



EDUCATING FUTURE LEADERS IN FRATERNITIES: OUTCOMES FROM PARTICIPATION IN A NATIONAL FRATERNITY EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM

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Campus engagement opportunities such as leadership development have potential for students to strengthen their personal skills. As such, fraternities and sororities can play an influential role in strengthening students' leadership skills. The present study examines the efficacy of a fraternity emerging leaders program, which is an educational opportunity focused on the development of new leaders. Data were collected from participants at three time intervals. Findings suggest students develop across several leadership domains, creating a stronger appreciation of their organizational values and fraternity ritual compared to non-participants. Recommendations for practice are included to address the transfer problem of leadership application and provide future directions for emerging leader program development.

Among the many engagement opportunities that exist on college and university campuses are fraternity/sorority-affiliated organizations, which are prominent organizations on many campuses and have historical ties back to the earliest days of colleges and universities in the United States (Horowitz, 1987). Fraternity/sorority-affiliated organizations place social connection and engagement central to the membership experience. Therefore, they provide means for creating enriching student involvement opportunities. Sororities and fraternities are isolated from Title IX legislation because of their adherence as single-gender organizations, which can concurrently provide for gender empowerment and spaces for furthering gender stereotypes and sexism (Sasso et al., 2020a; 2020b). Despite these potential challenges related to identity dynamics, which are stratified by race, gender, religion, and often social class, sororities and fraternities are grounded in values of brotherhood/sisterhood, philanthropy or service, academic excellence, and leadership practice, which can create a positive influence on leadership development (Bureau et al., 2021).

The role of fraternities on college campuses is widely debated, and perceptions of their purposes and practices vary greatly (Sasso, 2015). Issues of substance misuse, hazing, and other sophomoric behaviors featured in media headlines provide face validity to continued perceptions that fraternities are no more than speakeasies (Sasso, 2015; Sasso et al., 2022). These claims are also backed by research, which notes that fraternity members are more likely to engage in binge drinking, increase the frequency of substance misuse, increase patriarchal and misogyny-

nistic perspectives, and are less open to diversity (Sasso et al., 2022). Fraternity men are also campus purveyors of sexual violence and transmit forms of hegemonic or *toxic* masculinity (McCready & Radimer, 2020).

Despite these research outcomes and public perceptions, fraternities have yet to falter and are enduring campus social institutions (Sasso et al., 2020a; 2020b). Fraternity membership is positively associated with stronger retention and graduation rates, as well as greater engagement in career immediately following graduation and higher reports of well-being later in life (Gallup, 2014; Pike, 2000; 2003; 2020). Moreover, some campus and national fraternity organizations are engaging in efforts to build on these positive outcomes by reforming the notion of *fraternity* and reconstructing the meaning-making of their undergraduate members through leadership development.

As one example of these reform efforts, this exploratory study examines outcomes from an emerging leaders institute facilitated by a singular national fraternity to determine the program's ability to initiate positive change in rising undergraduate leaders to practice more effective and values-driven leadership within their fraternity chapters. This study was conducted on an emerging leaders program with 157 undergraduate participants, and compares self-reported knowledge and abilities in relation to leadership based on the program's learning outcomes. The study also explores self-reported behaviors related to the program's learning outcomes to examine if program attendees applied knowledge gained through participation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This brief literature review begins by differentiating student involvement and engagement. This research includes additional research about member outcomes and leadership experiences in sororities and fraternities. Although not all national fraternities are members of national umbrella organizations, much of the research included in this literature review centers member organizations of the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) and National Interfraternity Conference (NIC). This literature review does not include identity-based or culturally-based organizations such as the National Pan-Hellenic Conference (NPHC).

Student Involvement and Engagement

Student involvement and engagement are often conflated terms. Kuh (2009) conceptualized student engagement as the time and effort that students spend on activities that are directly correlated with the desired outcomes from a college experience, as well as the institutional plans that allow students to participate in such activities. The term student engagement pertains to multiple subcategories, such as academic involvement, athletic involvement, and involvement with the faculty (Astin, 1977).

Astin's (1984) notion of student involvement was location-based. The more time students physically spend on campus, the more likely they are to engage in groups, events, and faculty interactions. Students acquire more knowledge when interested in the academic and social elements of college (Astin, 1999). Astin (1984) formulated five tenets or *postulates* of student involvement to the extent they: (1) have qualitative and quantitative characteristics; (2) require an investment of psychosocial and physical energy; (3) are a continuous process in which students invest varying amounts of energy; (4) have development that is directly proportional to the quality and quantity; and (5) have educational effectiveness that is proportional to the involvement.

Astin (1984) conceived of participation student-centered theory, as opposed to Kuh's engagement theory, which is an institutional theory (Kuh, 2009). Astin (1984) emphasized that the student bears the responsibility for engagement, since genuine participation takes an investment of energy in relationships, academics, and activities relevant to the on-campus experience. The student has control over how and with whom they spend their time, including with family, friends, academics, and other extracurricular activities (Astin, 1984). These types of obligations and close proximity to campus can discourage involvement and from the educational advantages of student engagement and result in a lack of academic and social integration (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009).

