep you in contact with your peers and your brothers. So Kappa Alpha Psi the most important thing was to provide a structure for me to give back and also to participate (S82).

Another respondent agreed with the aforementioned quote adding:

I’ve built some very close bonds and have some very good friends that we have a unique chapter where we built relationships that are long lasting and I think they’re true, and I think we learned how to not only do the rah rah and pat each other on the back thing but also be able to have earnest and respectable conversations with each other when issues sometimes are not as agreed upon across the board and I think that over the years we’ve learned to respect that amongst each other and we also I think we’ve grown to rely on each other’s advice and opinions whether or not we agree upon them all the time as well as I
think that the friendships and the bonds that we’ve learned, I mean that we’ve honed over the years have not only shown a light to the people that came behind us as far as how they go about approaching building their own relationships because they see how they have built it can withstand time but also it leaves you with a feeling that even though we are individuals and we do have personalities, and we do have our idiosyncrasies we actually truly enjoy each other’s company (S83).

A recurring theme was the description of the chapter as “family” to the members. The relationships were more intimate and meaningful. Members viewed one another as a resource because of the common culture that was shared. Respondent S86 stated:

I think the most important thing is the sense of unity and the, it’s like a family, what I describe is mostly all my friends are my fraternity members. I would say 90%, 95% it’s the loyalty and the bonding and the common goal that we have to always achieve. It’s nice when you’re doing well but it’s also when you’re doing bad to have that network to say hey get yourself together. Not only that, but to give you a game plan and say hey what are you doing, you need to be doing this, this, this, and that and that’s happened for me in my undergraduate career, and also post graduate. I think that’s the most important thing is knowing that you have a network besides your family which my fraternity is parallel to my family (S86).

Another member added:
It’s actually allowed me to see family outside of my own family. You know, I’ve been very fortunate to have a mother and father and a brother and sister and it’s good to see how family can operate outside of your own family and that comes about from the inspiration of other fraternity brother’s families as well. That’s always drawn me to that, that sense of brotherhood, that sense of camaraderie, the sense of sharing values, the sense of sharing your own personal experiences to help others, and that’s what brothers have done, all the brothers have done for me and I felt like I’ve had to pass that down, you know, my experiences of my personal family I felt obligated to share those experiences and those options I’ve had being in the family unit with other brothers who might not have had brothers and sisters and then needed to know what it was like to have a brother and sister to talk. But you know, one of those highlights is just the brotherhood itself (S87).

The theme of the brotherhood as family was stated throughout the interviews by members from all three decades. Respondent S96 stated:

The most important thing it has done for me is given me a family outside of my blood, brothers that I can really call my brothers and that I can lean on and be leaned on by, it’s given me a greater feel family, the work family as far as how you live your life and the struggles that you go through and family is more than just blood, it’s that common bond (S96).

Equally important was the feeling that era of initiation and age did not have a negative impact, but in fact increased the desire for members to join since it is not often young men of color have access to men much older than them who have already been through the experience.
I think what really turned me to the fraternity was when in spring of 2008 a lot of my older friends, you know some of the guys who took me under their wing when I first got to university in September 2007 until the spring of 2008 these are brothers when they crossed I started to really look into it because these are friends of mine and guys like mine. I think they really came to the front. I tried to make myself a leader as quickly as possible on campus and you know as I started to study Kappa more but when I saw the chapter first off I saw leaders, I saw my friends who were leaders and I saw older brothers, alumni brothers who were leaders. Then as my time as an entrant went on I started to speak to older brothers who graduated from university, you know, 10, some even 20 years before me, then I really started to see the strong networking and professionalism aspect of brothers who graduated and wanted to have great careers in a variety of areas. You know, just to be all like-minded individuals, you know I looked up who the fraternity was, the older brothers, and it felt like the fraternity accomplished everything that I had already tried to accomplish myself and wanted to gain and a combination of those things just pulled me together by spring I was a full blow entrant to the fraternity (S09).

Achievement. Academic achievement was the second theme that came from the interviews. The fundamental purpose of Kappa Alpha Psi is achievement in every field of human endeavor. These are the words every member of the fraternity must commit to memory. For members of Mu Kappa there is an additional quote that members now regard as the creed of the chapter. Mu Kappa’s creed was created by founder Norris Hite who stated:
Achievement to us is not a buzz word. It is the essence of who we are. Understand the essence of what Kappa truly is, not what other people make it to be. Define yourself by those standards; live by that creed and you will be the best man you can be (2009).

Mu Kappa chapter prides itself on having a high graduation rate, as well as, leadership positions throughout the campus community. Both of those accomplishments impacted not only the members, but also the minority students throughout the campus community. It was important to be positive role models and examples of what minority students were capable of achieving.

We’ve had such a high successful graduation rate and brothers going to get their Masters Degrees and beyond I think it has had a positive influence on the campus to see that there are people of color who not only maintain what their fraternity principles say, but they also achieve an academic excellence while also holding strong political positions. At one point we were president of BSU, president of the Student Greek Council, Finance Committee, I mean and it transcends down to some of the younger brothers to this day as an organization. I think also on the professional level we participated in Big Brother, Big Sister in the area of Binghamton where their socio economic standards were pretty low for people of color, and a large mixed race so showing kids that hey there are people who are young who care about them who are achieving and who are not like the norm from their community, but cares about life outside of that community (S86).
Table 4.7  
*Key Terms Used to Identify Objectives Related to Encouraging Honorable Achievement in Every Field of Human Endeavor*

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*Note.* Key terms identified as words related to achievement.

Terms such as high standards were stated by several members throughout the process (see table 4.7);
Well the focus of achievement and every brother, you know, from the beginning held high standards, you know, their grade point average. There was aspirations about post graduate, what were you going to do after college and a lot of people talked about, especially fraternity members talked about building their careers and going beyond just with a Bachelor’s Degree and pursuing other post graduate degrees (S87).

Another responded added:

At one time the retention for African American males was very low. I graduated in 1990 and I think in my graduating class I could only count maybe 10 people, and honestly a lot of them were either actually with the fraternity or were friends of Kappa Alpha Psi, brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi. So with the workshops the way they’re conducted there, you know, fairs on the campus, financially, academically, that pretty much inspired me to kind of follow that lead as well (S87).

The term striving was another key word that could be attributed to achievement. Members felt standards and accountability were important traits that provided members with a structure within which they could operate.

Intellectually it definitely influenced me and forced me to do better than what I’ve been doing, especially intellectually, also striving for a higher level and just seeing all my same brothers reach relative success I know that I could reach myself just kept on pushing me to reach the higher level. So it was also a catalyst to influence me (S09).
Another responded included grade point average as a determining factor in being held accountable by the members of the chapter. The chapter’s requirement for initiation and continuous involvement is higher than both the national office and the university.

Intellectually the standard, the accountability, not to say prior to my sophomore year I didn’t have a level of accountability for my academics, but the fact that for starters in order to keep your active membership while an undergraduate you have to have a certain GPA. We have to have a 2.8, the national requirement is 2.5. So that alone puts more academic pressure on you, you know. As an undergraduate student from my upper classman years, my junior year, and my senior year of college our graduation rate getting college done in four years or graduating in two years it’s very strong in the Kappa chapter, that puts more academic pressure on you and sets the bar of achievement higher (S09).

The Mu Kappa creed (Hite, 2009) and the responsibility to excel were cited by another respondent who stated:

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity the most important thing it has done for me hands down it has made achievement a way of life for me. Not something I would like to do, not something I occasionally do, but a way of life. A way that I live my life day to day, we have to set the marker where achievement for us is not a buzz word, it’s actually who we truly are, it’s not a word that we throw around, oh I might achieve tomorrow but I might slack off the day after. No it’s how we do things. Since I joined Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity in 2009 achievement is this word we call the core principle of a fraternity as it’s meant so much more to me
and accountability, it’s everything I do I feel more empowered and also in a positive sense more pressured to do well in it whether it’s my work, whether it’s something social, whether it’s stress, whether it’s my appearance in public, I just feel like in many different aspects of life I’ve just been inspired to achieve and not do well but excel at what I’m doing. You know, whether it was excelling amongst my peers and undergraduates and now excelling with my team in the workplace, whatever the situation may be (S09).

**Personal development.** Kappa Alpha Psi strives to promote the spiritual, social, intellectual and moral welfare of its members. In order to gauge the impact this objective had on members, the researchers asked two questions:

**Question 4:** How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. influenced your spiritual and intellectual growth?

From these questions two themes emerged. The first was spirituality. Many members discussed the impact being a member of the organization had on their religious beliefs. The second theme was personal development. Members felt being a member gave them an opportunity to learn how to be leaders, a better understanding of character development and the skills needed for professional development (see table 4.8).

Interestingly many members felt a spiritual connection with one another with regards to religion and the relationships that existed with one another. Members discussed how their beliefs had grown or we reinforced through their interactions with other members.

Also a lot of the fraternity members were spiritual, talked about church, you know, believed in the Lord in a sense and pretty much even though everyone
strayed away in college at a certain point in time when you talked to people one-on-one, you know, everything came back to spirituality on an individual basis and how it pertained to the family as well (S87).

Table 4.8

*Key Terms Used to Identify Objectives Related to Promoting the Spiritual, Social, Intellectual and Moral Welfare of Members.*

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<th>Key Terms</th>
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*Note.* Key terms identified as words related to spiritual and personal development.

The fact that most members shared a common religious background allowed them to openly discuss their perspective from a religious standpoint and increased their faith through discussions, as well as, fraternal practices.

Spiritually it let me know that I wasn’t alone and I had people I could identify with and coming from the inner city of New York and trying to achieve you feel
alone at times, so it gave me that bond, that fraternity, you know, that brotherhood of like-minded individuals that’s trying to start to be better for themselves as well as their community (S96).

Another respondent added:

I’ve always considered myself a very spiritual person, however, the fraternity also added to that just being around a lot of other brothers who shared the same values, the same beliefs that I do just made it a lot more stronger (S08).

The last respondent explained how the opening of chapter meetings emphasized Kappa Alpha Psi’s religious roots stating:

Well it’s you know, let’s start off by saying Kappa Alpha Psi does not discriminate by race, religion, creed or anything like that, but in a sense had a awesome strong Christian roots to Kappa. I myself am Christian and some of the things we do right before in their chapter meetings you know as well as saying prayers, saying things in Proverbs and different things that prayer involves. But bigger than this was the typical religious aspect, spiritually I mean it was the focus that was spiritual, you know, unfortunately there was a tragedy amongst the brother and his family or something like that, the way we come together there’s that spiritual connection there (S09).

The next theme centered on personal development that ultimately led to professional skills that are used currently by members.

Kappa Alpha Psi has influenced my intellectual and spiritual growth by giving me a challenge to overcome some of my own shortcomings on an organizational
structure, to understand what it is to serve and to provide a support role and then
to also lead by example (S82).

Another respondent provided a historical explanation for the chapter’s
originating emphasis on personal development and professionalism stating:

It influenced my professional development by being introduced to and interacting
with professions from different walks of life and different professions.

Binghamton alumni chapter consisted of professionals and retirees that came from
all over the United States; they were drawn here by companies like IBM and other
organizations that works with subcontractors for those companies (S82).

One member reflected on the impact the chapter had on choosing a career
stating:

Looking back at it I think that it also teaches you a lot about growth because you
see a lot of people that you’ve built relationships with them grow and they grow
not only in maturity and knowledge over the different careers that they might
have chosen, but also I see that they’ve grown in their beliefs as far as faith as
well (S83).

The opportunity to learn skills such as communication, negotiation,
influencing and team building played an important part on member development.

It influenced my professional development in a way that I think that allowed me
to be able to deal with multiple varying personalities. Being able to deal with
people who, cause I mean you might hold offices in a chapter or an organization,
but yet everybody in a fraternity and I think that is one of the biggest benefits is
equal, you’re sitting at pretty much a round table and there are people that have a
stronger strength than others but yet whether you have a lot of strength in certain areas you still have to influence everybody at the table because at the end although there’s a vote and you can actually have some of the strong people be pulled into other directions if they don’t develop themselves with influencing skills, develop themselves in negotiation skills amongst the people that sit at the table which are their peers. So I think that dealing with people and dealing with multiple personalities, and seeing how they play out with being able to get people to understand one is your ideas and how you feel about certain things. Being able to listen and follow as well as develop your own leadership skills, so therefore you can respect the position and opinions of others and being able to come to a reasonable I guess decision on your own and then being able to influence others, maybe feel like your decision is strong, or your position is strong. So I think that that I felt was a valuable experience and tool to bring into the professional arena because when you go into a company you have to, you don’t choose the people you work with but you have to work with them and you’re responsible for yourself (S83).

Opportunities extended themselves outside of the chapter for non-members participating in chapter functions. One member recalled the annual fashion show as his introduction into how professionalism was an integral part of the experience one would gain from membership stating:

Just for the professionalism and the first experience on campus, being African American on the campus, you know, population was limited and I had a chance to see how professionally they ran their operation, you know, honestly the first event
was a fashion show and I was a part of that fashion show and I was able to
witness behind the scenes and also just the camaraderie with the fraternity and the
friendships that I saw, the genuine friendships that I saw between the fraternal
brothers and the outreach they did in the community with the Big Brother, Big
Sister program and I think it was Vestal at the time (S87).

Another member saw the fraternity as an opportunity to become more
involved in the community because of the work ethic of the members of the
chapter stating:

I saw the members, the brothers at that time were doing, you know, how they
were very active with the other organizations on campus. You know, their
leadership was all over in different organizations and I wanted to be part of that
being very introverted so I thought it would help me to become active and grow in
my leadership. I was really impressed with the brothers at that time and being
part of participation with the different organizations. So again I wanted to get on
board with that, I wanted to be part of that (S88).

The chapter was also the impetus for many to stay in school and maintain
their eligibility. They viewed the chapter as a responsibility that was theirs to
maintain and develop.

Well my intellectual growth during my freshman year I had a son and I left school
after my freshman year. But my desire to get back was linked to being with my
older fraternity members and my new fraternity members. To this day my mother
says that if it wasn’t for Kappa Alpha Psi I would have never went back to school
because I was determined to get back to be with my friends, my true, true friends
that we’ve been through hardships with and fun times. So that influenced me to actually go back to school and then being with a group of young men and myself that strive for academic performance, you had no choice but to get your act together for school because they were as harsh on you as big brothers as they were your peers (S86).

Networking was a key term that arose from the discussions as members felt the organization provided a structure that promoted professional opportunities and access to members of various professions.

