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Regressions on Personality and Political Preferences of Greek Letter Social Organizations

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REGRESSIONS ON PERSONALITY AND POLITICAL PREFERENCES OF
COLLEGIATE GREEK LETTER SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

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2013

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ABSTRACT

Research examining fraternities and sororities is minimal. Whenever research does arise, it usually focuses on negative stigmas with these organizations, such as alcohol abuse or hazing. This study seeks to examine more positive aspects of Greek organizations in order to inspire further research into fraternities and sororities. It was hypothesized that Greek-affiliated college students differ from unaffiliated college students in the Big Five personality factors such that Greek members are less likely to be open to experience, less conscientious, more extraverted, and less neurotic than nonmembers. Greek members and nonmembers will be similar in agreeableness. It is also hypothesized that Greek members are more likely to be politically conservative than nonmembers. Furthermore, it is predicted that Greek-affiliated students will become more similar to their respective organizations over time spent affiliated with them on these six measures. A 24-item online survey was given to 613 undergraduates (51% Greek) measuring the Big Five personality factors and political preference. Logistic and linear regressions were used to analyze data. Greek members were found to be more likely to be extraverted, less likely to be neurotic, and more likely to be politically conservative than nonmembers. Patterns in change over time for each organization were not found.

Keywords: Greek Organization, Fraternity, Sorority, Personality, Big Five, Political Preference

Dedicated to my wife, Beth, for all of the late nights, encouragement, nagging, and for inspiring this project.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research on undergraduate collegiate Greek-letter social organizations, more commonly known as fraternities and sororities, focuses on the negative aspects of Greek life. The bulk of scholarly literature on fraternities and sororities focuses on alcohol abuse, legal issues, academics, and other issues. This study was intended to examine Greek life from a new perspective, with the idea of searching for the positive aspects of fraternity and sorority life. Finding quantifiable benefits to joining Greek organizations aids in answering the question igniting my research: “Is Greek life worth it?” Current research would most often say “No.” Much research suggests that Greek-affiliated students are more prone to alcohol abuse (Caudill et al., 2006; DeSimone, 2009; Park, Sher, Wood, & Krull, 2009), subject to illegal and harmful activities such as hazing (Drout & Corsoro, 2003), and have overall lower grade point averages (GPAs) than unaffiliated students (DeBard, Lake, & Binder, 2006). However, if positive aspects of Greek life can be identified, I believe that an argument can be made for joining a Greek-letter social organization.

Research on Greek Organizations

Literature on Greek organizations is dominated by research on alcohol use and abuse (Borsari & Carey, 1999). Greeks are often stereotyped such that all Greek-affiliated

students have parties and binge drink (Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 1996). Wechsler, Dowdall, Davenport, and Castillo (1995) define “binge drinking” as “having consumed five or more drinks in a row for men and four or more drinks in a row for women” within a two-week period (p. 922). They found that 75% of the fraternity members of their sample engaged in binge drinking, while Caudill et al. (2006) found that 86% of their fraternity sample engaged in binge drinking.

Studies on the frequency of college and Greek organization binge drinking have led researchers to examine the secondary effects and contexts of Greek member drinking behaviors (Borsari & Carey, 1999; Meilman, Leichliter, & Presley, 1999; Wechsler et al., 1996; Workman, 2001), as well as the possible demographical characteristics of the behavior (Caudill et al., 2006; DeSimone, 2009; Park et al., 2009; Wechsler et al., 1996). According to Wechsler et al. (1996) and Meilman et al. (1999), Greek members are more likely than unaffiliated students to have a hangover, do something they later regretted, miss a class, experience memory loss, get into an argument, and drive under the influence of alcohol, among other risky behaviors. Borsari & Carey (1999) identified five recurring themes within fraternity drinking literature, while Workman (2001) analyzed fraternity drinking stories in order to decompose the construction of collegiate binge drinking from within the Greek culture.