Braxton et al. (2013) created a more specific form of engagement from a psychosocial perspective, defining the term as the amount of psychological energy students invest in their social interactions with their peers and in their participation in their extracurricular activities. Furthermore, student involvement has also been found to positively correlate with self-confidence, communication, and interpersonal skills (Huang & Chang, 2004). These sorts of cocurricular programs are encouraged as institutional engagement and codified in sorority and fraternity standards programs (Bureau & Barber, 2020; Sasso, 2012).

While some critics argue that being involved in extracurricular activities may hinder students from engaging in academically-focused activities and, therefore, achieve suboptimal educational gains (Goedereis & Sasso, 2020; Kuh, 2009), empirical results demonstrate otherwise. Huang and Chang (2004) found that an increase in co-curricular (student) involvement is positively correlated with an increase in academic involvement. The premise of Astin's theory of involvement (1984) is the more engaged a student is in their experience, the greater opportunity for both cognitive as well as affective growth (Asel et al., 2009). Previous studies support that when students immerse themselves in their college career and engage in student involvement activities and student engagement programs, they are found to be more successful in educational gains and academic achievements (Hoffman et al., 2002; Pike, 2020).

Fraternity Membership Gains

Student engagement with university-facilitated fraternity and sorority programs leads to leadership development, and involvement in fraternity leadership positions is related to significant developmental gains. Participation in a sorority or fraternity is also connected to increases in community engagement and community service (Asel et al., 2009; Bureau & Koepsell, 2017). Sorority and fraternity members who have higher levels of involvement also report being more engaged on campus, have a higher sense of purpose, and benefit by practicing and developing leadership skills (DiChiara, 2009; Long, 2012; Pike, 2020).

Involvement in student organizations particularly is related to a number of individual academic and personal development gains (Sasso et al., 2020a; 2020b). Students have more credit hours and higher GPAs than non-affiliated students during their first year of college through their involvement in fraternity/sorority organizations (DeBard & Sacks, 2011; Debard et al., 2006). Additional studies also indicate higher communication and critical thinking abilities than unaffiliated students, illuminating greater gains related to personal and social skills through sorority/fraternity involvement (Hayek et al., 2002).

Pike (2000, 2003, 2020) also found significant gains related to fraternity members. Specifically, membership in a fraternity is associated with greater involvement in curricular student engagement programs and cocurricular student involvement activities, promotes student learning and development, and promotes satisfaction with the college experience (Pike, 2020). Similarly, Pike (2003, 2020) found a modest but positive association between fraternity/sorority affiliations and gains in learning, such as active learning and interactions with faculty. Pike (2020) also supported that the relationship in learning gains was stronger for fraternity/sorority-affiliated seniors than fraternity/sorority-affiliated first-year students, indicating fraternity/sorority organizations provide an ongoing academic environment that helps students develop important academic skills through their membership experience.

Fraternity and sorority participation leads to increases in attendance at campus student involvement activities and gains in leadership development during the first year of college (Aren et al., 2014; DiChiara, 2009; Martin et al., 2012; Sasso et al., 2020b). However, these increases are equalized by the senior year, during which there are no significant differences compared to unaffiliated students (Hevel et al., 2014). There are small cognitive development gains for fraternity membership after the first year, which include interpersonal growth, social interaction, collaborative work, and the ability to influence others (Pascarella et al., 2006). Notably, interpersonal skills are among the most salient gains with regard to collaborative work and learning measures (Martin et al., 2012; Pike, 2000, 2003). There are significant gains among fraternity members, which include the ability to influence others by the senior year (Asel et al., 2009; Hevel et al., 2014; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Pike, 2003; Sasso et al., 2020a). Fraternity/sorority members demonstrate outcomes related to leadership, service, and friendship (Long,

2012). These skills promote sense of belonging, interpersonal relationship skills, and self-perceived leadership ability for members (Long & Snowden, 2011; Martin et al., 2012).

Leadership in Fraternal Organizations

Participation in a fraternity generally suggests positive educational outcomes (Martin et al., 2012; Pike, 2020). Being a student leader in a campus organization significantly contributes to leadership development, decision-making skills, and feelings of personal competence (Astin, 1993; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Kuh, 1995; Pike, 2020). Along with educational gains, fraternities and sororities also provide opportunities for their members to benefit from significant gains in the interpersonal skills of leadership (Kelley, 2008). However, not all sorority and fraternity members are automatically leaders, and so chapters offer leadership positions and additional leadership trainings to promote skills development. Thus, sororities and fraternities are potential sites of leadership development that offer opportunities through student involvement (Sasso et al., 2020a; 2020b; Schoper et al., 2020).

Leadership development is an espoused outcome of membership across chapters and governing councils in which leadership and sense of identity intersect differently in the context of campus chapters (Atkinson et al., 2010; Barber et al., 2015; Cory, 2011). Students demonstrate leadership competencies complementary to the explicit and implicit norms of their chapter and their campus community, which are connected to identity dynamics (Barber et al., 2015). College women and men develop leadership differently to navigate power structures into higher positions (Madsen & Andrade, 2018). Fraternity members tended to vote their members into leadership, such as within student government associations (SGA), over more deserving female candidates (Goodman, 2021). Fraternity presidents also retained confidence in their leadership ability up to ten years after college (Kelley, 2008). In contrast, Harms et al. (2006) found fraternity and sorority members holding leadership positions were less often recognized as effective leaders.