Professionally it has really allowed me to connect with individuals and outside of my field all over the country and even to this day internationally. There is a great network entombed, a good springboard to opening yourself beyond your community to then have more of an effect locally as well as nationally if not internationally. Also just the diversity, you know, the ethnic diversity, the career diversity, we’ve got brothers who have pursued law degrees, who have gone to the criminal justice system, have held executive positions, have had ownership of their own business and enterprises and just looking at those different career options have kind of drawn me to the attention of those brothers as well (S87).

He added that chapter programs such as the annual fashion show provided members and non-members with the opportunity to branch out and create avenues of opportunities for others.

Socially the new Kappa chapter was influential with hosting one of the biggest events which is the fashion show and probably it drew in just about maybe 85 to 90% of the campus community to attend it and to a large part of the campus
population to participate whether it be participants in the fashion show itself, the financial aspect, the leadership aspect, I mean it played a huge part in the social development of a lot of people on that campus and even though a lot of brothers did not pledge, a lot of African American males did not pledge Kappa Alpha Psi they were surrounded by Kappa Alpha Psi, you know they enjoyed the friendships, the camaraderie (S87).

The chapter also extended itself to outside organizations and chapters to assist in the development of programs and leadership beyond the confines of Binghamton.

We were exemplary at actually working outside of the organization with other organizations on campus and even in the local community so that we would have the support of the student body for everyone’s event and we did that not only on campus and locally in Binghamton but also all up and down the northeast, you know, New York State, like all of the SUNY colleges and all of them from Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse, New Paltz, Cornell, we organized and the brothers was growing and supporting each other at different events and not just social events but important events to help out the community (S96).

Character development played an integral part in the development of many of the members, because the culture of the chapter demanded that members present themselves professionally when representing the chapter which essentially meant that members were to always conduct themselves in public accordingly.

I believe the most important thing is really just mold me into the man that I became today. The brothers that surround me as well as being an undergrad even
the direction from all the brothers it really just showed me a level of success I could achieve on my own. So it has really molded me into a better man and becoming a better person to the others around me, just how the way I treat others but the way I see them and just being surrounded by those brothers, to see the love and to grow into my own person (S08).

Professional attire was an aspect of the chapter that allowed members to begin building their wardrobe while still undergraduates. This made members stand out on campus as the chapter held a professional attire day once a week and members were required to dress professionally for chapter meetings.

Professionally I mean coming into the fraternity at a young age I began to grow in college professionally as a member of the fraternity. So for starters we have a chapter where we come in business attire to our chapter meetings. Prior to joining the fraternity I can’t count the amount of times I dressed up for college, unless I dressed up I’m referring to professional business attire, shoes, shirt, tie, blazer, slacks of that nature. Only in the fraternity I would say I was in business attire pretty much once a week if not more, you know, hosts a program or whatever you were doing. Not for nothing, I mean as far as going to workshops and things like that, just that alone made me have to increase my business wardrobe, now I had more of a reason to dress up. That if nothing else automatically builds your professionalism, dressing professionally. Now having this network of alumni brothers who are involved in various endeavors from medicine, from the sciences, for business, for law increased my professionalism. Hosting forums increased my professionalism (S09).
Communicating professionally also allowed members to build confidence and presentation skills. Members had the opportunity to engage campus leaders and administrators regularly which provided them with the ability to overcome obstacles related to communicating and advocating for others.

I feel like the fraternity and more so my chapter kind of demanded of myself and other brothers naturally just took our professionalism to new heights overall because it was just the way we handled business, it was the way we did things, it was the way we walked around campus when it was time to conduct business, you know, not to say we were different from other college students and didn’t party, we’re the best partiers in Binghamton, ask anybody. Like people in Binghamton knew when MK was handling business. It was a Friday afternoon when you saw about six brothers walking in the union suited up, oh we have a chapter meeting today, you know they mean business. It’s not typical to see six Black and Latino males at Binghamton University all in suits and six of them walking together at the same time, taking care of business, speaking to everyone from the Dean of Students, peers, to professionals, you know, to be able to approach people in such high up places at 19, 20 years old increased our professionalism and then do it properly on top of that (S09).

**Mentoring.** The next objective addressed the goal of the fraternity to assist with the aims and purposes of colleges and universities. The importance of having guidance through peers and mentors was an important aspect of the chapter that many members felt assisted them to achieve their goals.
Question 5: How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc influenced your professional development?

Well when I first came out of school some of my older brothers took me under their wings and actually groomed me. It’s kind of like apprenticeship where they brought me to the store to buy my first suit, my first tie, mock interviews and guide me through that process, and in the same token I’ve guided many of the younger brothers who have processed as well. Many of us in the fraternity first time I guess first generation that made it into college so we didn’t have that backbone and that network so we learned from others mistakes, from others shortcomings when they left school so that helped mold me and it also helped me realize that we don’t have that foundation that others may have as far as establishing that type of mentorship (S86).

Role modeling is an important aspect to mentoring. Many of the members stated that the opportunity to view other members in a positive light provided them with an understanding of how they needed to conduct themselves.

It was a very clear decision when I seen that the very few members that were on campus how they handled their self and identified their self and I chose to handle myself in a similar way without being part of the organization already so it just seemed like a good fit. Socially it allowed me to take what I was trying to do on an individual level and reach more people and I think that was a good thing as far as like I was saying with the whole mentorship and tutoring and everything (S96).
Table 4.9

*Key Terms Used to Identify Objectives Related to Assisting with the Aims and Purposes of Colleges and Universities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Terms</th>
<th>S82</th>
<th>S83</th>
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</table>

*Note.* Key terms identified as words related to mentoring.

Another member added:

I saw a group of young men who were putting work into the campus and really did their job especially in the community and these men were also members of a fraternity Kappa Alpha Psi Incorporated. Doing more research on the organization I started to notice my values were very more closely aligned with the organization as well as what it stood for in philanthropy and things of that nature.
So doing more research I realized that that was something that I wanted to pursue cause just being really being heavily influence by it, by seeing these men on campus achieving so much it really helped me to chose to join to achieve membership (S08).

Mentoring is provided from all levels of the chapter. Alumni and active undergraduate members alike reach out to one another just to check in and make sure members are on the right path.

There’s so much more accountability and its direct because it even comes from your peers, it can come from any of the brothers checking to see how you’re doing in classes. Accountability is just really increased, it no longer comes from my mom or my sister back home, I had brothers right there on campus who were no more than a phone call away always inquiring about my academic achievement. So intellectually as an academic undergraduate student it definitely increased being a member of a fraternity (S09).

The designation of library hours for members had an impact on members and minority students on campus. Modeling proper academic behaviors led many to study with members of the organization even if they had no interest in joining the organization.

For starters socially the new Kappa Alpha Psi enhanced the social life of not only Black and Latino students, but all students at Binghamton University with our social programs that we did. Educationally we had library hours on Sundays for students which was good for students to come in on Sundays and study as a group, particularly targeting the minorities because you know we sometimes
we’re unseen in the library like that. But having programs like that, having our educational forums pushed for education and advocated education on our campus (S08).

Community service. The final objective of the study was related to the fraternity’s objective to inspire service in the public interest. The purpose of Kappa Alpha Psi continues to achievement of fraternal members so that they can enhance the lives of those less fortunate. Mu Kappa has a long and storied history with regards to providing programs and performing acts of charity in the interest of educating and servicing the public interest. Kappa Alpha Psi has national programs such as Guide Right as well as their affiliation with St. Judes Hospital for Children. The researcher asked two questions related to this objective:

Question 9: What contributions did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. make to the larger society during the last thirty years?

Question 10: How do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.?

Mu Kappa chapter played an integral part in tutoring for poor minority children at the Urban League in downtown Binghamton. This relationship has maintained itself over the last 30 years. Two older members of the chapter explained the relationship and how it came into existence.

What Kappa Alpha Psi did was my class and the classes that came after us they hooked up with the Urban League to provide some type of tutoring or some ongoing easy to attain community service program… The alumni that pretty much guided our pledge process they were, some of them were involved in the Urban
League and by us opening back up to the Urban League, the Urban League provided a few more programs that weren’t there before and also because the interest in the organization and the interest in people from Binghamton University going to downtown Binghamton to do something that was community based was maybe not new but it was something that was getting optimists involved (S82).

Table 4.10

**Key Terms Used to Identify Objectives Related to Inspiring Service in the Public Interest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Terms</th>
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<th>S83</th>
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*Note.* Key terms identified as words related to community service.

Another member added:

I think that we had a good and strong impact on the community and I think that it was based on not only our desire to and a commit to guide right which was a community based activities as well as mentoring of the youth in the area as well as we also I guess enveloped into that the community awareness as far as bringing the better awareness of health issues, of safety issues, of sometimes political issues and controversial issues to the student body, but that was cause our
community is not only the university in which the campus is on but we also were very active in the community as far as the Binghamton area. I think that the Binghamton alumni area helped balance, the alumni chapter helped us balance that because we had the alumni brother who was the head of the Urban League, we had alumni brothers who were involved in the church and through the church they were involved in the same voice and other community enhancement type of initiatives as well as a lot of them were more involved in the community based initiatives through their job which was Finger Lakes and IBM they kept us when we go to create what our guideline initiatives going to be for the year balanced with on campus as well as community outreach type of activities. I think that I really kind of was impressed with that because it allowed us to have to take our activities and physically take ourselves off campus and downtown into the Binghamton area to seek out the best way to make an impact (S83).

Big Brother/Big Sister was another program members dedicated their time and energy towards.

There weren’t too many fraternal organizations on the campus that really focused on achievement and all aspects, all endeavors whether it be again, family, careers, and just the way that we ran the organization all on campus and it integrated with the campus community it made me aspire to do better things beyond just the undergraduate level. A lot of the outreach we did was in the community as well. We did a lot of community service working with Big Brother, Big Sister and just to see how people looked up to the fraternity and looked to the fraternity for
guidance, financial guidance, trying to conduct themselves in a manner to pursue their academic careers and consistently stay there (S87).

The Mu Kappa chapter’s involvement with U-Turn, Adopt a Family, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) and New York State Mental Health Society are three of the recent programs that are done yearly by the members.

While in college we definitely had an impact on the community. Being an undergrad we definitely had time to develop especially being a chapter that just returned to the campus community doing events to help out the family during the winter time as well as joining in U-Turn a national youth program and programs like that. It definitely, especially on the college campus, and outside the Binghamton community definitely I feel like we made an impact just reaching out to college students as well as the community (S08).

Another member added:

One of our most unique programs Adopt a Family, every year around Christmas time we would basically fund the Christmas of a needy family, typically be a minority family, usually a single mother who’s struggling to make ends meet, you know, we’d work with the middle schools and high schools in the Binghamton area to get a family recommended to us and we would fund their Christmas, and I mean just the joy of seeing the kids’ faces was rewarding in itself. Mothers against Drunk Driving events, went to Binghamton High School working with a brother, we used to get an educational opportunity program director at the university working with him with his mentorship program in the area. The New York State Mental Health Society forum meetings which all the brothers from the
MK chapter would go to both years that I was an active member as an undergraduate (S09).

Respondent S83 added that Kappa Alpha Psi’s impact extended itself beyond college campuses stating:

I think that you have a large portion that actually sees them for they’re very, very involved in their community cause I think that Kappa is good for outreach. I mean my opinion and observation of Kappa is actually one that gets involved in Harlem week and get involved in different activities in Brooklyn and get involved in the school system and different partisans like that as well as I think that the brothers that I observed on a large scale carry themselves very well and even though we are a social organization that I think that the impression that we leave when we do get involved in those events does not leave you with a party or a playful type of afterthought when they leave (S83).

Another member added:

Most important thing is just going out into the community and helping the community. You know, you’re going out you have a purpose you go out with the people with like minds like yourself who are really interested in helping the community and helping people in need. So I think that’s the motivational piece right there, you know, just going out and helping your fellow beings and helping to really improve your community, make your community better (S88).

**Summary of Results**

In summary, five major objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi emerged from the interviews conducted. The first objective was Brotherhood. Members of the chapter
perceived the chapter to be a family. Chapter relationships were viewed as being part of an individual’s primary group as oppose to a temporary or secondary group. This sentiment was shared by members from throughout the chapter over a 30 year span. Age, profession and religion did not hinder the communication and networking between members. Younger members cherished the ability to interact and receive guidance from older members. Older members modeled the standards and expectations of what is required from younger members.

The second objective centered on the chapter’s belief of the term achievement as a way of life. The chapter’s high graduation rate and commitment to provide leadership on campus were both examined. Members stated high standards, expectations, successful role models, accountability and the demand for excellence from peers and alumni alike led to members becoming more cognizant of their responsibility to themselves and others.

The third objective discussed personal development. Members of the chapter all provided accounts of how membership provided them with the opportunity to develop spiritually and professionally. Many members discussed the impact being a member of the organization had on their religious beliefs. The second theme was personal development. Members felt being a member gave them an opportunity to learn how to be leaders, a better understanding of character development and the skills needed for professional development.

The fourth objective was related to mentoring and importance of having mentors to assist members reach their goals both personally and professionally. The opportunity to engage older members provided undergraduates with an understanding of how they
needed to conduct themselves. Mentoring also existed from peer to peer. Members regularly checked in with one another and set up structures such as mandatory library hours that had an impact on not only the members, but also other minority students on campus.

The final objective of the study focused on community service and Kappa Alpha Psi’s impact on the greater community. Members discussed the need for the organization to be a presence in the community and provided examples of programs they have contributed towards such as the Broome County Urban League, Big Brother/Big Sister, U-Turn, Adopt a Family, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) and New York State Mental Health Society. All of the members prided themselves on being a positive role model and being an active contributor to the betterment of the community.

The final chapter of this study is included in the next section. The chapter will offer a detailed summary of the findings. It will summarize the objectives and sub themes detailed in chapter four, as well as, discuss the implications of having Black Greek letter organizations on college campuses. Recommendations for practice and future research will also be offered, as well as an overarching synopsis of the study.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This study served to extend the existing research in the understanding of how student involvement in a historical Black Greek letter organization promotes academic persistence and personal development. This ethnographic study examined the alumni of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, Mu Kappa chapter at The State University of New York Center at Binghamton. This final chapter summarizes the objectives and sub themes detailed in chapter four, as well as, discussing the implications of having Black Greek letter organizations on college campuses. Lastly it provides a summary overview of the study.

Black and Hispanic men continue to see their numbers downwardly spiral in comparison to their peers, including Black and Hispanic women. The lack of minority males applying to, attending and completing college is a national concern that has multiple socio-economical implications. Historical Black Greek letter organizations such as Kappa Alpha Psi were created over 100 years ago to ensure Black men attending college would have a peer driven support system to strengthen their ability to not only complete their education, but also train them to take on leadership positions within the greater community.

Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement considered increased student retention by examining the impact involvement, environment and outcomes. This researcher found that requiring members to take on leadership roles, engage themselves...
in community activities and setting high expectations that were quantifiable allowed members to learn skill sets that they would hone over time for their personal and professional development. These opportunities also allowed members to create programs that enhanced the lives of many students on the college campus, as well as, members of the greater community. Ultimately members learned to have a greater sense of responsibility for themselves and altruism for others. A sense of obligation to one another as well as the chapter created an overwhelming sense of solidarity. These feelings led to members achieving their final goal which was to obtain a college degree and have competitive job skills to enter the job market.

The research questions for this ethnography investigated how membership in Kappa Alpha Psi allowed for the personal development and academic persistence of fraternal members at the State University of New York Center at Binghamton. The researcher replicated the survey questions used in the Williams-Scurlock (2005) study of how the Servant-Leadership model impacted members of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity in terms of personal development.

This researcher sought to replicate the questions to ascertain whether his findings were generalizable, however utilized an ethnographic approach utilizing Astin’s (1984) student involvement theory as the theoretical approach for this study.

The researcher sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How did membership in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the personal development of members during their undergraduate years?

2. How did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the academic persistence of members during their undergraduate years?
Upon retrospect, the researcher realized that themes were aligned with the objectives of the organization throughout the existence of the chapter. Members were able to create avenues that promoted the ideals of the organization. These objectives became an engrained part of the chapter’s culture over time. Furthermore the researcher believes it would have been beneficial to interview the entire chapter in order to understand the impact the organization had on individuals regardless of the year in college when they were initiated.

Based on the information gathered from the interviews, membership in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contributed greatly towards the personal development of members within Mu Kappa Chapter. The expectation of the chapter that all members should be active on campus and in the community led to members developing leadership skills and a sense of altruism. All members were expected to hold leadership positions within the chapter at some point during their undergraduate career, as well as, in outside organizations that served the greater campus community.

The first research question asked how membership in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contributed towards the personal development of members during their undergraduate years. This information was gleamed from three questions found in the interview protocol that the participants provided responses.

- Question #4: How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your personal growth?
- Question #5: How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your professional growth?
• Question #8: What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity have on the community while you were in college?

Table 5.1

Relationship between the Research Questions and the Interview Protocol

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Protocol</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. How did membership in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the personal development of members during their undergraduate years?</td>
<td>Question #4: How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your personal growth?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the academic persistence of members during their undergraduate years?</td>
<td>Question #3: What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Question #6: How has being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity opened doors for you that you may not have had access?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Question #7: What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity has done for you?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. Research questions and related interview questions.

Membership in Kappa Alpha Psi afforded members with a venue in which they were provided with an opportunity to learn how to strategically plan, negotiate positions, organize events, develop programs, coordinate resources with outside organizations, recruit potential candidates for membership, report activities and budget for events
annually. These skill sets provided members with the knowledge and confidence to move into the workforce and compete with skill sets they may not have obtained otherwise.

Regardless of the era an individual was initiated into the fraternity, a strong sense of obligation, leadership and academic achievement were the basic tenets participants cited contributing to their personal development during their undergraduate years. Here are three examples:

Kappa Alpha Psi has influenced my intellectual and spiritual growth by giving me a challenge to overcome some of my own shortcomings on an organizational structure, to understand what it is to serve and to provide a support role and then to also lead by example (S82).

To this day my mother says that if it wasn’t for Kappa Alpha Psi I would have never went back to school because I was determined to get back to be with my friends, my true, true friends that we’ve been through hardships with and fun times. So that influenced me to actually go back to school and then being with a group of young men and myself that strive for academic performance, you had no choice but to get your act together for school because they were as harsh on you as big brothers as they were your peers (S86).

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity the most important thing it has done for me hands down it has made achievement a way of life for me. Not something I would like to do, not something I occasionally do, but a way of life. A way that I live my life day to day, we have to set the marker where achievement for us is not a buzz word, it’s actually who we truly are, it’s not a word that we throw around, oh I might achieve tomorrow but I might slack off the day after. No it’s how we do
things. Since I joined Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity in 2009 achievement is this word we call the core principle of a fraternity as it’s meant so much more to me and accountability, it’s everything I do I feel more empowered and also in a positive sense more pressured to do well in it whether it’s my work, whether it’s something social, whether it’s stress, whether it’s my appearance in public, I just feel like in many different aspects of life I’ve just been inspired to achieve and not do well but excel at what I’m doing. You know, whether it was excelling amongst my peers and undergraduates and now excelling with my team in the workplace, whatever the situation may be (S09).

The second research question asked how Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contributed towards the academic persistence of members during their undergraduate years. Academically, Kappa Alpha Psi contributed towards the persistence of members during their undergraduate years by setting standards and expectations by which members were required to uphold. The groupthink ideology “achievement in every field of human endeavor” (Bryson, 2003) was impressed upon members through the pledge process, mentoring and peer-to-peer interaction. The ability to be active in the chapter was relegated by a member’s academic performance. Ultimately the interpersonal relationships forged over time allowed for members to feel as if they were a part of something larger than just themselves. This promoted feelings of obligation and service towards one another. Two examples of these sentiments are provided in the following quotes:

Well the focus of achievement and every brother, you know, from the beginning held high standards, you know, their grade point average. There was aspirations
about post graduate, what were you going to do after college and a lot of people talked about, especially fraternity members talked about building their careers and going beyond just with a Bachelor’s Degree and pursuing other post graduate degrees (S87).

Over twenty years later the culture expectations of the chapter have maintained themselves. Another member stated:

There’s so much more accountability and its direct because it even comes from your peers, it can come from any of the brothers checking to see how you’re doing in classes. Accountability is just really increased, it no longer comes from my mom or my sister back home, I had brothers right there on campus who were no more than a phone call away always inquiring about my academic achievement. So intellectually as an academic undergraduate student it definitely increased being a member of a fraternity (S09).

The opportunity for internships, summer employment and graduate school were all made available for members who met the academic criteria for eligibility. These opportunities encouraged members to maintain their grade point averages. Library hours were established and members assisted each other with developing good study habits. Older members assisted younger members with the selection of classes within various majors and counseled them on how to interact with professors to ensure they would receive assistance if needed.

Every member interviewed for this study concluded that there was some aspect of Kappa Alpha Psi that provided them with the desire to remain in school. For some members the sense of obligation or the allure of being socially elite gave them the
impetus to push forward, for others the positive role models within the chapter and overall organization served as the driving force to remain in school and complete their academic degree.

**Implications of Findings**

Colleges and universities continue to struggle with identifying strategies that will promote the retention of minority students. Researchers such as Kimbrough (1996), Williams (2004) and Williams-Scurlock (2005) have studied the impact that membership in the historical Black Greek letter fraternities have on student involvement, leadership and service. Each of their studies have reaffirmed that these organizations serve a greater purpose than just social interaction. Contributors towards the study of student involvement such as, Astin (1984), Tinto (1993) and Bean (2000) all agree that student engagement in the campus community is tantamount to increasing retention for all students regardless of race.

This study provided additional findings that involvement in certain peer driven organizations such as the historical Black Greek letter organizations can breed the qualities that colleges and universities are spending considerable amounts of funds and human resources to develop. In Mu Kappa chapter, peer expectations, mentoring and community service have created an atmosphere of academic achievement and personal development amongst the members. The sense of familial belonging that permeates itself throughout the chapter promotes a place of solace, as well as, an understanding that the purpose of being in college and a member is to achieve. Furthermore, the role modeling and standards of expected behaviors are constantly reinforced through words and deeds. Spiritually the organization provides many of the members with an opportunity to
fellowship. Some of the members refer to this opportunity as having a unity or bond. Some equated this as a spiritual experience. Others relayed a more straight-forward religious perspective that identified with the Christian values and practices imbedded in the organization, such as beginning every meeting with the reciting of the Lord’s Prayer and Proverbs. Balancing the academic, social and spiritual needs of students encourages students to remain in school and allows them to push forward with the confidence that they are supported by a strong network.

Unlike predominately White Greek letter organizations, the impact of Black Greek letter organizations are felt throughout the minority community on campus. Their visibility on campus places them in an elite social status and as an integral part of the climate that makes going to college more palpable for the non-Greek minority students. Academic institutions, student affairs, student organizations and other groups seeking to increase the retention and persistence rates of minority males can view this study as an approach worthy of further consideration. This particular study was researched by an insider that has witnessed the transformation of young men for over two decades. The data of this study implies that the creation of cohorts designed to serve as a supporting mechanism from a peer to peer level would increase levels of communication and social development.

These findings have led the researcher to consider the following questions:

1. How does spirituality impact the development of historical Black fraternities and sororities?

2. How do historical Black fraternities and sororities fulfill the mission or objectives of their organization?
3. What are the graduation rates of individual chapters within historical Black fraternities and sororities?

4. Are the findings of this research project generalizable to other historical Black fraternities and sororities?

Limitations

The study was limited by several factors that should be considered. The use of a purposeful sample limited the generalizability of the study (Cresswell, 2002). The length of the doctoral program as an accelerated program led to limiting the study to a purposeful sample because of the short length of time associated with fulfilling the deadlines of the program. The interview process also presented a limitation due to the length of time respondents had been out of school. Respondents were asked to recall thoughts from up to 30 years ago. This could have led to lapses in memory, misinterpretation of events and the inaccuracy of involvement in certain situations.

The study would also benefit from having a larger sample pool to promote greater diversity. The opportunity to interview all of the members of the chapter would have yielded more data. The possibility exists that the respondents may have had discussions with one another since all of the respondents maintain relationships with one another.

The researcher is a member of the organization being studied, as well as an alumnus of the college being used in the survey. The researcher has served as the unofficial historian of the chapter and maintains a level of influence amongst the members of the chapter. The power entrusted to the researcher by the members of the chapter could have been skewed respondents answers to provide ideal in lieu of real responses.
Another limitation of the study is that all of the participants were from a single historically Black Greek-letter organization located on a single predominately white college campus. The organization is selective and as such, academic transcripts, letters of recommendation and community service are reviewed and candidates are vetted prior to making final decisions to extend an opportunity for membership. The argument can be made that like-minded people are selected to join the organization thus predetermining the likelihood that members would be academically driven, rather than the organization indoctrinating members to have like minded aspirations.

Recommendations

Colleges and Universities have long struggled to find a balance between the benefits that these organizations provide with regards to community service and the concern over the pledge process many must endure to become members. The national offices of all of the Black Greek letter organizations should be encouraged to create such a mechanism that ensures conformity to the non-hazing policies that exist, while encouraging dialogue regarding the traditions of the organization that could be shared with administrators and academics alike. This would bolster their claim that they are integral to the success of the Black community as a whole.

Undergraduate chapters would increase their significance to the university if they start maintaining records on graduation rates, majors, professional occupations and services provided to the community. These mechanisms would provide fraternities and sororities with the means to track members throughout their undergraduate/graduate school years and ultimately into their professions. Additionally, the ability to review the various processes, systems and activities they are engaged in will allow them to become
more insightful with regard to the impact these activities affect members. Collecting such data would strengthen the argument that Black Greek letter organizations are an integral and essential asset for the Black community, as well as, colleges and universities.

The National Pan-Hellenic Council, the umbrella organization for the Divine Nine, as well as, the individual historical black fraternities and sororities both nationally and locally should maintain statistical information regarding undergraduate chapter graduation rates, opportunities of personal and professional development, and community service. This information is worthy of research and would help to further validate the existence of such organizations on college campuses. Mandating such information would also allow the fraternal organizations with an opportunity to identify which programs assist with the academic achievement of their members.

Knowledge of historical Black Greek letter organizations is limited to small pockets of individuals. More outreach can be done on college campuses through student activities, the Greek Council and cultural unions. Academic departments such as Sociology, Political Science and African American Studies can provide classroom presentations as well as campus wide symposiums regarding the benefits of membership. Fraternities and Sororities can individually and/or collectively sponsor programs to be brought to campus. Within the community the Urban League, Police Athletic League, Board of Education and Black Male Initiative can be enlisted to provide open forum.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to determine the role of Kappa Alpha Psi, a historically Black-Greek letter fraternal organization in the academic persistence and personal development of black students attending at the State University of New
York Center at Binghamton. Alumni of Mu Kappa chapter served as the focus of this study. The chapter’s graduation rate of 97 percent over a 30 year period is significantly higher than the national average for students regardless of sex, nationality or socio-economic class. Of the 60 initiates, 49 have completed their bachelor degree, three have completed an associate degree, four are completing their undergraduate degree and four dropped out. The high rate of degree completion for this particular group warranted an investigation that could offer personal perspective or testimony on the impact of the fraternity on individual degree completion.

The culture of Mu Kappa chapter is centered on achievement, brotherhood, mentoring, personal development and community service. Geertz (1973, p. 89) defines culture as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.” Based on the literature, the researcher decided an ethnographic approach would capture the essence of Mu Kappa culture. “Ethnography is a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs and language of a culture sharing group” (Creswell, 2007, p. 68). Creswell does not recommend more than four or five studies for an ethnographic study (p. 128). The use of case studies allows for several perspectives based on chronological time periods and contexts for the formation and changes of behavior or culture over time.

The ethnographic approach is designed to capture information that identifies shared cultural practices and objectives. Based on the objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi, the research sought to answer the following questions:
1. How did membership in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the personal development of members during their undergraduate years?

2. How did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contribute towards the academic persistence of members during their undergraduate years?

Black males on predominately white college campuses struggle with identifying support networks that provide access to participation and integration into campus life. Fleming (1983) identified issues that lead to increased feelings of isolation including the lack of connection with most of the social, psychological and academic aspects of campus life. The very concept of being a minority in a predominantly white environment created undue stress for students who did not possess coping mechanisms to navigate through unfamiliar terrain.

Historical Black fraternities have a long and storied history that is interwoven into the fabric of American colleges and society in general. The prominences of their members provide a veritable who's who of contributors over the last 100 years can be counted within the ranks of these organizations (Kimbrough W., 1996). From its initial formation the purpose of the organization has been to “raise the sights of Black youths and stimulate them to accomplishments higher than might be realized or ever imagined” (Bryson, 2003, p. 2).

While New York colleges and universities created state and federally funded programs specifically designed to attract, recruit and retain minority students, their inability to acclimate students to an environment that could be perceived as being hostile or uncaring has led to high levels of attrition. These programs attempt to address academic deficiencies through remediation and social development by providing
counseling services specifically for students accepted into these programs. College sponsored retention programs continue to provide the greatest opportunities for minority students to be accepted and obtain a quality education.