In order to recognize patterns in fraternity and sorority binge drinking behavior, research has observed demographics and student characteristics. Caudill et al. (2006) observed fraternity drinking behaviors and consequences by student and chapter characteristics. They compared student behaviors by age, year in college, ethnicity, race, grade point average, residence, and prior alcohol-related discipline. Chapter

characteristics were compared by region of the country, whether or not the chapter had been sanctioned for alcohol use, chapter size, whether or not the chapter possessed a house, whether or not that house was alcohol-free, and the status of the chapter in regard to national affiliation.

At first glance of the literature on Greek organizations, alcohol is the most readily available subject; however, more research is beginning to appear for the merit of joining Greek organizations from the perspective of academic success. DeBard et al. (2006) compared Greek-affiliated students to unaffiliated students ($n > 3,000$) in their first year of college in regards to grades, credit hours earned, and retention rates. They found that Greek-affiliated students (both men and women alike) have lower overall GPAs in their first year of college on average when compared to unaffiliated students. Nonmembers displayed higher GPAs each semester of college, higher cumulative GPAs, and earned more credit hours than Greek members on average in the first year, although Greek members had significantly higher retention rates than nonmembers (84% vs. 74% for women, 83% vs. 71% for men, $p < .05$). Furthermore, Asel, Seifert, & Pascarella (2009) observed that Greek affiliation did not correlate with academic performance, development of general or liberal arts competencies, or development of career and professional preparation.

Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt (2001) observed a continued negative effect in Greek-affiliated student academics, but a less pronounced effect in years two and three of college. These findings suggest that any major detriments to learning resulting from joining a Greek organization occur during the first year of college when transitioning to

the work load and lifestyle of college is coupled with the pledging process of joining a fraternity or sorority.

Contrary to DeBard et al. (2006), DeBard & Sacks (2010) found positive results for fraternity and sorority academics ($n > 45,000$). They found that students joining Greek organizations during their first year of college earned significantly higher GPAs than unaffiliated students ($p < .001$). DeBard & Sacks also found that Greek-affiliated first year students had significantly higher retention rates to their sophomore year ($p < .001$). The contradiction in these two findings indicates that the academic success and retention of students might vary from institution to institution. DeBard & Sacks (2010) believe that institutions with lower academic standards will have more academic problems with students than institutions with higher selectivity and academic standards.

Even though evidence is mixed for Greek members' academic performance, Whipple and Sullivan (1998) give reason for optimism about Greek organizations, claiming that they have potential as learning communities. They explain that Greek organizations are primed for student learning in that there is potential for a living-learning community with Greek housing, strong connections are formed between members, leadership development abounds with the self-governing nature of Greek organizations, and in many organizations, community service is expected.

Pike (2000) identified that Greek-affiliated students differed from unaffiliated students in average levels of social involvement and gains in general abilities, with Greek students reporting higher levels of both while not reporting lower levels in other measured constructs. After observing college experiences and cognitive development of students, Pike found that the differences observed between Greek-affiliated students and

unaffiliated students were more pronounced for college experiences. Greeks were significantly more involved with campus clubs ($p < .001$), gains in communication skills ($p < .05$), gains in interpersonal skills ($p < .01$), and gains in critical thinking ($p < .05$) than unaffiliated students.

Due to Greek organizations' emphasis on social involvement, members form lifelong friendships and career networks. Marmaros & Sacerdote (2002) found 63% of students seeking help finding a job from a fraternity brother or sorority sister of his or hers accepted or planned on accepting a prestigious job, as opposed to 22% for students who did not seek fraternity or sorority help. Harrison, Mitchell, & Peterson (1995) concluded that Greek organizations contribute to the level of social and academic participation in the university environment, and therefore, contribute to a greater likelihood of alumni donations to universities. Mathiasen (2005) observed one exceptional fraternity chapter who even emphasized moral development. This chapter was regarded highly by other organizations and administrators on campus. The chapter preserved its values, recruited quality students matching those values, upheld house tradition and reputation, and encouraged community service by members.

Hope exists for the justification of Greek organizations. Mathiasen (2005) demonstrates most clearly the positive impact a fraternity or sorority can have on a university campus and the members of the organization. However, other topics of study regarding Greek social organizations vary in justifying joining them. Rhoads (1995) case studied a fraternity chapter ethnographically and found skewed perceptions of gender. Despite the fraternity being seen as progressive by the campus community, Rhoads found hostile representations of women who socialized with the fraternity. Women were

positioned as passive participants of the fraternity experience, subjugated to the direction of the male fraternity members. Rhoads found that the perceptions of masculinity were narrow for this group of males. Men were supposed to be “macho,” women were seen as less than men, and homosexuals were viewed as equal to women.