For most members, leadership development occurs through holding a formal executive board or other leadership positions which is related to extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability (DiChiara, 2009; Harms et al., 2006; Martin et al., 2012). There are many other benefits to becoming a leader or officer in a chapter (Gastfield, 2020; Kelley, 2008; Long & Snowden, 2011). Chapter presidents in fraternities/sororities report gains in interpersonal skills, organizational skills, teamwork, decision-making (Kelley, 2008). Members of fraternity/sorority organizations rated their leaders in their organization to be effective and accurate representations of their organization (Adams & Keim, 2000). Members with the strongest commitment to the organization are rated the highest by their peers (Dugan, 2008). Typically, chapter leaders gain this commitment through leadership experiences in executive meetings, retreats, and roundtables from campus programming (Long & Snowden, 2011).

Fraternity and sorority leaders receive additional specialized training to develop their technical abilities to fulfill the position's responsibilities, but also involving leadership development to help facilitate shared leadership and organizational management. Prior studies document the effectiveness of leadership programs for fraternity members to increase levels of success in academics, service to others, and leadership competency (Biddix & Underwood, 2010; Dugan, 2008; Isacco et al., 2013). However, there is a lack of published assessment about these nationally sponsored organizational leadership programs despite having data such as GPA, membership rosters, initiation rates, chapter consultations, and needs-based or satisfaction surveys (Barber et al., 2020; Biddix & Underwood, 2010; Hesp & Biddix, 2009).

National Sorority/Fraternity Leadership Programs

Students seek leadership skills to grow during their undergraduate experience (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Schoper et al., 2020). Participation in formal leadership development programs as a form of student engagement facilitates gains in confidence, leadership skills, and openness to serve in a leadership role (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Particularly for men, leadership skills are developed at higher rates by participating in a leadership class (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). For other formal programs, participation leads to significantly higher scores in areas like common purpose and citizenship (Dugan, 2006).

Prior studies document the effectiveness of national and campus-based leadership programs for sorority and fraternity members. Across both private and public academic institutions, leadership programs for fraternity members have increased levels of success in academics, service to others, and leadership development (Dugan, 2008; Isacco et al., 2013). A 10-year program evaluation of a national fraternity emerging leaders program elucidated that program participants were more likely to assume a leadership role eventually becoming chapter president, self-reported they felt better connected to their organizational rituals and values, and increased their fraternity commitment (Biddix & Underwood, 2010). Such programs are common and provide additional specialized training to develop participants' technical and leadership abilities to fulfill the position responsibilities, but also involve leadership development to help facilitate shared leadership and organizational management (Biddix & Underwood, 2010). Our current study aims to address the gap in current literature regarding the effectiveness and outcomes of leadership programs sponsored by national organizations. The findings of this study are intended to explore and provide support for the efficacy of these leadership programs.

METHODS

Research Site

This study examines one national fraternity from the North American Interfraternity Conference and its emerging leaders program, a voluntary participatory four-day immersive leadership development program that engages undergraduate chapter members nationwide. An annual program takes place each summer and involves a mix of large-group lectures, small-group sessions, service-learning opportunities, and topic-based sessions. The overall programming consists of sessions that focus on a variety of topics pertaining to the planning and management of a successful chapter. The sessions also include new member education, academic excellence, chapter finances, values-based recruitment, facilitating the organization's ritual education, implementing community service and philanthropy, and practicing effective communication. Each of these sessions is intended to shape the participants' future behavior as leaders through different routes of chapter involvement. These sessions intend to provide attendees with high-level, but foundational, knowledge of important areas of chapter operations to prepare them for future roles as chapter leaders.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an emerging leaders program sponsored and hosted by a national fraternity. This study utilized a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test survey design. The independent variable in this study was the emerging leaders program. The dependent variables in this study were the time interval in the pre-event, post-event, and follow-up conditions among the experimental group of program participants. In employing a quasi-experimental design through the use of a randomly selected control group of emerging leader participants, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- (1) Does the emerging leaders program influence a participant's knowledge regarding chapter leadership, leadership skills, and likelihood of engaging in behaviors related to leadership?
- (2) Are there significant differences between emerging leader program participants and non-participants in the areas of knowledge, abilities, and behaviors (campus involvement, service learning) fraternity ritual, symbols and regalia, chapter operations (finance, risk management), and recruitment?

Sample

This was a singular organizational study of one fraternity in which purposive sampling methods were utilized to identify a convenience sample of study participants ($n = 157$). Inclusion criteria for the study included active fraternity membership in good standing and in attendance at the emerging leaders program ($n = 62$), but non-program attendance for the comparison group ($n = 95$). The comparison group was randomly generated from the general membership database by fraternity staff using the following criteria: (1) completion of at least one year of college enrollment; (2) active membership in good standing, and (3) no participation in the emerging leadership program. These criteria were utilized to develop a counterfactual group among the comparison group sample to create similarity with program attendees based on eligibility for the emerging leaders program.

The experimental group demographics among program attendees were relatively consistent over the three surveyed periods (pre-event, post-event, follow-up). The similarity in demographic representation among the experimental group of program attendees and the control group of non-program members contributes to the external validity of the study's findings. Table 1 presents the information on both ELA and non-ELA respondents.