This study examined the role of Kappa Alpha Psi, a historically Black-Greek letter fraternal organization as it applied to academic persistence and personal development for Black men who attended The State University of New York Center at Binghamton utilizing Astin’s student involvement theory. Student involvement theory defines student involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (Astin, 1984, p. 518). Input variables included involvement in student organizations and leadership opportunities, measure personal development and academic persistence. Outcome variables of this study included personal development as obtaining leadership positions in student organizations on campus and persistence as graduation from college. Astin’s study concluded “those students who join social fraternities and sororities or participate in extracurricular activities of almost any type are less likely to drop out” (Student Involvement: A developmental theory for higher education, p. 523). He cites that a sense of belonging to the group is more important amongst minority groups than Whites.

From 1982 to present Kappa Alpha Psi, Mu Kappa chapter has provided a number of services that members are expected to be fully engaged in strategizing, planning, and executing programs that are beneficial to the community. These activities include blood drives, DWI forums, tutoring/mentoring at the Urban League, study skills workshops, leadership training and Black Male forums. The level of involvement expected and the objectives set in place by the chapter provides members with not only an opportunity to
develop organizational skills, but also the expectation that in time all will become leaders either within the chapter or on campus. There is an expectancy that perseveres and persists that the chapter must maintain a level of quality. This reminder is a poem that is committed to memory by every chapter member, “Be strong, for we are not here to play dream or drift. We have hard work to do and heavy loads to lift. Shun not thy struggle for it is God’s gift. Be Strong” (Babcock, 1901).

The existence of Black fraternities on college campuses have long provided minority students with an outlet to become engaged in the campus and surrounding community through service, socialization and leadership (Astin, 1993; Kimbrough, 1995; Williams, 2004; Williams-Scurlock, 2005). Much of the literature regarding minority males within higher education focuses on causes for leaving school, rather than examining the reasons why some succeed. Feelings of alienation due to under-prepared academic training, a lack of a support network, finances and culture shock lead many students to fall short of reaching their goal of achieving an academic degree. While the concepts of race, ethnicity and economic class should be considered set in place (Allen, 1992), culture can be nurtured and conformed to include achievement as a basic tenet of existence.

This study served to extend the existing research in the understanding of how student involvement promotes academic persistence and personal development for students in Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity at The State University of New York Center at Binghamton. Across the United States, countless organizations collectively spend millions of dollars to investigate, evaluate and address declining enrollment of students of color. Particularly alarming is the continuing downward spiral of Black male college
graduates. Black male degree attainment has had insignificant growth over the last 30 years. Colleges are judged by their ability to graduate students within a six year time frame.

In 2000 in New York State, Black males between the ages of 18-24 represent 8.6 percent of the population, however the State University of New York system only 3 percent of these men are enrolled in college. Colleges continue to struggle with the retention of Black males. Black males represent the highest attrition rates of any group in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Nationally more than 67 percent of Black males enrolled in college do not graduate (Harper, 2006). Since 1985 Black women have outshined their male counterparts in every academic level from associates to doctoral degree. Within the Black community Black males represent 33.8 percent of total Blacks attending college.

Prior studies (Kimbrough, 1996, Williams, 2004, Williams-Scurlock, 2005) demonstrated both an understanding of the theoretical frameworks that were applicable, as well as, an insightful perspective of the phenomena due to their membership in the organizations they studied. Similarly, membership in the organization provided the researcher with an opportunity to identify meaning both individually and collectively from “a culture-sharing group and their core values and beliefs” (Creswell, 2007, p. 92). This researcher sought to discover the core values and beliefs of this culture-sharing group by interviewing eight alumni of Mu Kappa chapter at Binghamton University.

The findings of this study centered on the five objectives of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. The first objective was, Brotherhood. Members of the chapter perceived the chapter to be a family and felt accountable toward one another. The second objective
was achievement. Not just as a term but a way of life. Mu Kappa chapter prides itself on having a high graduation rate, as well as, leadership positions throughout the campus community. The third objective examined personal development on a spiritual and professional level. Members felt being a member gave them an opportunity to share their religious beliefs, as well as, developing the skills needed for professional development. The fourth objective relayed the importance of having guidance both peer to peer and the guidance of mentors was an important aspect of the chapter that many members felt assisted them to achieve their goals. The fifth and final objective detailed the importance of community service. Mu Kappa has a long and storied history with regards to providing programs and performing acts of charity in the interest of educating and servicing the public interest.

The opportunity for internships, summer employment and graduate school were all made available for members who met the academic criteria for eligibility. These opportunities encouraged members to maintain their grade point averages. Library hours were established and members assisted each other with developing good study habits. Older members assisted younger members with the selection of classes within various majors and counseled them on how to interact with professors to ensure they would receive assistance if needed.

Every member interviewed for this study concluded that there was some aspect of Kappa Alpha Psi that provided them with the desire to remain in school. For some members the sense of obligation or the allure of being socially elite gave them the impetus to push forward, for others the positive role models within the chapter and
overall organization served as the driving force to remain in school and complete their academic degree.

The first research question with regard to personal development was viewed positively by all of the respondents. Membership in Kappa Alpha Psi afforded members with a venue in which they were provided with an opportunity to learn how to strategically plan, negotiate positions, organize events, develop programs, coordinate resources with outside organizations, recruit potential candidates for membership, report activities and budget for events annually. These skill sets provided members with the knowledge and confidence to move into the workforce and compete with skill sets they may not have obtained otherwise.

Regardless of the era an individual was initiated into the fraternity, a strong sense of obligation, leadership and academic achievement were the basic tenets participants cited contributing to their personal development during their undergraduate years.

The second research question asked how Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity contributed towards the academic persistence of members during their undergraduate years. Academically, Kappa Alpha Psi contributed towards the persistence of members during their undergraduate years by setting standards and expectations by which members were required to uphold. The groupthink ideology “achievement in every field of human endeavor” (Bryson, 2003) was impressed upon members through the pledge process, mentoring and peer-to-peer interaction. The ability to be active in the chapter was relegated by a member’s academic performance. Ultimately the interpersonal relationships forged over time allowed for members to feel as if they were a part of
something larger than just themselves. This promoted feelings of obligation and service towards one another.
References


http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=sharper


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Appendix A

Correspondence to Study Participants

Greetings Brothers,

My name is Joseph Cordero and I am a spring 1986 initiate of Mu Kappa Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated located at the State University of New York Center at Binghamton. I am currently a doctoral student at St. John Fisher College in the Executive Leadership in Education program. For my dissertation research, I am investigating the impact that the Mu Kappa chapter has had on academic persistence and personal development over the past 30 years.

I will investigate this subject through a series of semi-structure interviews consisting of 10 questions. From 1982 – 2010, 37 freshmen and sophomores were initiated into Mu Kappa chapter. I am seeking 6 participants to assist with this study. Studies have shown that the first two years are the most critical with regards to retaining students. This is especially true for Black and Latino males. The interviews will be categorized by year in college and years as member of the fraternity. I will divide the participants by decade. They will consist of members who were initiated in the 1980’s, 1990’s and 2000’s.

I am requesting your assistance, support and participation by agreeing to a 20 minute interview that will either be telephone recorded or filmed. If you choose to participate in this study, all information will be considered confidential and I will not use any identifiers within the study other than length of time in the fraternity. You are within
your rights to decline and or ask for your interview to be removed from the study at any
time. It is my intention to create a composite of member perceptions of student
involvement, the influence of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity on members and society, as it
pertains to academic persistence and personal development as a result of fraternal
involvement over the last 30 years.

The final product will be made available to all members of Mu Kappa chapter. If
you have any questions, feel free to email me at jelizer@aol.com or call me at (646) 369 -
3903. Thank you in advance for considering this endeavor.

Yours in the Bond,

Joseph E. Cordero, Doctoral Candidate
St. John Fisher College - Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education
Appendix B

Informed Consent

Mu Kappa Chapter, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.: An Ethnographic Study of Academic Persistence and Personal Development

Joseph E. Cordero  646-369-3903
jcordero04919@sjfc.edu
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership  Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education  St. John Fisher College

I understand that I have been invited to participate in dissertation research on the impact of Mu Kappa chapter on member academic persistence and personal development.

- If I choose to participate, I understand that the interview will be visually recorded. The time required to complete the interview is approximately 30 minutes.

- There are no reasonably foreseeable physical discomforts or risks associated with this activity. I will receive no direct benefit, but data collected from this study may contribute to a better understanding of Historical Black Fraternal membership.

- If participating in this study causes me problems, the researcher or his designee will refer me to his advisor, who will talk with me and if necessary refer me to a professional who can provide counseling.

- The data collected in this study will be summarized. Information gathered that personally identifies me will not be reported to anyone outside the research project.

- I may ask questions of the researcher, Joseph E. Cordero, at anytime or his advisor, Dr. Janice Kelly, St. John Fisher College, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education can provide me information about the rights of human subjects in research.

- I understand that I may refuse to participate in this study, and if I choose to participate may stop at any time. If I refuse to participate or decide to stop, I will not be penalized and will not lose any benefits to which I may be entitled.

I understand the provisions and I agree to participate as a respondent in this study.
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Appendix C

Interview Protocol

1. What organizations did you hold membership while in college?

2. What leadership positions (i.e. president, vice president, team captain, etc.) did you hold on campus or within the fraternity?

3. What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.?

4. How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. influenced your spiritual and intellectual growth?

5. How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. influenced your professional development?

6. How has being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. opened doors for you that you may not have had access?

7. What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., has done for you?

8. What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. have on the community while you were in college?

9. What contributions did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. make to the larger society during the last thirty years?

10. How do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.?
Appendix D

Interview Transcripts

Respondent: S82

Q  What organizations did you hold membership while in college?

Resp  I held membership in the Black Student Union actually I was president and vice president of the organization. I served as an associate member of NYPIRG, New York State Public Research Group. I also held office in the (:36.5 inaudible) Council and I was also an officer in the Harper College Martial Arts Program.

Q  Okay. What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?

Resp  I was a freshman when I entered, I was a freshman when I pledged Kappa Alpha Psi my second semester. My first semester at the college was my first introduction to Greek organizations first hand. My cousin, my older cousin she was senior by about ten years, she pledged Delta Sigma Theta at Bennett College and that was my first contact with Greek organization on a one-to-one basis. She explained to me that when I entered college I was to pledge Omega Psi Phi which I had no idea what that was, but I had questions about the whole order and the photos that I saw different were familiar about her room and the fact that she was high academic achiever at a historically Black university, that intrigued me. So when I came to Binghamton I was introduced to Greek organizations that were predominantly white, if not all white and their membership and membership activity consisted of silly pranks and activities like drinking large amounts of beverages with every meal and repeating silly phrases and basically rowdiness. When I observed Greek organizations at other campuses like Syracuse and Cornell University I saw them in a different context, you know, community
service, social activities and you know healthy academic rivalry amongst Greek organizations. So when I got to Ithaca and I saw the chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi I was intrigued and I inquired further and found that a lot of the idols that I had Arthur Ash, Bill Russell, Percy Sutton and others were members of the organization and the personalities in character of the organization is what attracted me.

Q How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your spiritual and intellectual growth?

Resp Kappa Alpha Psi has influenced my intellectual and spiritual growth by giving me a challenge to overcome some of my own shortcomings on an organizational structure, to understand what it is to serve and to provide a support role and then to also lead by example. Being a freshman it seemed like it was going to be forever before I held a real leadership to the organization because the seniors and those that were ahead of me outvoted me as well as sought those positions because they would soon leave the academic environment. So I was sometimes begrudgingly doing grunt work and having four leaders and one follower being me. So Kappa Alpha Psi did kind of prepare me for the politicking and positioning that would happen in other organizational structures where I was outnumbered or had to gain influence by my own efforts and also (4:52 inaudible) and framing.

Q How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your professional development?

Resp It influenced my professional development by being introduced to and interacting with professions from different walks of life and different professions. Binghamton alumni chapter consisted of professionals and retirees that came from all over the United States, they were drawn here by companies like (5:26 inaudible), IBM and other organizations that works with subcontractors for those companies. I think we had a class of not just they were graduates, so some of them were Vietnam veterans with that kind of experience before they entered college, and others were privileged high school students that went on to
prestigious universities where they studied engineering. I met a physicist and a manager whose wife was a physicist that were associated with the first moon shot and he was working as an engineer for IBM on rocket research and he had been, I think his data initiation was like system 2 or system 4. He was an older gentlemen, you know, he was in his 70’s and when we came across him he had children and grandchildren and he was living in Binghamton and it was just interesting to see someone from that generation alongside guys who just recently graduated and gone on for entry level positions at IBM. So the interaction that I had as a pledge as someone entering the university had a profound effect upon my professional development, being prepared for interviews, even the interviews that we had to attend to enter the organization being a sense of how to present yourself and how to be prepared and have poise in a stressful situation.

Q How was being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi open doors for you that you may not have had access to?

Resp I would say that Kappa Alpha Psi on its own through networking and association has not afforded me up to this point an opportunity to advance from the base of someone in the organization reaching a handout saying here’s an opportunity that’s available for you. I mean if I had a different field of study of course there were other opportunities that could have presented themselves. But how it has opened up doors was to give me perseverance, ability to understand and know when to force an issue and when to retreat. My role in community service has had many turns in terms of leadership and hiring and resources, and along the way my longevity and ability to survive has probably had more to do with my preparedness of life as opposed to having a door opened for me.

Q What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity has done for you?

Resp The most important it’s done for me is give me a network and a framework to address young Black males in the society in which we live. To have an opportunity to influence, mentoring and development of other young males that
come from where I came from and also to give them something to strive for and give them a piece of me. In college you have friends, you have associates, and Kappa Alpha Psi has been a structure in which they succeed in sustainability of relationships and it’s very much social and also an opportunity to be in contact with those people that you associate with. So where you might drift apart some people that you just casually meet because of the bond of the fraternity and the business aspect of the organization it will keep you in contact with your peers and your brothers. So Kappa Alpha Psi the most important thing was to provide a structure for me to give back and also to participate.

Q    What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity have on the community while you were in college?