Other studies have been inspired by Greek organizations, but remain more neutral in their objectives. De Los Reyes & Rich (2003) researched fraternity housing over the course of time, the direction it took fraternities, and the possibilities of incorporating more residential colleges onto university campuses. Woodward, Rosenfeld, and May (1996) searched for sex differences in social support and used fraternities and sororities merely as the sample to indicate gender. The potential for observing Greek organizations is vast. As evidenced by this compilation of literature, research does not need to focus on negative aspects such as alcohol abuse. By observing Greeks from different perspectives, researchers can tap into the wealth of benefits possible from joining such an organization. This study has chosen to examine Greek-affiliated students through the lenses of personality and political preference.

Personality

McCrae and John (1992) state that the Five Factor Model of personality, commonly known as the Big Five personality factors, is empirically supported, comprehensive in nature, and makes much sense in personality psychology. The Five Factor Model integrates a variety of personality constructs (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) in such a way as to give a global description of personality in as few as five scores (McCrae & John, 1992). The Big Five personality factors have been able to predict academic success (Cole, Field, &

Giles, 2003; Furnham, 2012; Kurtz, Puher, & Cross, 2012; Schnuck & Handal, 2011), health-promoting behaviors (Raynor & Levine, 2009), self-esteem and self-concept (Worrell & Cross, 2004), political opinions (Cooper, McCord, & Socha, 2011), and social adjustment (Kurtz et al., 2012; Schnuck & Handal, 2011).

The personality factor of extraversion is described as a form of positive emotionality, manifested as dominance, talkativeness, sociability, warmth, affiliation, and energy (McCrae & John, 1992). Because Greek-affiliated students have been found to differ from unaffiliated students in terms of social involvement (Pike, 2000), it is hypothesized that **Greek-affiliated students will be more likely than unaffiliated students to be extraverted.**

McCrae and John (1992) describe neuroticism as chronic negative affect, the tendency to experience distress, and the cognitive and behavioral repercussions of those characteristics. Neuroticism has been found to correlate positively with social activities (Cole et al., 2003). This emotional instability might be due to individuals' lack of time stemming from involvement with too many activities. The demands of joining a Greek organization indicate that the collegiate extracurricular activity would lead to poor academic performance and adjustment (Asel et al., 2009; DeBard et al., 2006), and thus, lead to higher likelihood of high neuroticism levels among Greek members. However, it has also been found that people decrease in neuroticism during young adulthood (Vaidya, Gray, Haig, Mroczek, & Watson, 2008). Furthermore, Park et al. (2009) found neuroticism to actually be significantly and negatively correlated with Greek affiliation. For this reason, it is hypothesized that **Greek-affiliated students will be less likely than unaffiliated students to be neurotic.**

The personality factor openness is commonly observed as aspects of intellect, but broader in scope (McCrae & John, 1992). This scope encompasses intelligence, imagination, and perception, while also serving as “sensitivity to art and beauty” (McCrae & John, 1992). According to De Los Reyes and Rich (2003), the college fraternity was inspired by the ancient Greeks of Europe, but now has digressed away from their original, scholarly focus into the purely social organizations that they are today. Pascarella, Flowers, and Whitt (2001) found that, among undergraduate students participating in diversity programming, Greek members chose to attend fewer sessions and, consequently, declined in openness to diversity during their first year of college. Asel et al. (2009) maintain that, although Greek organizations facilitate members’ social involvement, the involvement lacks relationship diversity and heterogeneity. This research leads to the hypothesis that **Greek-affiliated students will be less likely than unaffiliated students to be open to experiences.**