Table 1. *Data of ELA and non-ELA Respondents.*

	Pre-Program	Post-Program	Follow-up	Comparison Group
Respondents	62	30	54	95
Sophomores	28.5%	60%	22%	20%
Juniors	31%	33%	56%	42%
Seniors	40.6%	3.3%	22%	38%
Prior leadership event attendance	23%	74%	74%	56%
Currently serving in chapter leadership role	46%	43%	59%	46%

Procedure

The instrument was distributed in three individual cycles: pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. First, an online pre-test was distributed via email to all emerging leader program participants one week before the emerging leaders program. This pre-test asked respondents to self-report their knowledge, skills, and experiences related to their fraternity membership experience. Upon arrival at the program, participants were also given an oral reminder in person to encourage participation among those who had not yet completed the survey. A post-test survey with identical questions was distributed again to the same participants at the end immediately after completion of the training. A second, final post-test was sent 30 days later to the same participants to assess longer-term learning and applicability of content from the emerging leaders program. Thirty days after the completion of the program, another follow-up post-test was also sent to program participants and a random sample of non-participating fraternity members to construct a comparison group. These time lapses were intentionally selected to allow participants to be more removed and distant from the program to allow for more authentic assessment. This control group received the follow-up post-test survey during the same time period as the program participant group. Email reminders were sent for the second and follow-up post-tests to all fraternity member study participants to encourage participation.

Instrument

The same pre-test/post-test survey was used at each of the three intervals. These constructs of the survey were aligned with the emerging leaders program learning outcomes, which included: (1) membership experience; (2) membership education; (3) regalia and ritual; (4) chapter operations; and (5) recruitment. Each of these five domains were segmented into two standardized sections: "knowledge & abilities" and "actions and behaviors." Participants were asked about their knowledge & abilities (confidence), i.e., "I can..." and then asked about actions and behaviors, i.e., "To what extent have you engaged in any of the following activities."

Membership experience asked participants about service learning, other student organization involvement, and risk management. Questions included such as "I can identify potential risk management concerns within my chapter" or "I can identify ways to get my chapter and fellow members involved in the campus community." Member education asked participants about facilitating and implementing programming for new member education and included questions such as "Created and implemented a schedule of leadership and professional development programs for my chapter" and "I can effectively lead a new member education program, including in-person education and Phase I online new member education." Regalia and ritual asked participants about the symbols and initiation ceremonies and included questions such as "I can identify the areas of the initiation ceremony my chapter needs to improve." Chapter operations asked participants to rate their understanding of risk management and minimum chapter standards. Questions included "I can create a plan for my chapter to

complete the requirements for the chapter excellence packet” and “I can explain all six parts of the risk management policy.” Recruitment asked participants about their member marketing efforts and included questions such as “I can create a brand for my chapter” and “I can create a recruitment plan specific to my chapter.”

Content validity was facilitated by the fraternity educational programs team, whose members are responsible for designing the curriculum and program structure. Their feedback was used to refine the program outcomes that served as the constructs of the instrument used in this study. Criterion validity was facilitated by piloting the survey with current undergraduate fraternity members, and results were reviewed by the educational program team prior to survey administration. This instrument was authored specifically to assess this emerging leaders program and was never used prior to this research study.

The pre-test survey consisted of demographic questions, including the chapter the participant was representing, academic year in college, if they were currently serving in a chapter officer role, and if they had previously attended a leadership training program sponsored by the national organization. All participants were asked to report their current knowledge or understanding of three general program outcomes by responding with a five-point Likert-type agreement scale, with 5 indicating strongest agreement and 1 indicating strongest disagreement with the statement regarding their current knowledge, ability, or behaviors.

The five-point scale used for knowledge and ability outcomes included a neutral point score of 3. Therefore, any mean scores that garnered a 3 or greater provided grounds to assume average scores fell within the range of agreement with learning outcomes statements. The general program outcomes included questions regarding knowing how to get chapter members involved on campus, creating community service opportunities, and identifying risk management concerns with their chapter. Participants were then asked questions related to the learning outcomes of the specific programming track they indicated they planned to attend.

The post-test and follow-up surveys included an additional question set asking the extent to which the participant had engaged in activities and behaviors related to the program’s learning outcomes. The inclusion of behavior-related questions was intended to capture if attendees applied the knowledge they reported gaining related to the program learning outcomes. For example, in asking in the pre- and post-program survey if attendees have knowledge of how to create community service opportunities, the follow-up survey also asked to what extent attendees actually created community service opportunities. Behavior-related questions were also asked for each set of learning outcomes related to the programming tracks. Behavior-related outcomes were measured on a three-point scale in which respondents indicated the extent to which they have engaged in a specific behavior or taken a specific action related to the program’s outcomes, with a 1 response indicating no reported experience or actions and 3 indicating completion of action or full engagement in a behavior.

Data Analysis

For Research Question One, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the emerging leaders program (IV) on time interval (DV) in pre-event, post-event, and follow-up conditions among the experimental group of program participants. For Research Question Two, the analysis also included a comparison of the reported general program outcomes and track-specific outcomes between the emerging leader program participants at the follow-up interval and the non-participant fraternity members who served as the control group. This analysis included comparing means of the reported knowledge and abilities to assess differences in understanding and awareness of key chapter leadership concepts as well as reported behaviors and actions related to key chapter leadership activities as presented through the various programming tracks. Independent t-tests were conducted to assess the differences in responses among program participants and the control group of non-participants.