Resp Kappa Alpha Psi in Binghamton prosper was the rebirth of community service and a campus based initiative that was from the Black community. We had to deal with organizations like the churches peer program which was an equal opportunity program that sought to give opportunities to students that may have had a disadvantage by one means or another, financial or academic and give them opportunities to stay in college. What Kappa Alpha Psi did was my class and the classes that came after us they hooked up with the Urban League to provide some type of tutoring or some ongoing easy to attain community service program. We also provided another contact with real people that were on campus as well as the community. So there may have been some time in the 60’s and the 70’s that that was taking place that Kappa Alpha Psi work with the rebirth of that in Binghamton. The alumni that pretty much guided our pledge process they were, some of them were involved in the Urban League and by us opening back up to the Urban League, the Urban League provided a few more programs that weren’t there before and also because the interest in the organization and the interest in people from Binghamton University going to downtown Binghamton to do something that was community based was maybe not new but it was something that was getting optimists in (12:35 inaudible).
Q  What contribution did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity make to the larger society during the last 30 years?

Resp  Well the organization on a national basis has done charitable works in supporting education of higher educational institutions over the last 30 years. The Kappa Alpha Psi Foundation Guide Right of the (13:09 inaudible) individual alumni chapters are sponsoring schools to colleges as well as scholarships and other mentoring programs since they use themselves throughout the community in places like Philadelphia, Detroit and New York City. In terms of their member, how can I say the connection, the personality of Kappa Alpha Psi for the past 30 years was drawn from a traditional predominantly Black organization that had ancient ways of doing things in terms of ceremonies of initiation and so forth that had to change. Some of the things that were going on in the organization, good and bad, had changed over the last 30 years to where Kappa Alpha Psi now focused on in my opinion development of the individual rather than some dogma or routine of how initiation that may not have anything to do with character and things, or academic challenges.

Q  Okay. Final question, how do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?

Resp  Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity it’s like an indigenous African language. Those people who are familiar with it it's a part of life, it’s understood and it’s symbolic and it’s spiritual. For those who are on the outside of the organization that has no contact with them or no understanding of our history Kappa Alpha Psi is like a foreign entity, it’s not something that’s easily accepted by let’s say white society even now in 2012. The concept out there are Black males gathered for a purpose that has to do with academia and brotherhood is something foreign to a lot of people. You have judges, professionals that have no real contact with the Black community as a whole that has no idea what Black people in the organization represent historically. If they do they usually have it from firsthand knowledge like being at a university like Indiana University where something that you come
across and understand or they know someone that’s in the organization which there are of course thousands of members and knows their past and gets them familiar but in terms of how I believe Kappa Alpha Psi is viewed is on an individual basis. Who is standing there representing Kappa Alpha Psi to you at that particular time. Were you Percy Sutton or, you know, some T-shirt where you never really contributed to the organization. So Kappa Alpha Psi to me is many things, but I think it’s misunderstood and not necessarily representative of the goals and aspirations of the organization when you ask people who have limited knowledge of Kappa Alpha Psi.

Q  Okay, and that the end of the formal interview. I actually have one last question for you, because you are founder of the chapter, because you were the first person of all, what is your vision of what our chapter should strive for? And not looking at necessarily just what you see today or the issues that may come up today, but when you think about our chapter over the last 30 years as being an entity to itself, what do you feel our chapter should strive for?

Resp  Our chapter should strive for a place, a foundation, a building, a structure, something that’s dedicated to those who came before, who came before the chapter was even founded, you know the founders, those people who had the vision to pursue a way out of discrimination and displacement in American society, or those who were shunned in our society. So they were forced to develop on their own, in a way segregation of that age gave way to independence of thought and self reliance. I think that change of spirit should be mirrored in some of the things that are (18:47 inaudible). In particular I think that the undergraduate chapter should adopt and be a part of forming this initiative and when I say this initiative it should be a foundation. I mean Kappa Alpha Psi has many foundations, it should be a foundation that has how each (19:13 inaudible) neighborhoods throughout we’ll say the urban sections of New York and well as the rural sections, to assist and to give some real guidance and advice and direction to aspiring college kids and also to make it not such a bad thing to be in academics and not such a bad thing to be a good student, and not such a bad thing
to not aspire to be just like everybody else that’s around. So in short term I think we just need to have the chapter that’s responsible and academically sound and the campus as a whole can look at them as role models, as people with character, with some strength and some swagger and also in terms of business so an organization that can sustain a charitable work interest.

**Respondent: S83**

**Q** What organizations did you hold membership while in college?

**Resp** Okay I held membership in Kappa Alphi Psi New Campus Chapter and a couple of orientated I guess governing relationships, well one is the Inter Greek Council and the other one was a Panel Council and the fourth was a not fraternally or Greek related and that is the Black Greek Council, the African American Student Council which is just a regular color.

**Q** Was that a Black student union?

**Resp** Yes, thank you for the name, it’s been a long time.

**Q** Okay. What leadership positions, i.e., president, vice president, team captain, did you hold on campus or within the fraternity?

**Resp** Okay so this is you’re asking for the individuals organizations and the positions or just the positions as pertained to the Greek Kappa?

**Q** Both.

**Resp** Okay, for Kappa I held a number of positions. I was secretary at one time, I was being a pledgee at another time, I was president of the chapter for a period of time and for the Inter Greek Council I sat on the judiciary board which governed the actions of all Greeks, you know, culture, social, even business Greeks, this was the full gamut of Greeks and that summed it up. I never really held a position in a Black shindig or the penthouse.
Q Okay. What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?

Resp I decided to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi because I observed them for a while. I mean I was kind of exposed to fraternal organizations in high school. So I got a chance to actually observe them for a number of years before I actually approached Kappa. I had some friends from New York that actually pledged before me. I also had some friends that attempted to become members of Greek organizations that didn’t so there was the positive and the negative side of I guess seeking membership. But I sought that a membership in those organizations because they had a strong tie to the community as well as to some memberships and they viewed their memberships as lifelong commitments was very attractive to me and just the way they carried themselves and the way they acted toward one another. It was impressive. Then I guess coupled with going to a highly competitive university and then being able to get a chance to become I guess a part of a chapter that was away from the city is where I viewed them would put us in the atmosphere that actually I think that bonds and ties with the university would even grow even further.

Q How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your spiritual and intellectual growth?

Resp That’s a good question. Spiritually I think that I would have to point to I guess, are you saying as a new entrant or just in general through the years?

Q In general, you can speak of both.

Resp Okay. I guess from I had a spiritual upbringing so I mean I had a good foundation, but also during the early years of Kappa even during the pledge program we were, we attended church and a member of Binghamton Alumni, which was the alumni chapter that was in the area of the university as well as have the jurisdiction over the undergraduate chapter had a beacon. It was very active in one of the local Baptist churches I believe and we used to go to the service on
Sunday mornings as well as I guess attended an event or two of the church. So it gave me a chance to observe people which were the people that I was pledging with that come from a diverse background spiritually and as well as we didn’t know each other well because we were just meeting one another to see them in not only an involvement that was spiritual but because one of my line brothers was Muslim, another one was I think on the borderline wasn’t sure exactly what he believed as well as the rest of us who had varying different ideas and commitments to faith at the time to see us participating and growing and getting to know each other not only as people but as students, but also as people of varying faiths. Looking back at it I think that it also teaches you a lot about growth because you see a lot of people that you’ve built relationships with them grow and they grow not only in maturity and knowledge over the different careers that they might have chosen, but also I see that they’ve grown in their beliefs as far as faith as well.

Q What about intellectual growth?

Resp Intellectual growth as well, I mean I think that you might have took that in too at the time because that was a broad definition under maturity but it’s also intellectual growth because I think that as the years went on at Binghamton you could just see the intellectual growth grow whereas I think that as students we were going through the motions but then as students you also see I think turns at different points where we became serious students where it wasn’t a matter of getting through it but how, you know, what you’re going to take with you and also you know, how not only what you’re going to take with you but taking as much with you because you’re going to need because as culture you’ve got to live in that environment and to see the college as what it is which is an environment that is kind of like set aside from the challenges of real life environment because where you might think that things are a problem but actually you realize after you leave college that it’s an environment that really is set aside from a lot of the different challenges that you’re going to be facing later on.
Q: How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your professional development?

Resp: It influenced my professional development in a way that I think allowed me to deal with multiple varying personalities. Being able to deal with people who, cause I mean you might hold offices in a chapter or an organization, but yet everybody in a fraternity and I think that is one of the biggest benefits is equal, you’re sitting at pretty much a round table and there are people that have a stronger strength than others but yet whether you have a lot of strength in certain areas you still have to influence everybody at the table because at the end although there’s a vote and you can actually have some of the strong people be pulled into other directions if they don’t develop themselves with influencing skills, develop themselves in negotiation skills amongst the people that sit at the table which are their peers. So I think that dealing with people and dealing with multiple personalities, and seeing how they play out with being able to get people to understand one is your ideas and how you feel about certain things. Being able to listen and follow as well as develop your own leadership skills, so therefore you can respect the position and opinions of others and being able to come to a reasonable I guess decision on your own and then being able to influence others, maybe feel like your decision is strong, or your position is strong. So I think that that I felt was a valuable experience and tool to bring into the professional arena because when you go into a company you have to, you don’t choose the people you work with but you have to work with them and you’re responsible for yourself.

Q: How was being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi open doors for you that you may not have had access to?

Resp: I’m not sure because well you know we both know that over the years in Kappa have been kind of on and off as we say a lot of the networking parts of it because your undergraduate years you can count them as the graduate years but I would have to say that in the work environment I haven’t run into that many Greeks as well as Kappas but I think that it still because of the close knit and interworking
of the social environment and also the community service type of environment it still allowed you to develop a honed people skills that you still take back with you to work. I mean I had I guess what you could a unique environment, a unique opportunity because I did have one of the chapter brothers at a period of time work with me in a professional environment, but we never really reported directly into the same reporting line so therefore you could say that one didn’t have a direct influence over the other but because we were from the same area we were able to help one another out because you have people to bound ideas off of and develop objectives and things of that nature and that was helpful.

Q  What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity has done for you?

Resp  The most important thing, I think that Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity definitely has, I’ve built some very close bonds and have some very good friends that we have a unique chapter where we built relationships that are long lasting and I think they’re true, and I think we learned how to not only do the rah rah and pat each other on the back thing but also be able to have earnest and respectable conversations with each other when issues sometimes are not as agreed upon across the board and I think that over the years we’ve learned to respect that amongst each other and we also I think we’ve grown to rely on each other’s advice and opinions whether or not we agree upon them all the time as well as I think that the friendships and the bonds that we’ve learned, I mean that we’ve toned over the years have not only shown a light to the people that came behind us as far as how they go about approaching building their own relationships because they see how they have built it can withstand time but also it leave you with a feeling that even though we are individuals and we do have personalities, and we do have our idiosyncrasies we actually truly enjoy each other’s company.

Q  What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity have on the community while you were in college?
I think that we had a good and strong impact on the community and I think that it was based on not only our desire to and a commit to God right which was a community based activities as well as mentoring of the youth in the area as well as we also I guess enveloped into that the community awareness as far as bringing the better awareness of health issues, of safety issues, of sometimes political issues and controversial issues to the student body, but that was cause our community is not only the university in which the campus is on but we also were very active in the community as far as the Binghamton area. I think that the Binghamton alumni area helped balance, the alumni chapter helped us balance that because we had the alumni brother who was the head of the Urban League, we had alumni brothers who were involved in the church and through the church they were involved in the same voice and other community enhancement type of initiatives as well as a lot of them were more involved in the community based initiatives through their job which was Finger Lakes and IBM they kept us when we go to create what our guideline initiatives going to be for the year balanced with on campus as well as community outreach type of activities. I think that I really kind of was impressed with that because it allowed us to have to take our activities and physically take ourselves off campus and downtown into the Binghamton area to seek out the best way to make an impact.

What contribution did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity make to the larger society during the last 30 years?

So you’re not talking about Binghamton, you’re talking about a fraternity organization in general?

Yes.

I think that one is that it definitely gives an atmosphere to not only, well definitely to college age kids to one is to pull them together to not only do community based things but also it gives them I think a trophy environment competition amongst not only amongst other fraternities which are their peers but also within a chapter to hold leadership positions. I think that Kappa itself has a good leadership type
of focus where they bring people together for leadership conferences every year and whereas you might take them for granted in the beginning and you look at them as an opportunity for social things, but if you actually look at when you’re sitting in the meetings across the board and you have people that are coming from colleges through New York State, throughout the state of New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and New Jersey all in the same province and then if you look at also some of the minds and ideas that are coming out them and the different community service related things that different chapters are doing and if you look at the I guess the academic and mental prowess in the room you have the majority of the tools that are coming out of those areas that are actually, and the things that they are involved in not only on their local levels but they get involved in on the provincial and the national level it’s kind of impressive. It’s something that I think if it’s focused and used right could be a good tool to pull not only ideas but you could pull resources and in some cases even financial backing to these ideas.

Q Okay. Final question, how do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?

Resp I think the outside world there’s a number of different ways they view them. I think that you have a large portion that actually sees them for they’re very, very involved in their community cause I think that Kappa is good for outreach. I mean my opinion and observation of Kappa is actually one that gets involved in Harlem week and get involved in different activities in Brooklyn and get involved in the school system and different partisans like that as well as I think that the brothers that I observed on a large scale carry themselves very well and even though we are a social organization that I think that the impression that we leave when we do get involved in those events does not leave you with a party or a playful type of afterthought when they leave. I think they leave a good impression and a good impact on the organizations and the groups that they get involved in. I think that you might find that there are of course (20:48 inaudible) of paternal life and this is with Kappa and any fraternal organization, especially in
the environment that we’re in now that there are groups of the community that might look at them down because of the over I think I would say it’s not exaggerated but it’s definitely because of the media, it is in your face with the hazing events and the dangers that fraternities have been involved in. I think that in a lot of circles, especially the high school circles, that they may view Kappa as very positive because of the I guess the opportunities, the scholarships, and the opportunity for mentoring and the Kappa leaders and the different things that Kappa definitely does for each, and to people that have not maybe had the opportunity to see what college life is about. I mean I think that it’s hard to say how Kappa is viewed because it is a vast and wide reaching but I think that overall it’s viewed positively because not only do you see the undergraduates but you also see that because we have so many alumni chapters and all of them offer every competitor amongst themselves as well as other Greeks that they get involved in different community service things and I think that also that from a standpoint of how I guess I view or for the majority of my experiences that Kappa men do carry themselves in public very well, and yeah we did have a good time and we partied but usually that environment is tossed aside and not how the public views them at large. So I would say that at large it’s a very positive view that they have on fraternities, but we definitely have to very concerned because of hazing aspect of it that it doesn’t overshadow all the positiveness that the organizations do.

Q Okay, and that was the last question, thank you very much, I’m going to stop recording now.