Conscientiousness is characterized by thoroughness, neatness, organization, diligence, and an orientation towards achievement (McCrae & John, 1992). It is the Big Five factor most associated with academic achievement (Cole et al., 2003; Furnham, 2012; Kurtz et al., 2012; Schnuck & Handal, 2011), as well as with the promotion of healthy lifestyle choices and behaviors (Raynor & Levine, 2009). According to Raynor and Levine (2009), conscientious individuals may be highly socialized to following rules and regulations. Their carefulness may lead them to cost-benefit analyses in decision-making. Greek-affiliated students have been found to have an increased likelihood to participate in an assortment of risky behaviors, including but not limited to smoking cigarettes, consuming alcohol, binge drinking, and having a large number of sexual

partners (Raynor & Levine, 2009). Some literature also points to Greek students' lack of academic success (Asel et al., 2009; DeBard et al., 2006), which would indicate a lack of either mental ability or conscientiousness (Cole et al., 2003). For this reason, it is hypothesized that **Greek-affiliated students will be less likely than unaffiliated students to be conscientious.**

In regards to the last factor, agreeableness, it is hypothesized that **no significant difference will be found between Greek-affiliated students and unaffiliated students.**

Agreeableness lies along a spectrum of altruism, nurturance, caring, and emotional support on one end, and hostility, indifference to others, self-centeredness, spitefulness, and jealousy at the other (McCrae & John, 1992). Worrell and Cross (2004) found that agreeableness has a moderate effect on impression management, a measure of how one attempts to present to others. Reasoning follows that, on average, a student would not self-report that he or she were hostile, indifferent to others, self-centered, spiteful, or jealous of others because he or she is attempting to appear agreeable.

In addition of differentiating the likelihood of personality factor presence in Greek members versus nonmembers, this study also seeks to identify the effect of Greek letter organizations on their members. A body of research points to the idea that Greek members select which organization matches and facilitates their preexisting attitudes and behaviors (Borsari & Carey, 1999; Caudill et al., 2006; DeSimone, 2009; Krasnow & Longino, 1973; Park et al., 2009; Vedlitz, 1983; Wechsler et al., 1996) through a process called self-selection. Members who find themselves in contention with the attitudes and behaviors of their organization tend to change their own attitudes and values to match those of the other members within the organization (Borsari & Carey, 1999). Over time,

the tendency to observe these attitudes and values will increase (Borsari & Carey, 1999).

The idea of accentuation plays a role in the change over time. If a member joins an organization because of his or her predispositions and that organization's embrace of those dispositions, then the organization will reinforce a growth in magnitude of those dispositions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Pascarella et al., 2012). For this reason, it is hypothesized that **Greek-affiliated students will become more similar over time spent affiliated with their respective organizations in regards to the Big Five personality factors.**

Political Preference

In general, college students tend to become more liberal in their political views over the course of college (Krasnow & Longino, 1973). Diverse experiences in college, including interaction with students different from one's self, create a liberalizing effect (Pascarella et al., 2012). Despite this general tendency for students to be exposed to diverse people and experiences while at college, fraternal organizations seem to have a neutralizing, if not opposite effect (Krasnow & Longino, 1973). Weeden, Hevel, Pasquesi, and Pascarella (2012) explain that to be conservative is to maintain the current political status quo, and that fraternities and sororities are served well by the current political system. Students who join Greek organizations tend to be wealthier than unaffiliated students (Weeden et al., 2012), which is why they would be well served by the current political system. Wealth is evident in that Greeks must pay dues to maintain membership, as well as partake in costs for other social activities typical of the organization and culture (Weeden et al., 2012). Other factors such as parent education and privilege might also explain why students joining Greek organizations are politically

conservative (Weeden et al., 2012). This leads to the hypothesis that **Greek-affiliated students will be more likely than unaffiliated students to be politically conservative.**

Krasnow and Longino (1973) found that fraternities significantly influenced their members in regards to personal political orientation, although results were mixed in regards to what direction members were influenced. They found that fraternities exerted a conservative influence only when the members were initially more liberal than the fraternity chapters' political norms, but exerted a liberal influence on members initially more conservative than their chapters' norms. However, this effect is in contention with the idea of accentuation (Pascarella et al., 2012). Students join Greek organizations by self-selection in order to facilitate their preexisting attitudes and beliefs. I agree with the idea of accentuation affecting Greek member change over time. Thus, it is hypothesized that **Greek-affiliated students become more similar over time spent affiliated with their respective organizations in regards to political preferences.**

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Participants

The total sample size of this study consisted of 613 participants. All participants were undergraduate students at Western Kentucky University. Of the sample, 427 participants were female and 182 participants were male, with four participants not indicating gender. This sample also consisted of 313 participants belonging to Greek letter social organizations (fraternities or sororities) and 300 participants not affiliated with Greek organizations.