RESULTS

Regarding Research Question 1 – Does the emerging leaders program influence a participant’s knowledge regarding chapter leadership, leadership skills, and likelihood of engaging behaviors related to leadership? – there was an overall main effect of the emerging leaders program. This was for two of the three computed variables in pretest-posttest data: identifying involvement opportunities and community service opportunities (Tables 2 and 3). For the variable related to identifying involvement opportunities, there was a main effect of the emerging leaders program, such that participation in the program saw an increase in understanding of how to identify involvement opportunities for their chapter, $F(2, 144) = 3.294, p = .040$. For the variable related to community service creation, there was a main effect of the emerging leaders program, such that participation in the program saw an increase in identifying community service opportunities for their chapter, $F(2, 144) = 3.827, p = .024$.

Table 2. One-Way ANOVA of Survey Response by Program Participation for Involvement Identification.

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between groups	2	5.681	2.841	3.94	.040
Within groups	144	124.169	.862		
Total	146	129.850			
*p < .05					

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA of Survey Response by Program Participation for Community Service.

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between groups	2	6.726	3.363	3.827	.024
Within groups	144	126.553	.879		
Total	146	133.279			
*p < .05					

Post hoc tests using Tukey were utilized to identify statistically significant differences in means between the pre-event and post-event for involvement identification and community service opportunity identification among program participants. For the involvement identification (InvolvID) variable, post-event ($M = 4.44, SD = .801$) responses were greater than pre-event ($M = 3.92, SD = .9$), ($p = .03$). Similarly, post-event ($M = 4.50, SD = .842$) responses for community service (CommServ) opportunity identification were greater than pre-event ($M = 3.93, SD = .910$), ($p = .018$). Follow-up responses were not analyzed and are used as the control (comparison) group for the second research question to compare the program efficacy to non-participants in the emerging leaders program.

Regarding Research Question 2 – Are there significant differences between emerging leader program participants and non-participants in the areas of knowledge, abilities, and behaviors (campus involvement, service learning), fraternity ritual, symbols and regalia, chapter operations (finance, risk management), and recruitment? – we break results into four categories: Member Experience, Fraternity Ritual and Symbols and Regalia, Chapter Operations, and Recruitment (see summary Table 10).

Membership Experience (Campus Involvement, Service Learning)

In terms of member experience, there were no significant differences in means observed between emerging leader participants and non-participant respondents for all three general program outcomes variables for knowledge and abilities. In terms of reported actions and behaviors, there was a statistically significant difference found for the involvement identification variable, such that the ELA attendees ($M = 2.57, SD = .633$) responses were greater than non-participants ($M = 2.23, SD = .750$), $t(147) = 2.83, p = .005$ (Table 4). However, there were no significant differences in means observed between participants and non-participant respondents for the variables *community service creation* and *risk management concern identification*.

Table 4. *t*-test Comparison of Reported Actions for Participants vs. Non-Participant Respondents.

			ELA		Non-ELA	
Outcome	t(147)	p	M	SD	M	SD
Involvement*	2.830	.005	2.57	.633	2.23	.750

Note. *The variable InvolvID found a statistically significant difference between the participant attendees ($n = 54$) and non-participant respondent ($n = 95$) means.

There were no significant differences in means observed between participants who attended member education trainings and non-participants respondents for all four outcomes of the member education in terms of reported knowledge and ability. However, in terms of reported actions and behaviors, there was a statistically significant difference among program participants ($M = 1.92$, $SD = .793$) and non-participants ($M = 1.45$, $SD = .651$) related to describing the national fraternity membership development program to their chapter, $t(105) = 2.27$, $p = .025$ (Table 5).

Table 5. *Pre & Post Event t*-test Comparison of Reported Actions and Behaviors for Program Participants vs. Non-Participant Respondents Related to Member Education Training.

				ELA		Non-ELA	
Outcome	Time	t(105)	p	M	SD	M	SD
Member	Pre	.972	.344	2.00	.603	1.81	.854
Education	Post	2.270	.025	1.92	.793	1.45	.651

Note. There were no significant differences in means observed between program attendees ($n = 12$) and non-program respondents ($n = 95$) for all variables but Member Education, $p < .05$.

Fraternity Ritual and Symbols & Regalia

In terms of reported knowledge and ability related to the fraternity ritual education, a statistically significant difference in means was found for the ritual mechanism explanation variable, such that program participants who attended ($M = 4.71$, $SD = .488$) reported higher means than non-participants ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .999$), $t(100) = 2.173$, $p = .032$ (see Table 6). In terms of reported actions and behaviors, a statistically significant difference in means was found for all three variables for fraternity ritual trainings, in which program participants reported higher means than non-participant respondents in their experiences in describing the mechanics, regalia, and symbolism of ritual, explaining the mechanics and symbolism to their chapter, and identifying areas of improvement for their chapter's initiation ceremony (see Table 7).

Table 6. *t*-test comparison of Reported Knowledge and Ability for Program Participants vs. Non-Program Respondents Related to Fraternity Ritual.

			ELA		Non-ELA	
Outcome	t(100)	p	M	SD	M	SD
Ritual Mechanism	2.173	.032	4.71	.488	3.88	.999

Note. There were no significant differences in means observed between program participants ($n = 7$) and non-participant respondents ($n = 95$) for all variables except Ritual Mechanism Explanation, $p < .05$

Table 7. *t*-test comparison of Reported Actions and Behaviors for Program Participants vs. Non-Program Respondents Related to Fraternity Ritual.