Respondent: S86

Q What organizations did you hold membership while in college?

Resp Kappa Alpa Psi Fraternity Incorporated.

Q Were you a part of any other organizations on campus?
Resp No. Student government finance committee, Black Student Union, I was a part of those organizations. They’re not really organizations except for the Black Student Union.

Q Okay. What leadership positions did you hold on campus or within the fraternity?

Resp Within the fraternity I was Guide Right director, I was the Dean of Pledgees, and Assistant Dean of Pledgees during my undergraduate career.

Q Did you hold any positions at any of the other organizations on campus?

Resp The finance committee I was co-chair.

Q What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated?

Resp Basically due to the relationships that I established during my first semester on campus, but I had an understanding of like Greek fraternity because my sister’s boyfriend at the time was a member of Omega Psi Phi, so I had a little understanding and then when I got to know some of the older members of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity our personalities were more alike than the ones that were from Omega Psi Phi.

Q How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your spiritual and intellectual growth?

Resp Well my intellectual growth during my freshman year I had a son and I left school after my freshman year. But my desire to get back was linked to being with my older fraternity members and my new fraternity members. To this day my mother says that if it was for Kappa Alpha Psi I would have never went back to school because I was determined to get back to be with my friends, my true, true friends that we’ve been through hardships with and fun times. So that influenced me to actually go back to school and then being with a group of young me and myself that strive for academic performance, you had no choice but to get your act
together if it wasn’t for school because they were as harsh as you as big brothers as they were your peers.

Q  How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your professional development?

Resp  Well when I first came out of school some of my older brothers took me under their wings and actually groomed me. It’s kind of like apprenticeship where they brought me to the store to buy my first suit, my first tie, mock interviews and guide me through that process, and in the same token I’ve guided many of the younger brothers who have processed as well. Many of us in the fraternity first time I guess first generation that made it into college so we didn’t have that backbone and that network so we learned from others mistakes, from others shortcomings when they left school so that helped mold me and it also helped me realize that we don’t have that foundation that others may have as far as establishing that type of mentorship.

Q  How has being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity opened doors for you that you may not have had access to?

Resp  Just by association and networking brothers of all different academia, all different professions have given me insight on how to navigate throughout life’s hurdles. For instance, when I first had my son and I was thinking about leaving school there was an older brother who told me and pulled me aside and gave me an example of a brother who had numerous children that finished school. Also being a member has opened doors to brothers who have climbed that corporate ladder and who have actually navigated through the bumps and the bruises who actually helped and guided me. There’s been a number of times where brothers have given me leads for job offerings and I have done the same. Just simple networking has established and opened doors professionally and in my private life also, dealing with mortgages, looking for a house, side businesses. The network just opened up doors that you would think that you would have ceilings on. So it just gives you an expansive network and library and resources in which you can go to.
Q: What has been the most important thing that Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity has done for you?

Resp: Wow, if I had to single it out, I have to think about that one because Kappa Alpha Psi has just been so beneficial for me personally. I think the most important thing is the sense of unity and the, it’s like a family, what I describe is mostly all my friends are my fraternity members. I would say 90%, 95% it’s the loyalty and the bonding and the common goal that we have to always achieve. It’s nice when you’re doing well but it’s also when you’re doing bad to have that network to say hey get yourself together. Not only that, but to give you a game plan and say hey what are you doing, you need to be doing this, this, this, and that and that’s happened for me in my undergraduate career, and also post graduate. I think that’s the most important thing is knowing that you have a network besides your family which my fraternity is parallel to my family. So to me that’s the most important thing to have a family that’s behind you, you may not communicate every day, but I know that I can call on certain, a good amount of my fraternity brothers and they will be at my side in a second. So I think that’s probably one of the most important things to me.

Q: What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity have on the community while you were in college?

Resp: Well I think one of the most important things that we established in the field of academia is that we showed that we could achieve academically. Previously I think the lines that pledged before us in pre ‘86 they were there but I don’t know if they were achieving the academic and graduation rate that followed after spring ’86. We’ve had such a high successful graduation rate and brothers going to get their Master’s Degrees and beyond I think it has had a positive influence on the campus to see that there are people of color who not only maintain what their fraternity principles say, but they also achieve an academic excellence while also holding strong political positions. At one point we were president of BSU, president of the Student Greek Council, Finance Committee, I mean and it
transcends down to some of the younger brothers to this day as an organization. I think also on the professional level we participated in Big Brother, Big Sister in the area of Binghamton where their socio economic standards were pretty low for people of color, and a large mixed race so showing kids that hey there are people who are young who care about them who are achieving and who are not like the norm from their community, but cares about life outside of that community. So I think Kappa Alpha Psi has grown to show that we are a positive force on the campus and outside the campus around the community.

Q What contributions did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity make to the larger society during the last 30 years?

Resp Well I can speak of recently, we’ve teamed up with a lot of organizations to look at people of color who have prostate cancer, we have drives for that. We have Kappa League where we take in a youth in the community under our wing and do social academic programs. I think we’re on the national front we do have members that are in the political spotlight. So (9:49 inaudible) we’ve added a lot of social agendas and political actions to link ourselves with society and Kappa Alpha Psi is a force like that.

Q Final question, how do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?

Resp I think that we had negative press due to hazing, not specifically Kappa Alpha Psi but Black fraternities as a whole and mostly recently the flood (10:31 inaudible). So a good society name is as good as the last image that they have. They may view Kappa Alpha Psi a Black fraternity as a whole as a fraternity that is in some type of turmoil but I also think that in the New York City metropolitan area the Brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi in all the boroughs are really making a positive gain especially In low socio economic areas. So I think it’s also nationally it may not be held in regard due to recent activity but I think on a local and by city I think that it’s held in a positive light. Even to this day when people see that I have (11:33 inaudible) they may be a white or Black guy, oh I remember Kappa Alpha
Psi and it will surprise me like to the day I die and it wasn’t a negative influence or impact, it was actually a positive impact. So I think it depends on the time it was going on and how they view us overall.

**Respondent: S87**

**Q** What organizations did you hold membership while in college?

**Resp** Let’s see I was treasurer of the Caribbean Student Association, at one point I was a subcommittee member for Black Student Association as well, and a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated.

**Q** Okay. What leadership positions did you hold on campus or within the fraternity?

**Resp** Secretary, treasurer and at one point president, I’m sorry, (:55 inaudible)

**Q** For the fraternity.

**Resp** Hmm mm.

**Q** Okay. What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?

**Resp** Just for the professionalism and the first experience on campus, being African American on the campus, you know, population was limited and I had a chance to see how professionally they ran their operation, you know, honestly the first event was a fashion show and I was a part of that fashion show and I was able to witness behind the scenes and also just the camaraderie with the fraternity and the friendships that I saw, the genuine friendships that I saw between the fraternal brothers and the outreach they did in the community with the Big Brother, Big Sister program and I think it was Vestal at the time.

**Q** How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your spiritual and intellectual growth?
Resp  Well members, you know, a lot of the members were about family, they keep in
good contact with their families, they shared stories about their families, their
families careers and speaking to a lot of older brothers they were very eager to
talk about their families and their involvement with their families, what they did
with their families. So everyone focused pretty much on family, when I pledged I
was introduced to a lot of family members which showed me that you know, from
the first and foremost that family was important. Also a lot of the fraternity
members were spiritual, talked about church, you know, believed in the Lord in a
sense and pretty much even though everyone strayed away in college at a certain
point in time when you talked to people one-on-one, you know, everything came
back to spirituality on an individual basis and how it pertained to the family as
well.

Q  How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your professional development?

Resp  Well the focus of achievement and every brother, you know, from the beginning
held high standards, you know, their grade point average. There was aspirations
about post graduate, what were you going to do after college and a lot of people
talked about, especially fraternity members talked about building their careers and
going beyond just with a Bachelor’s Degree and pursuing other post graduate
degrees. Even from a professional standpoint the way that they conducted their
meetings, their finances, you know, they hosted workshops on campus. A lot of
those things it impacted me and the fraternity focused on achievement and that’s
something that I want to aspire to do. There weren’t too many fraternal
organizations on the campus that really focused on achievement and all aspects,
all endeavors whether it be again, family, careers, and just the way that we ran the
organization all on campus and it integrated with the campus community it made
me aspire to do better things beyond just the undergraduate level. A lot of the
outreach we did was in the community as well. We did a lot of community
service working with Big Brother, Big Sister and just to see how people looked up
to the fraternity and looked to the fraternity for guidance, financial guidance,
trying to conduct themselves in a manner to pursue their academic careers and
consistently stay there. At one time the retention for African American males was very low. I graduated in 1990 and I think in my graduating class I could only count maybe 10 people, and honestly a lot of them were either actually with the fraternity or were friends of Kappa Alpha Psi, brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi. So with the workshops the way they’re conducted there, you know, fairs on the campus, financially, academically, that pretty much inspired me to kind of follow that lead as well.

Q How was being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi open doors for you that you may not have had access to?

Resp One of my first jobs coming out I actually was part of the CIC Fellowship Program and I found out about that Minority Public Policy Program through my fraternity brothers and at the time I was pursuing an MPA joined (5:35 inaudible) program which I attended the same Minority Fellowship as previous brothers and had the experience of moving on and expose myself and getting exposure from all the professors outside of Binghamton and Albany University, Rockefeller College which is in Albany and at that time I looked forward to pursuing a career with an MPA dual city program to be all set, got accepted to law school but unfortunately the budget was cut and I was actually looking forward to pursuing that career but in the interim I actually was a college advisor and found out through that job the connection was made by one of my fraternity brothers Manny Ramirez. His wife at the time had worked there and it kind of opened the doors to my career in education and I never thought I was going to pursue a job or career in education, I always thought I was going to go back to law school, but now I’m actually 20 years vested here in education as an assistant principal. So I told hold those contacts and connections through the Minority Fellowship Program to brothers and my career in education indirectly through a fellow brother as well and his wife.

Q What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity has done for you?
Resp  It’s actually allowed me to see family outside of my own family. You know, I’ve been very fortunate to have a mother and father and a brother and sister and it’s good to see how family can operate outside of your own family and that comes about from the inspiration of other fraternity brother’s families as well. That’s always drawn me to that, that sense of brotherhood, that sense of camaraderie, the sense of sharing values, the sense of sharing your own personal experiences to help others, and that’s what brothers have done, all the brothers have done for me and I felt like I’ve had to pass that down, you know, my experiences of my personal family I felt obligated to share those experiences and those options I’ve had being in the family unit with other brothers who might not have had brothers and sisters and then needed to know what it was like to have a brother and sister to talk. But you know, one of those highlights is just the brotherhood itself. Also just the diversity, you know, the ethnic diversity, the career diversity, we’ve got brothers who have pursued law degrees, who have gone to the criminal justice system, have held executive positions, have had ownership of their own business and enterprises and just looking at those different career options have kind of drawn me to the attention of those brothers as well.

Q  What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity have on the community while you were in college?

Resp  Oh phenomenal, not just the, I guess entertainment and leisure, and all the extracurricular outside of education, but they really inspired people to socially get involved, you know, one thing that Kappa Alpha Psi took charge of was the apartheid stares and one thing that was big back then was the whole apartheid in South Africa and one of the voices was quite a few members of Kappa Alpha Psi like Alfonso and a couple others who were political science majors who kind of turned me to a lot of political careers outside of the domestic borders and taught me what’s happening across the seas in African and we had the time in Africa as well. So they kind of tuned me into politics. Socially the new Kappa chapter was influential with hosting one of the biggest events which is the fashion show and probably it drew in just about maybe 85 to 90% of the campus community to
attend it and to a large part of the campus population to participate whether it be participants in the fashion show itself, the financial aspect, the leadership aspect, I mean it played a huge part in the social development of a lot of people on that campus and even though a lot of brothers did not pledge, a lot of African American males did not pledge Kappa Alpha Psi they were surrounded by Kappa Alpha Psi, you know they enjoyed the friendships, the camaraderie. The fashion show employed the business of a lot of DJ’s, a lot of vendors, so it did expose people with other opportunities. We had radio personalities who DJ’d the event who went on to become popular radio DJ’s in different cities. We’ve had vendors whether it be through signage and banners that went on to become graphic designers. So you know it really not only influenced the social aspect but it gave individuals an opportunity to aspire into their own businesses and careers from that point as well. So a major influence.

Q What contribution did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity make to the larger society during the last 30 years?

Resp I look at everybody’ individual outputs, I mean we’ve brothers that are in politics, we’ve got brothers that are in education and each individual has touched the lives of their communities, their families, the people in their careers. As I said earlier, a lot of brothers have been reflective reverse background careers and some of them have actually worked with individuals in the community. We have a brother Akeem Jeffries who’s an Assemblyman, we have a number of attorneys that are present as well, a number of educators, those educators have influenced the lives of probably thousands of kids. So when you look at the greater community these brothers have taken what they’ve learned in college and focused on the fraternity model for achievement and used to aspire and use achievement to inspire the only family endeavors and the community endeavors as well.

Q Final question, how do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?
In a global sense I think at first glance there are those communities that benefit directly through the volunteer programs. I know here down in Maryland a lot of the alumni chapters are very influential in the community. They do a number of workshops on career opportunities for the youth, a lot of fraternities down here hold workshops for families for parenting, a lot of fraternity members are involved in mentoring young African American males from every level from elementary to middle and high school levels. So those community people see the massive influential aspect in the society. Of course you have the population of students who are, or people who are in high school or in college that have witnessed the STEP shows on the university campus and that’s been influential in the standpoint of wanting them to go to college. So across the board it’s impacted many people and I think at first glance people definitely see the value that it’s presented in providing opportunities for enhancement in education, community development in health and in medicine, there’s been a number of health fairs that have been sponsored by Kappa Alpha Psi. So there’s a global aspect, Kappa Alpha Psi is also across the world, you know, we have Kappas in Germany, Bahamas and Korea, and in other places across the world and people get a chance to see it first glass that African American males can be professional and I think that’s really important as you’re trying to dispel the myths that the media has falsely portrayed for African American males as well. So we’ve been very influential in urban areas and again people have actually benefits from many of the services that Kappa Alpha Psi has done in those areas as well.

Respondent: S88

Q What organizations did you hold membership while in college?

Resp The Caribbean Student Association, I was on the social committee. That’s about the only one I can remember. Oh I was also part of the, my major was law in society so at one point I was part of that debate, they had like a debate team, a debate club going on.

Q Do you have anything else?
Resp No, actually member like active member that will be actively will be included in the association would be the social committee or social action committee, and the debate team, those are the only two that I was active in.