Design

The design for this study was a between-subjects design (Greek-affiliated participants vs. non-affiliated) looking at both the Big Five personality factors (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism) and political preference (conservative vs. liberal) individually. Greek affiliation and degrees of personality and political preference were all self-determined by the participant on an electronic survey. Binary logistical regressions were used to analyze whether Greek-affiliated participants were more or less likely to be open to experience, conscientious, extraverted, agreeable, neurotic, and conservative compared to non Greek-affiliated participants. Linear regressions were used on each Greek organization individually to analyze the likelihood

that Greek-affiliated participants becoming more similar in the Big Five personality factors and political preference, respectively, over the course of time in the organization. This part of the study was a within-subjects design observing Greek-affiliated students by classification in college (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior).

Measures

Demographics. Participants completed an electronic demographics form including questions on age, gender, race, class year, and Greek affiliation, if applicable. (See Appendix A.)

Personality. The Mini-IPIP, a short form of the International Personality Item Pool (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006), was given to participants to measure the Big Five personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism). The Mini-IPIP consists of 20 brief statements that participants respond to on a Likert-type scale (*strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree*). A sample item from the Mini-IPIP is, “I have a vivid imagination.” Another item from the Mini-IPIP measuring a different construct is, “I get chores done the right way.” Short- and long-term test-retest correlations for the Mini-IPIP are high, with *rs* over .60 across five separate studies (Donnellan et al., 2006), and the time necessary to complete the measure is kept at a minimum. (See Appendix B.)

Political Preference. Four items were created specifically for this study to measure participants’ political conservatism. These items were constructed to resemble items on the Mini-IPIP and follow the same Likert-type scale for responses. A sample item from this measure is, “I am politically conservative.” Another sample item is, “In the next election, I will vote liberal.” (See Appendix C.)

Procedures

Greek-affiliated participants. Each of the Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Association, and National Pan-Hellenic Association organization presidents were emailed encouraging their chapters to participate in an online survey (see Appendix D). The top three highest participating organizations by percentage for both fraternity and sorority were awarded money towards the philanthropy of their chapter's choice. First place fraternity and sorority each received \$200, second place organizations each received \$120, and third place organizations each received \$80. The Western Kentucky University Faculty and Undergraduate Student Engagement (FUSE) Grant funded these awards. Presidents forwarded the link to the online survey to their chapter members. Chapter members were given an electronic letter of informed consent, six demographic questions, then a 24-item measure consisting of the Mini-IPIP and the author's political conservatism scale. After completing this measure, participants were given an electronic debriefing statement.

Non-affiliated participants. The same link to the online survey given to Greek organizations was also distributed to non-Greek participants. It was posted to a University application on www.facebook.com once, explaining that participants would be entered in a drawing to win one of five \$20 gift cards. The FUSE Grant also funded these gift cards. In addition to an open online post, the survey was distributed online through the Department of Psychology Study Board website that offered students course credit for participating in psychology studies. The survey was the same for non Greek-affiliated participants as for Greek-affiliated participants except that non Greek-affiliated participants were given five demographic questions and after the 24-item measure,

participants were given the opportunity to enter the gift card drawing by typing their email address in the space provided. Students participating for course credit were instructed to email the author in order to be given granted credit. Winners of the drawing were determined by assigning each email address a number then selecting five numbers at random.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

It was hypothesized that Greek-affiliated students would differ from unaffiliated students in several of the Big Five personality factors and political preference. Greek-affiliated students were predicted to be more likely than unaffiliated students to be extraverted, less likely to be neurotic, less likely to be open to experiences, less likely to be conscientious, similarly likely to be agreeable, and more likely to be politically conservative.