			ELA		Non-ELA	
Outcome	t(100)	p	M	SD	M	SD
Ritual Description	2.434	.039	2.71	.488	2.22	.792
Ritual Mechanism	4.236	.002	2.86	.378	2.16	.794
Initiation	3.347	.007	2.86	.378	2.30	.818

Note. Variables include: Ritual Description (RitualDes), Ritual Mechanism Explanation (RitualM), and Initiation Improvement Identification (Initiation). Statistically significant differences in means between participant respondents ($n = 7$) and non-participant respondents ($n = 95$) were found for all three variables, $p < .05$.

Chapter Operations (Finance, Risk Management)

There were no significant differences in means observed between program participant attendees who attended the chapter operations training and non-participant respondents in reported knowledge and abilities to plan for completing requirements for chapter excellence or explaining the organization’s risk management policies. In terms of reported actions and behaviors, a statistically significant difference was observed in which program participants ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .786$) reported higher means in their behaviors related to creating a plan to complete chapter excellence requirements than those of non-program respondents ($M = 1.84$, $SD = .794$) (see Table 8).

Table 8. *t*-test Comparison of Reported Actions and Behaviors for Participants vs. Non-Participant Respondents Related to Chapter Operations.

			ELA		Non-ELA	
Outcome	t(112)	P	M	SD	M	SD
Chapter Operations	2.099	.038	2.25	.786	1.84	.794

Note. There was a significant difference in means observed between program participants ($n = 20$) and non-participant respondents ($n = 95$) for the variable Chapter Operations (ChapOp), $p < .05$.

Recruitment

Regarding outcomes for the recruitment programming, statistically significant differences in means were found for all four variables related to reported knowledge and abilities to lead a recruitment workshop for the chapter, create a brand for the chapter, create a recruitment plan for the chapter, and using online management software for the recruitment plan. For all four of these knowledge and ability learning outcomes for the recruitment programming track, program participants who attended the recruitment programming reported significantly higher means than non-participant respondents (see Table 9).

In terms of reported actions and behaviors, statistically significant differences between means were observed in which program participants attendees report higher means for creating a brand for their chapter ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .516$) and applying online software to their recruitment plan ($M = 2.07$, $SD = .884$) than non-participant respondents (“create a brand” = $M = 2.03$, $SD = .831$, “apply chapter builder” = $M = 1.61$, $SD = .789$). There were no significant differences in means observed between program participants and non-participant respondents for behaviors and actions related to leading a recruitment workshop or creating a recruitment plan (see Table 10).

Table 9. *t*-test Comparison of Reported Knowledge and Abilities for Program Participants.

Outcome	df	t	p	Pre-Event		Post-Event	
				M	SD	M	SD
Involvement	91	2.744	.007	3.92	.900	4.44	.801
Community Service	91	2.918	.004	3.93	.910	4.50	.842
Ritual Mechanism	100	2.173	.032	4.71	.488	3.88	.999
Leading Recruitment Workshop	108	4.917	.000	4.47	.516	3.57	1.217
Create Brand	108	3.765	.000	4.40	.507	3.73	1.189
Create Recruitment Plan	108	2.405	.018	4.53	.640	3.81	1.133
Apply Chapter Builder	108	3.621	.001	4.33	.900	3.37	1.272

Note. Variables include: Leading recruitment workshop (LeadRec), Create brand (CreateB), Create recruitment plan (CreateRec), and Apply Chapter Builder (Apply), statistically significant differences in means between program participants attendees ($n = 15$) and non-participant respondents ($n = 95$) were observed for all four variables.

Table 10. Summary *t*-test Comparison of Reported Actions and Behaviors for Participants vs. Non-Participant Respondents.

Outcome	Df	T	P	ELA		Non-ELA	
				M	SD	M	SD
Involvement	147	2.830	.005	2.57	.633	2.23	.750
Ritual Description	100	2.434	.039	2.71	.488	2.22	.792
Ritual Mechanism Explanation	100	4.236	.002	2.86	.378	2.16	.794
Initiation Improvement Identification	100	3.347	.007	2.86	.378	2.30	.818
Chapter Operations	112	2.099	.038	2.25	.786	1.84	.794
Creating a Brand	108	2.265	.025	2.53	.516	2.03	.831
Creating a Brand	108	2.046	.043	2.07	.884	1.61	.789

Note. *The variable InvolID found a statistically significant difference between the participant attendees ($n = 54$) and non-participant respondent ($n = 95$) means. Variables Ritual Description (RitualDes), Ritual Mechanism Explanation (RitualM), and Initiation Improvement Identification (Initiation), had statistically significant differences in means between participant respondents. There was a significant difference in means observed between program participants ($n = 20$) and non-participant respondents ($n = 95$) for the variable, Chapter Operations (ChapOp), $p < .05$. There were Statistically significant differences in means between program participants ($n = 15$) and non-participant respondents ($n = 95$) were observed for creating a brand (CreateB) and applying online software, $p < .05$.