Q Okay. What leadership positions did you hold on campus or within the fraternity?

Resp I believe at one point I was some kind of like a member, I can date back vice president of the social action social committee and that’s taking it far back. So yeah that’s, vice president or president of something, yeah I can’t remember the exact title but I think it was like that.

Q And what organization was that in?

Resp That was the Caribbean Student Association, that was it.

Q Did you hold positions within the fraternity?

Resp Yes, within the fraternity I was vice president or president, let’s see, strategist, I was everything at one point.

Q Okay. What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?

Resp What made me decide to be a member of Kappa Alpha Psi was basically what I saw the members, the brothers at that time were doing, you know, how they were very active with the other organizations on campus. You know, their leadership was all over in different organizations and I wanted to be part of that being very introverted so I thought it would help me to become active and grow in my leadership. I was really impressed with the brothers at that time and being part of participation with the different organizations. So again I wanted to get on board with that, I wanted to be part of that.

Q How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your spiritual and intellectual growth?
Wow. To be very honest intellectual, it wouldn’t be intellectual or spiritual. I guess I grew up on my own with that. I think to be very honest. Throughout the years I mean just you know brothers and my father, that’s what made me really feel more intellectual. You know and being at the college and getting my Masters and throughout the years I wouldn’t think that to be very honest that this fraternity, did you say influence ...

Yes.

I don’t think it has impacted that and so I think it’s just my wanting to go to college and get my Masters and want to just pursue for my own personal goals. Spiritual would be that because I’m more spiritual this year than any other year that I’ve known myself. So I think it just has to, it doesn’t have anything to do with the fraternity the way I’m growing, you know, professionally, intellectually and spiritually.

How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your professional development?

Honestly I guess, I have to be very honest with you, it was my professional development, it’s me just wanting to again on my own, my own personal development and goals in life. Just wanting to pursue that, pursue my goals and reach a certain point in my life in light of my professional, my educational career and I thought I did.

How was being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi open doors for you that you may not have had access to?

Oh how would being a member open doors ... I don’t think it’s opened any doors. I think that in terms of networking I have done a few networking, you know, making connections with brothers in the field. Other than that, you know, it hasn’t really got me to that point of opening doors. Making the networking and making the connections yeah, but no not at all.
Q What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity has done for you?

Resp Most important thing is just going out into the community and helping the community. You know, you’re going out you have a purpose you go out with the people with like minds like yourself who are really interested in helping the community and helping people in need. So I think that’s the motivational piece right there, you know, just going out and helping your fellow beings and helping to really improve your community, make your community better.

Q What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity have on the community while you were in college?

Resp I think it had a good impact, you know, the fraternity show face in the community, working with the community on campus and the community off campus so I think it did have an impact. Yeah it did have an impact in terms of raising money for this particular cause and you know, other organizations on the campus as well as off the campus, it had a big impact. Are you looking for something detailed Joe.

Q No, no, however you want to answer.

Resp Alright.

Q What contribution did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity make to the larger society during the last 30 years?

Resp What contributions, you’re talking about the fraternity as a whole?

Q Correct.

Resp That one I’m going to have to think about … I think really if you look at that, I really have in mind about achievement so I think with the members achievements and reaching their goals and being at a certain place in their careers at a certain level I think that’s how the fraternity has grown in terms of being a very
profession organization. I think it also for the past 30 years ... this is a hard question really to think about that. Talking about 30 years, since the 80’s ... you’re talking about the 80’s right Joe.

Q The last 30 years ...

Resp Last 30 years in the 80’s ... didn’t pay attention to the history of what was going on but ... that’s a hard one. I think that’s a hard one. I don’t know how to answer that. That’s something that I would definitely have to research, I don’t know, I know that the fraternity had worked with other organizations, you know, recently with donating, you know, making financial contributions to places like, I forgot the name of that place, that hospital, the Children’s Hospital, research for cancer.

Q St. Jude’s.

Resp St. Judes, I mean that’s what I’m thinking about, you know that I’ve learned just recently. I know that they’ve had a couple of, you know, I’ve read about their stand and political lead in the war that we’ve been in, they’ve taken, you know, the fraternity as a whole has taken a stand on that which I read recently, but the thing is I haven’t been following what was going on for the past 30 years. Shame on me for not knowing.

Q Okay. Final question, how do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?

Resp Outside world is not Greek, that’s non Greek.

Q The outside world.

Resp The outside world, as far as I know the outside views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity as they’re not too much about us, you know, the outside world views the fraternity as a whole I mean they just view us as men just coming together and getting ourselves in trouble at some point. This whole thing about some people think negatively about fraternity especially if they don’t know anything about how it runs. I mean the whole purpose of it. I really don’t think they know that much,
they just hear the word fraternity and they, okay they say well it’s some kind of brotherhood, some kind of order, they don’t have a purpose. I’m thinking people when they hear about fraternity in general and some people because of all the things that have been going on in the news about fraternities and that’s where the negativity comes in. People tend to focus more on the negatives, so I don’t think they know and I don’t think we’ll ... I know some fraternities have put themselves out there on the map and they know throughout the years what they’re about, but other fraternities, especially when they get themselves involved in outrageous behaviors and acts then it doesn’t look from the outside world doesn’t become something good, something positive, you know.

Respondent: S96

Q What organizations did you hold membership while in college?

Resp What organization, Black Student Union, Ronald E. McNair Scholarship Program, and also with the ELT as a intern in the summer.

Q What leadership positions did you hold on campus or within the fraternity?

Resp The leadership positions on campus is bringing me way back now. I did do I was treasurer and I think that’s probably about it as far as that kind of role, the rest was more mentoring stuff, a lot of mentorships and tutoring and within the fraternity I can’t even remember really any titles like that. Yeah it was more just getting stuff done.

Q What made you decide to become a member Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated?

Resp It was a very clear decision when I seen that the very few members that were on campus how they handled their self and identified their self and I chose to handle myself in a similar way without being part of the organization already so it just seemed like a good fit.
Q  How did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influence your spiritual and intellectual growth?

Resp  It influenced me greatly. Spiritually it let me know that I wasn’t alone and I had people I could identify with and coming from the inner city of New York and trying to achieve you feel alone at times, so it gave me that bond, that fraternity, you know, that brotherhood of like minded individuals that’s trying to start to be better for themselves as well as their community. Socially it allowed me to take what I was trying to do on an individual level and reach more people and I think that was a good thing as far as like I was saying with the whole mentorship and tutoring and everything, just basically everything that I did I was able to do to the degree being a part of Kappa Alpha Psi opening doors that gave me access to as far as preach and practice what I was doing to be seen in a greater light and influence more individuals to follow the same track.

Q  How has Kappa Alpha Psi influenced your personal development?

Resp  My personal development ...

Q  Or your professional development?

Resp  Oh professionally it has really allowed me to connect with individuals and outside of my field all over the country and even to this day internationally. There is a great network entombed, a good springboard to opening yourself beyond your community to then have more of an effect locally as well as nationally if not internationally.

Q  How has being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity opened doors for you that may not have had access to?

Resp  Including what I’ve said before I would add to that it allowed me access to individuals that I might have not otherwise known about. So it’s knowledge and information about something that might have been right in front of my face but wasn’t aware because I wasn’t able to think that way.
Q  What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity has done for you?

Resp  The most important thing it has done for me is given me a family outside of my blood, brothers that I can really call my brothers and that I can lean on and be leaned on by, it’s given me a greater feel family, the work family as far as how you live your life and the struggles that you go through and family is more than just blood, it’s that common bond.

Q  What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated have on the community while you were in college?

Resp  Oh we had a great impact on the community actually coming out of the moratorium on campus, you know, there wasn’t a lot of Greek activities, so we was actually instrumental, I forgot to mention before, but the (5:46 inaudible) we was very instrumental in what we did was organize a lot of the Greek activities to work together instead of having us stand on the same night and compete for the student body.  We were exemplary at actually working outside of the organization with other organizations on campus and even in the local community so that we would have the support of the student body for everyone’s event and we did that not only on campus and locally in Binghamton but also all up and down the northeast, you know, New York State, like all of the SUNY colleges and all of them from Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse, New Paltz, Cornell, we organized and the brothers was growing and supporting each other at different events and not just social events but important events to help out the community.

Q  What contributions did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity make to the largest society during the last 30 years?

Resp  A lot of contributions, it depends if you’re talking about individuals as part of the organization or as a community as an organization as far as with the youth and the Guide Right Program is I think one of the biggest things is trying to secure a
future our youth. I think that’s probably the most influential because that stretches beyond your generation and beyond the brothers in your college years.

Q Final question, how do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated?

Resp Jokingly I would say with envy, but to be serious I think, I have to choose the right words here, I think we’re held at a high regard where if you dawned the letters you have to feel the pressure to carry yourself in a certain way because you’re representing more than just yourself and you know people look towards you, like they say, people imitate what they value and imitation is the highest form of flattery, and so if people really value what you’re doing and respect you and then you’re acting a fool then it’s going to be more likely leading to them acting a fool. So I think to answer the question is that they hold an organization at a high value and look towards it for leadership.

Respondent: S08

Q What organizations did you hold membership while in college?

Resp Kappa Alpa Psi while at Binghamton University.

Q Did you hold member at any other?

Resp Yes I was also a member of National Family Council Executive Board as well as the Philippine-American League.

Q What leadership positions did you hold on campus other than the fraternity?

Resp On the Philippine-American League I was position was publicity chair and Youth Development Public Relations Organization and things of that nature, marketing of the organization. As well as the National Family Council I was also the Public Relations Chair.

Q And within the fraternity?
And within the fraternity the first year from 2008 to 2009 I was the keeper of records which was an internal position, and from 2009 to 2010 I was the vice president.

Okay. What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi?

I’m familiar with any type of fraternity life before I came to college. I wasn’t too sure about joining any fraternity, I really didn’t have it in mind, however, once I got to Binghamton University I saw a group of young men who were putting work into the campus and really did their job especially in the community and these men were also members of a fraternity Kappa Alpha Psi Incorporated. Doing more research on the organization I started to notice my values were very more closely aligned with the organization as well as what it stood for in philanthropy and things of that nature. So doing more research I realized that that was something that I wanted to pursue cause just being really being heavily influence by it, by seeing these men on campus achieving so much it really helped me to chose to join to achieve membership.

How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your spiritual and intellectual growth?

Spiritual and intellectual however I’ve always considered myself a very spiritual person, however, the fraternity also added to that just being around a lot of other brothers who shared the same values, the same beliefs that I do just made it a lot more stronger. So I would say in that case it’s just being surrounded by a lot of people who share the same beliefs as me, it made my beliefs more stronger. I’m actually a Roman Catholic and I have a few beliefs, well most of my brothers are actually as well Roman Catholic so just sharing those same beliefs as myself and being around those brothers definitely made it stronger. Intellectually it definitely influenced me and forced me to do better than what I’ve been doing, especially intellectually, also striving for a higher level and just seeing all my same brothers reach relative success I know that I could reach myself just kept on pushing me to reach the higher level. So it was also a catalyst to influence me.
Q How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your professional development?

Resp Professionally I believe it helped me the most just coming from meetings and how meetings are conducted a lot of the orders and assuming those meetings and how those flowed, it really makes me, it strengthened my professionalism, just learning things of how to dress professionally, resume building, and just having brothers who are business professionals has definitely helped me strengthen those qualities that I have been looking for. Also in terms of networking, one of my first jobs was actually through fraternity brothers so I believe in that sense that it helped me out in that way just through the networking aspect of the fraternity.

Q How has being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi opened doors for you that you may not have otherwise had access to?

Resp It’s just going off of what I already expressed, the networking aspect of it, the first job I got right out of the school was through a fraternity brother of my own, so it just opened another door, another option for me, especially during a time when it was hard to get a job right out of the school, especially with this economy. So it was really something that saved me as in terms of making money and also for my future for my career goals. So that’s something that completed opened that part, a brand new door for me right out of school.

Q What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi has done for you?

Resp I believe the most important thing is really just mold me into the man that I became today. The brothers that surround me as well as being an undergrad even the direction from all the brothers it really just showed me a level of success I could achieve on my own. So it has really molded me into a better man and becoming a better person to the others around me, just how the way I treat others but the way I see them and just being surrounded by those brothers, to see the love and to grow into my own person.

Q What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity have on the community while you were in college?
While in college we definitely had an impact on the community. Being an undergrad we definitely had time to develop especially being a chapter that just returned to the campus community doing events to help out the family during the winter time as well as joining in U-Turn a national youth program and programs like that. It definitely, especially on the college campus, and outside the Binghamton community definitely I feel like we made an impact just reaching out to college students as well as the community.

Q: What contributions did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity make to the largest society during the last 30 years?

Resp: As a whole organization in the nation?

Q: Right.

Resp: That I’m actually not so sure of.

Q: How do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?

Resp: I feel like there’s a lot of mixed feelings on fraternity life. A lot of people that are not used to it, I feel like there are a lot of people that are really educated on fraternity life. Just sometimes might not see it in a good light, they just think of it as people just trying to find friends or people just trying to hate or pledge to each other but I feel like a lot of college students who see the work put in on campus and who come from schools who have a lot of fraternities and see all the work that they do, especially in the community, I feel like they hold a better view of fraternity life. They see it as why we do it in the first place is for the community and to give back to the college campus.

Respondent: S09

Q: What organizations did you hold membership while in college?

Resp: While attending Binghamton University which started the fall of 2007 until May 2011 I was part of the Caribbean Student Association, I was part of the Men of
Color Scholastics Society and I was also part of Bert Mitchell Minority Management Organization, it’s a pre-professional business organization for minorities, for Blacks and Latinos. Part of this time I was also heavily involved in many of the organizations but those are the ones that I particularly sat on the board for, and heavily involved in and of course Kappa Alpha Psi.

Q What leadership positions did you hold on campus or within the fraternity?

Resp Within the fraternity the first academic school year after I crossed the full academic school year would be the 2010-2011 school year, I was keeper of records at the school we call secretary and the new chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi. The Centennial year of 2010 through 2011 I was the pro mark what we call the president at the new chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi. It was also the same academic year that we won chapter of the year for the university. I was also a membership coordinator 2011-2012. On the outside of the fraternity I held two different positions in the Caribbean Student Association, I was the political coordinator and I was also the activities coordinator. The role of the political coordinator was responsible for bringing speakers such as well known author and educator from Cornell University to the school and also as activities coordinator hosting some of the mainstream events that the university doesn’t have any more, but they once had was a carnival which at the time was the largest student run concert in all of northeast schools. That was something I organized and I was also the chair for Medical and (2:24 inaudible) Society. That was an organization where we dealt with workshops and different forms of writing most to assist Black and Latino males on campus with their writing, professional dress, to finding appropriate housing off campus. I was also the leader of the National Association of Black Accountants.

Q Okay. What made you decide to become a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?

Resp Coming into the university both of my family members of the West Indies, my two other siblings went to St. John’s but I wasn’t really too well versed in Greek
prior to coming to university. I was kind of cared about STEP and things of that
nature. Getting to the university I immediate got involved with CSA and anyone
who knows me knows I’m not real big on Jamaican culture and as soon as I went
to the first meeting and heard about carnival, well actually I knew about carnival
before I got to the university and knew it was something I wanted to be part of. I
think what really turned me to the fraternity was why (3:44 inaudible) in spring of
2008 a lot of my older friends, you know some of the guys who took me under
their wing when I first got to university in September 2007 until the spring of
2008 these are brothers when they crossed I started to really look into it because
these are friends of mine and guys like mine. I think they really came to the front
(4:16 inaudible) I tried to make myself a leader as quickly as possible on campus
and you know as I started to study Kappa more but when I saw the chapter first
off I saw leaders, I saw my friends who were leaders and I saw older brothers,
alumni brothers who were leaders. Then as my time as an entrant went on I
started to speak to older brothers who graduated from university, you know, 10,
some even 20 years before me, then I really started to see the strong networking
and professionalism aspect of brothers who graduated and wanted to have great
careers in a variety of areas. You know, just to be all like minded individuals,
you know I looked up who the fraternity was, the older brothers, and it felt like
the fraternity accomplished everything that I had already tried to accomplish
myself and wanted to gain and a combination of those things just pulled me
together by spring I was a full blow entrant to the fraternity.

Q How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your spiritual and intellectual
growth?

Resp Well it’s you know, let’s start off by saying Kappa Alpha Psi does not
discriminate by rate, religion, creed or anything like that, but in a sense had a
awesome strong Christian roots to Kappa. I myself am Christian and some of the
things we do right before in their chapter meetings you know as well as saying
prayers, saying things in Proverbs and different things that prayer involves. But
bigger than this was the typical religious aspect, spiritually I mean it was the
focus that was spiritual, you know, unfortunately there was a tragedy amongst the brother and his family or something like that, the way we come together there’s that spiritual connection there. My grandmother passed away two weeks ago, you know, I kind of became the (6:23 inaudible) I didn’t really want to speak to anyone, I didn’t have a choice because I could stop receiving calls from brothers making sure I was alright, making sure I was good which uplifted my spiritual feeling. Not even just in times of tragedy just in times of share. I’m going to go to New York City this weekend to see some of the brothers for an annual stroll event that takes place in Manhattan and that’s going to be a great spiritual uplifting. We’re going to get together and have a good time. So spiritually yeah just like I said, you know, especially with my line brothers spring 2008 which most of them I was friends with before and spring 2010 because a lot of us came on campus at the same time we’re bigger than the members of a fraternity we’re legit brothers and you know, the constant communication with each other and things like that, so it’s spiritual uplift overall, bigger than a religious aspect. Intellectually the standard, the accountability, not to say prior to my sophomore year I didn’t have a level of accountability for my academics, but the fact that for starters in order to keep your active membership while an undergraduate you have to have a certain GPA. We have to have a 2.8, the national requirement is 2.5. So that alone puts more academic pressure on you, you know. As an undergraduate student from my upper classman years, my junior year, and my senior year of college our graduation rate getting college done in four years or graduating in two years it’s very strong in the Kappa chapter, that puts more academic pressure on you and sets the bar of achievement higher. Your achievement is (8:15 inaudible) and then not for nothing but coming back to the spiritual having older brothers constantly checking on you asking how’s class going, how are your grades doing, pushing you those two years after I crossed throughout college. There’s so much more accountability and it’s direct cause it even comes from your peers, it can come from any of the brothers checking to see how you’re doing in classes. Accountability is just really increased, it no longer comes from my mom or my sister back home, I had brothers right there on campus who were no more than a
phone call away always inquiring about my academic achievement. So intellectually as an academic undergraduate student it definitely increased being a member of a fraternity.

Q  How has Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity influenced your professional development?

Resp (9:19 inaudible) analyst for JP Morgan. I received through a brother of the Alpha Epsilon Chapter at Sampson CCS University down in North Carolina who is a vice president at the company as well. He had told me about the opening and I applied directly to him and you know went through the normal company process from there but I was actually referred by him. Professionally I mean coming into the fraternity at a young age I began to grow in college professionally as a member of the fraternity. So for starters we have a chapter where we come in business attire to our chapter meetings. Prior to joining the fraternity I can’t count the amount of times I dressed up for college, unless I dressed up I’m referring to professional business attire, shoes, shirt, tie, blazer, slacks of that nature. Only in the fraternity I would say I was in business attire pretty much once a week if not more, you know, host a program or whatever you were doing. Not for nothing, I mean as far as going to workshops and things like that, just that alone made me have to increase my business wardrobe, now I had more of a reason to dress up. That if nothing else automatically builds your professionalism, dressing professionally. Now having this network of alumni brothers who are involved in various endeavors from medicine, from the sciences, for business, for law increased my professionalism. Hosting forums increased my professionalism. Summer of 2009 I represented the chapter as undergraduate delegate in Washington, D.C. amongst other alumni and undergraduate chapter delegates increased my professionalism. Hosting forums, you know, we have two weeks, we have one week a semester and one in the fall, one in the spring, we host various forums and events saw this message, doing these things and getting in front of my peers and speaking on educated formulated topics increased my professionalism, and I mean the list can go on and on. But the college image I feel like the fraternity and more so my chapter kind of demanded of myself and
other brothers naturally just took our professionalism to new heights overall because it was just the way we handled business, it was the way we did things, it was the way we walked around campus when it was time to conduct business, you know, not to say we were different from other college students and didn’t party, we’re the best partiers in Binghamton, ask anybody. Like people in Binghamton knew when NK was handling business. It was a Friday afternoon when you saw about six brothers walking in the union suited up, oh we have a chapter meeting today, you know they mean business. It’s not typical to see six Black and Latino males at Binghamton University all in suits and six of them walking together at the same time, taking care of business, speaking to everyone from the Dean of Students, peers, to professionals, you know, to be able to approach people in such high up places at 19, 20 years old increased our professionalism and then do it properly on top of that.

Q How was being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi open doors for you that you may not have had access to?

Resp I think that goes back to my last question, I mean my last response, where I mentioned my current position, I was assisted by a brother on mine from another fraternity, so you know, possibly my job hunt could have taken more time or maybe more effort without having a network that I was able to reach out to which was effective. The biggest thing so much, to me opportunity to so many programs especially as an undergrad that I would get e-mails about and I would hear about that older brothers, my aces were 3 years older than me, when I say ace I’m talking about the service person on my line, the first person (13:52 inaudible) and he’s the same age and he’s in the same financial sector field and he was able to pretty much advice me like a direct academic mentor throughout my college career (14:06 inaudible) internship, take this class in the fall, take that class in the spring, no don’t take that professor I think you need to take this professor, hands on, I didn’t have to go to academic advising and wait an hour to see someone for five minutes. I call my line brother who did it all three years ago and told me exactly what I needed to do each semester, he told me exactly where I needed to
apply to. There many other opportunities, even traveling wise I feel like sometimes being in fraternity traveling definitely increased. One to support other brothers, other chapters, taking trips from Binghamton down to Baltimore, Maryland to support Alpha Omega chapter or going to Conclave here in DC, going to Indiana, STEP shows, going down to Atlanta and things of that nature, you know, maybe these weren’t things I would have done prior or without the fraternity as much traveling as I’ve done since I’ve been a member of the fraternity. I was also saying being a member of a fraternity linked me to a variety of people that I might not have known without the fraternity. Since moving to Delaware for my position often times at alumni meeting, Wilmington alumni, or you can go to (15:24 inaudible) alumni chapter meeting I’ll meet a brother and I’ll get invited to a particular event, whatever the case may be, you know, might not have been able to meet him or have such a good relationship with him without really knowing him from anywhere without the fraternity. I mean I don’t think it’s any (15:40 inaudible) when brothers say that you know when you meet a brother, you know, all be it well you’re coming from a good chapter I hope but when you meet a brother I mean automatically you’re embraced right away, right away, and you know since I left the New York City area I’ve met a variety of brothers in the Delaware, Philadelphia area who embraced me and invited me out to very nice events right away. This past weekend I was in Ocean City at a brothers beach house, just met him at the alumni chapter. You know, things like this I feel like all took place through the fraternity, expanding this profession and also social network.

Q What has been the most important thing Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity has done for you?

Resp Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity the most important thing it has done for me hands down it has made achievement a way of life for me. Not something I would like to do, not something I occasionally do, but a way of life. A way that I live my life day to day, we have to (16:54 inaudible) set the marker where achievement for us is not a buzz word, it’s actually who we truly are, it’s not a word that we throw
around, oh I might achieve tomorrow but I might slack off the day after. No it’s how we do things. Since I joined Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity in 2009 achievement is this word we call the core principle of a fraternity as it’s meant so much more to me and accountability, it’s everything I do I feel more empowered and also in a positive sense more pressured to do well in it whether it’s my work, whether it’s something social, whether it’s stress, whether it’s my appearance in public, I just feel like in many different aspects of life I’ve just been inspired to achieve and not do well but excel at what I’m doing. You know, whether it was excelling amongst my peers and undergraduates and now excelling with my team in the workplace, whatever the situation may be. Just I feel like hands down the number one thing in this is bigger drive and push to excel and achieve at whatever I’m doing which goes hand in hand with our cardinal principles.

Q What impact did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity have on the community while you were in college?

Resp Now when you say community are you referring to campus community or your city or both?

Q The bigger community, Binghamton, both the campus and the surrounding community.

Resp As far as from a university aspect Binghamton University is what’s called a PWI, predominantly white institution. For starters socially the new Kappa Alpha Psi enhanced the social life of not only Black and Latino students, but all students at Binghamton University with our social programs that we did. Educationally we had library hours on Sundays for students which was good for students to come in on Sundays and study as a group, particularly targeting the minorities cause you know we sometimes we’re unseen in the library like that. But having programs like that, having our educational forums pushed for education and advocates education on our campus. I feel that I went to school with students who said they appreciated having my chapter on campus, who said that they naturally felt like the new Kappa chapter made their college experience more enjoyable and then
that same thing from a party we had, to a forum we had, maybe even just the way the group of were and what we were on campus, always supporting, I mean we went to anything, one thing that our chapter (20:11 inaudible) when I was undergraduate always (20:12 inaudible) every single member of the chapter had to be a member of an essay, that’s a senior assembly chartered organization at the same time, and which we all were whether that was the last two months of the 2008-2009 semester what I just crossed, 2009-2010, or 2010-2011, every brother, every brother was not only a Kappa but, and I’m not just saying these are general members either, sat on the board of an essay org. So we went to any meeting for essay Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday and it was an MK brother sitting in the room on the board any day of the week. So I’m saying we was always around even if you weren’t doing an MK visit or wasn’t an MK event we were always around, we were always seen, always helping in other (21:12 inaudible), you know, giving back to the bigger picture. (21:17 inaudible) themselves always jumping on different things going on on campus. One of our most unique programs Adopt A Family, every year around Christmas time we would basically fund the Christmas of a needy family, typically be a minority family, usually a single mother who’s struggling to make ends meet, you know, we’d work with the middle schools and high schools in the Binghamton area to get a family recommended to us and we would fund their Christmas, and I mean just the joy of seeing the kids’ faces was rewarding in itself. Mothers against drunk driving events, went to Binghamton High School working with a brother, we used to get an educational opportunity program director at the university working with him with his mentorship program in the area. The New York State Mental Health Society forum meetings which all the brothers from the MK chapter would go to both years that I was an active member undergraduate. I mean for Binghamton University and Binghamton as a city I think with especially seven or eight of us that I was there the two years that I was undergraduate we had a large impact, we definitely had a large impact. Seven and eight Black and Latino males from the city came to Binghamton and left with a sound impact, definitely.
Q  What contribution did Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity make to the larger society during the last 30 years?

Resp  You could start with notable brothers who have gone on to do major things and become mayors of large cities like Los Angeles, like Washington, D.C., won some controversial law cases and legal history, Brother Johnny Cochran, sports, large athletic achievement, I mean and this is just on a grander scale. Possibly a smaller scale if not for nothing Kappa Alpha Psi with the brothers that were involved in the organization helped to increase Black and Latino male graduation rates in the United States which we know is not the strongest statistic out that through Undergraduate Leadership Institute which is a nationally run program and other things demanded of the fraternity. I mean if you come into the fraternity it’s a standard to get in and it’s a standard to maintain. I think that’s what separates Kappa from a lot of other MPA or BGLO fraternities and their fraternities also, the fact that the standard never ends. The standard to enter the fraternity it’s there to maintain. If you hold Black and Latino males accountable to the standard while they’re in college you will naturally see a correlation to graduation rates, and that’s what they did for society on a whole bigger than any of the individual achievements of any of the brothers of the Kappa Alpha Psi.

Q  Okay. Final question, how do you think the outside world views Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity?

Resp  I think it really depends on what you know about the fraternity honestly, how much knowledge you’ve been exposed to. Some might know us for STEP, some might know us for (25:12 inaudible), some might think Kappa Alpha Psi is this large hazing organization, some might say we’re pretty boys, some may see we’re well dressed, some in the college setting they may say oh they know the girls. Maybe if you’re more familiar with alumni they say oh they do good work in the community, they have great events. It really depends on how much the person knows about the fraternity. Overall, especially coming off of the centennial year 2011 one thing that can be taken away from Kappa Alpha Psi no manner what
stereotypes are attached to it or what you know of the history and the legacy. The fact that this is something that’s a century standing, this is 100 years in standing. The only MK fraternity founded at a predominantly white institution, founded by middle class Black Americans starting in the Midwest in a time like 1911, this was the post Civil War era, you know, the heart of the segregation era, in the Midwest to branch out and have all these major alumni chapters throughout the nation and have all these undergraduate chapters throughout the nation and internationally involved with that. So if you don’t know nothing else about Kappa Alpha Psi, let them at least acknowledge the fact that there is a level of history, there is a level of legacy that comes with the fraternity, and most people I feel know our key phrase “achievement”, so if you know nothing else you know history and achievement, that’s what we’re about.
## Appendix E

### Kappa Rho Colony / Mu Kappa Charter Members

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