DISCUSSION

This emerging leaders program was evaluated by surveying program attendees at three separate intervals to compare pre and post-event for participants, and long-term self-reported outcomes to compare to non-participants. Findings from the data analysis suggest that there were statistically significant differences between the pre-test and post-test responses for program participants. Specifically, there were significant differences in the final follow-up post-test between participants and non-participants in variables related to fraternity ritual, recruitment, chapter operations, and member education. This indicates that participants may gain a deeper nuanced understanding compared to non-participants about connecting with their organizational values because

they self-reported an increased ability to understand fraternity ritual, recruitment, and member education, which are also used to facilitate brotherhood by emerging chapter leaders. These findings can be contextualized as they contribute to the existing research and provide a better description of the leadership development of fraternity members.

A majority of responses showed a peak in the immediate post-test, suggesting that the responses may be higher because of the immediacy of the leadership information directly after the program. Significant differences were not observed between all variables on the post-tests, but there were differences between the pre-test and final post-test also related to involvement and community service opportunity identification. Results support program participants having a greater level of identifying involvement opportunities for their chapter, suggesting that the program encouraged members to increase their activities related to promoting campus involvement among chapter members. Participants were connected to broader campus involvement and service learning outcomes (Schoper et al., 2020).

In particular, the membership education programming participants reporting significantly higher means suggests having a greater knowledge of member development principles they can practice within their chapter to develop their peers. As aforementioned, program participants reported greater means in fraternity ritual, symbolism, and regalia, as well as improving ritual ceremonies. These differences indicate that the emerging leaders program strengthens participants' ability when it comes to aspects of the fraternity experience grounded in values and ritual. Values and ritual reflection are connected to moral development in undergraduate students (Tull et al., 2022).

Emerging leaders program participants also reported a greater understanding of successful chapter operations, such as chapter excellence requirements and recruitment. Findings suggest program participants gained important knowledge and took action to effectively assist in preparing their chapter to successfully recruit new members, which included chapter brand development, recruitment planning, and chapter building. These experiences as chapter leaders are connected to career competency development (Peck, 2018; Peck & Callahan, 2019).

Lastly, findings from the comparison between program participants and the non-program respondents in the second post-test suggest that the emerging leadership program is an efficacious leadership development program. Across all variable categories, non-participant respondents typically reported lower means than program participants. Further, this highlights that some components of chapter leadership and operations necessitate specialized leadership training through experiences such as an emerging leaders program and are less likely to be learned and practiced by general members. These findings are related to other emerging leaders programs for sorority or fraternity members, which demonstrate support for previous studies regarding increased levels of knowledge, ability, and behaviors related to leadership after leadership program engagement (Dugan, 2008; Isacco et al., 2013; Rosch & Caza, 2012).

This study is distinctive in that it examines one national fraternity's emerging leaders development program to explore its efficacy. The applicability for the efficacy of leadership programs such as this emerging leaders program can be extended to the greater fraternity and sorority community, as well as student organizations. The concept of a program that emphasizes leadership skills and a strong identification and affinity towards one's organization may contribute to increased knowledge, abilities, and behaviors in relation to leadership.

Limitations

There are limitations related to both the internal and external validity of this study. Self-report instruments were used in this study and featured a convenience sample, which may facilitate response bias or socially desirable responses by study participants. Although attempts were made to facilitate content and construct validity, the surveys used were not empirically validated and this could have impacted the findings. Participants were not asked to disclose their multiple identities, including race, gender, or class. There was no differentiation between student identities or institutional differences. The inclusion of the follow-up survey conducted multiple months after the program was intended to mitigate this limitation by allowing attendees to report experiences at a time

in which they are more removed and distant from the program. This time lapse may have contributed to an attrition bias in this study, given the differences in pre-test and post-test cohort sizes and response rates. The control group only completed the second post-test, and having the control group complete all three surveys at similar time intervals as the program participants may paint a more holistic picture for a longitudinal study.

The generalizability of this study might be limited as this was a singular organizational study. These study findings presented are not causal, were only exploratory, and were mostly descriptive. Thus, this study is not predictive, and its findings cannot claim the utility of an emerging leadership program for other sororities or fraternities. Future research should explore different types of national fraternity leadership programs and facilitate longitudinal studies to assess their efficacy over time.

Implications for Practice

While it is anticipated these study findings could be replicated within similar men's fraternal organizations, more research is still needed about leadership development programs sponsored by fraternities or sororities to strengthen the external validity of this study. Moreover, there are several recommendations for practice that can be gleaned from this study's findings. These recommendations for practice are offered to extend the boundaries of existing national fraternity or sorority leadership programs and integrate the role of student involvement professionals. These recommendations or any incentives for leadership should be integrated into chapter standards or awards programs to incentivize member leadership development within chapters (Bureau & Barber, 2020; Sasso, 2012).

Accessibility. This study was comprised of members from a general NIC fraternity. Traditional theories of leadership hold the assumption that all students have equal access to resources or support structures that allow them to become a fully developed leader. However, there are considerations relative to who has access and is allowed to demonstrate leadership skills (Taylor, Jr. & Lawrence, 2020). Future leadership trainings for emerging chapter leaders should consider the ways in which it can be made more accessible for a broader spectrum of members. Emerging leadership programs should consider the limitations of social class (Bureau et al., 2021). This should be sensitive to commuter as well as first-generation student needs (Goedereis & Sasso, 2020; Harrel-Hallmark et al., 2022; Sasso & Paladini, 2021). This could mean offering travel subsidies to chapters or discounts for these specific social identities or providing this training via an online platform to reach the broader membership. Campuses should support participation in emerging leadership programs through access to their campus student travel fund.

Critical Thinking. While leadership programs have a psychosocial developmental effect for fraternity members across their undergraduate experience, there is little to no critical thinking development that occurs between the first and fourth year of college (Waltz & Sasso, 2021). Waltz and Sasso (2021) noted the relationship between critical thinking and implicit bias in college men. Male student leaders demonstrated less tendency to hold confirmation bias than non-leaders and were more likely to have lower critical thinking ability when there was a greater tendency to hold confirmation bias.

To reduce these effects in college men, fraternity leadership programs offer promise as the research conducted centers critical thinking development through critical thinking instruction in the classroom, and these programs can be sites of potential instruction (Lange & Stewart, 2019). The highest predictor for leadership skills among men was participating in a leadership class or formal program (Dugan, 2006; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). Future leadership programs can include critical thinking development curriculum to and embrace notions of how students learn through a holistic experience based on the postulates of Astin (1999) to support the critical thinking gains in fraternity members during the senior year (Hevel et al., 2014).

Difficult Conversations. Students' implicit attitudes hinder critical thinking development in college male leaders (Waltz & Sasso, 2021). They are not prepared for difficult dialogues because undergraduate students, particularly college men, are also more likely to hold confirmation bias, which reinforces their own belief systems and restricts openness, thereby hindering the development of critical thinking (Waltz & Sasso, 2021). Emerging

fraternity leaders should be prepared to engage in difficult conversations, including those about social class and cultural differences (Bureau et al., 2021; Parker & Pascarella, 2013, 2018). Understanding students' differential access to different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural) affects collaborative dynamics with other members for access to leadership positions and overall chapter participation (Harrel-Hallmark et al., 2022).

Also, understanding how these forms of capital influence the disruption of implicit biases can reduce assumptions by emerging leaders about their fellow brothers to humanize other experiences (Bureau et al., 2021; Parker & Pascarella, 2013, 2018). Schoper et al. (2020) commented that leaders could develop a more complex understanding of their world, which will increase the extent to which they “notice, consider, question, and engage in their experiences” (p. 103). Student involvement professionals can help national organizations gauge readiness and prepare students to return to their chapters to implement strategies for meaningful conversations and action (Nagda & Roper, 2019).

Integrating Student Involvement Professionals. It is not uncommon for student affairs professionals to be invited to facilitate sessions at sorority and fraternity leadership programs such as the one in this study, but there needs to be a greater campus connection beyond the specific fraternal organization (Sasso et al., 2020). Professionals in student involvement can also serve as complementary campus facilitators to assist sorority and fraternity members in applying their positional (president, treasurer, etc.) and organizational knowledge. Sororities and fraternities serve as sites of potential leadership instruction, and student involvement professionals offer positionality to address the transfer problem in which programs focus too much emphasis on learning outcomes and do not teach the application of their newly learned leadership skills (Lange & Stewart, 2019; Reyes et al., 2019).

Student involvement campus professionals should also be mindful not to duplicate existing national organization positional trainings, which may be redundant. Such programs typically take place as retreats or other leadership sessions (Pearlman et al., 2023). Rather, there should be an emphasis on connecting sorority and fraternity members to more comprehensive leadership programs or a focus on leadership development within campus-based councils executive boards.

Formal leadership programs have demonstrated efficacy beyond singular-event or short-term programs (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Rosch & Caza, 2012). These programs should use intentional curricula with a conceptual framework, such as the social change model (Parker & Pascarella, 2018). Future leadership programs can include critical thinking development curriculum to and embrace notions of how students learn through a holistic experience based on the postulates of Astin (1999) to support the critical thinking gains in fraternity members by their senior year (Hevel et al., 2015; Waltz & Sasso, 2021). Executive-board development on sorority/fraternity governing councils (NPC, NIC, NPHC, etc.) should be a priority as these campus-wide organizations have explicit career connections to leadership development which integrate co-curricular learning (Peck, 2018; Peck & Callahan, 2019; Walker & Havice, 2016).

Additionally, participants in this study self-reported ability to facilitate new member education programs. Student involvement professionals should challenge senior chapter leaders to expand their scope to consider how new member education could be a space to teach and practice leadership skills to emerging leaders to move beyond teaching organizational values and history. Integrating new members into campus councils or chapter committees and coordinator positions as early as possible offers opportunities to practice leadership skills (Pearlman et al., 2023; Schoper et al., 2020). This may allow for a more seamless transition into progressive positions with more responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Significant differences were demonstrated between program participants and members who did not attend the program, suggesting that the emerging leaders program has a positive impact across various learning outcomes. Further, there are numerous program outcomes associated with various facets of student engagement, such as identifying campus involvement and community service, that extend beyond leadership development outcomes.

Numerous other fraternal organizations plan and host similar emerging leaders programs. Opportunities to continue studies similar to this study are available. To have continued study of the effects of leadership development programming on the fraternity chapter experience will necessitate more than just a single organizational commitment to building this body of research but will require a commitment to generating findings that create a positive narrative and support for the leadership development opportunities that exist within fraternal organizations.

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