Preliminary Analysis

Participants' answers to the Mini-IPIP were summed before analyzing the data such that all items measuring a given personality factor were totaled separately (i.e., all items measuring extraversion were totaled, yielding an extraversion sum; all items measuring agreeableness were totaled, yielding an agreeableness sum; etc.). Descriptive statistics can be found for Greek-affiliated students and unaffiliated students in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for Greek-Affiliated Participants by Sub-Scale*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Extraversion	14.42	2.75	7.00	20.00
Agreeableness	16.08	2.40	6.00	20.00
Conscientiousness	15.19	2.64	7.00	20.00
Neuroticism	10.33	2.85	4.00	18.00
Openness	15.04	2.27	6.00	20.00
Conservatism	13.50	4.05	4.00	20.00

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for Unaffiliated Participants by Sub-Scale*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Extraversion	13.40	3.43	4.00	20.00
Agreeableness	15.86	2.44	8.00	20.00
Conscientiousness	14.62	2.43	8.00	20.00
Neuroticism	11.01	2.90	4.00	19.00
Openness	15.11	2.51	7.00	20.00
Conservatism	11.88	3.72	4.00	20.00

The lowest possible score on each sub-scale was 4.00 and the highest possible score was 20.00. On average, Greek-affiliated students scored higher than unaffiliated students on measures of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and political conservatism. Unaffiliated students displayed higher levels of neuroticism and openness to experience than Greek-affiliated students. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for each sub-scale (Table 3).

Table 3. *Cronbach's Alpha for Each Sub-Scale*

Sub-Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Extraversion	.799
Agreeableness	.685
Conscientiousness	.637
Neuroticism	.662
Openness	.639
Conservatism	.889

Hypothesis Testing

In order to determine whether or not Greek-affiliated students were more or less likely to differ from unaffiliated students in the Big Five personality factors, binary, logistic regression analysis was used. All personality variables were entered into one equation in order to observe individuals as a whole rather than as separate parts. Logistic regression coefficients for the Big Five personality factors can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. *Regression Coefficients of Big Five Personality Factor Sums*

	<i>B</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds Ratio
Extraversion	.107	13.223	1	.000	1.113
Agreeableness	.002	.004	1	.950	1.002
Conscientiousness	.064	3.378	1	.066	1.066
Neuroticism	-.067	4.743	1	.029	.935
Openness	-.071	3.414	1	.065	.931
Constant	-.572	.331	1	.565	.564

For each point increase on the extraversion sub-scale, the odds of being classified as a Greek-affiliated student increase by 1.113 ($p < .001$). For each point increase on the neuroticism sub-scale, the odds of being classified as a Greek-affiliated student decrease by .935 ($p < .03$). The coefficients found for the sub-scales agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness were not found to be significant. These findings were predicted by regression equation: predicted logic of Greek affiliation = $-.57 + .11*(\text{Extraversion}) + .002*(\text{Agreeableness}) + .06*(\text{Conscientiousness}) - .07*(\text{Neuroticism}) - .07*(\text{Openness})$. Classification prediction outcomes for the equation can be found in Table 5.

Table 5. *Affiliation Status Classification Predictions for Big Five Factors*

Observed	Predicted		
	Unaffiliated	Greek-affiliated	Percentage Correct
Unaffiliated	114	146	43.8
Greek-affiliated	85	207	70.9
Overall percentage			58.2

Binary logistic regression was also employed to analyze the political preferences of participants. The coefficients of this analysis can be found in Table 6. For each point increase on the sub-scale conservatism, the odds of being classified as a Greek-affiliated students increase by 1.112 ($p < .001$). This finding was by predicted by regression equation: predicted logic of Greek affiliation = $-1.301 + .11*(Conservatism)$. Classification prediction outcomes for this equation can be found in Table 7.

Table 6. *Regression Coefficients of Political Preference Sum*

	<i>B</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds Ratio
Conservatism	.106	23.945	1	.000	1.112
Constant	-1.301	20.395	1	.000	.272

Table 7. *Affiliation Status Classification Predictions for Political Preference*

Observed	Predicted		
	Unaffiliated	Greek-affiliated	Percentage Correct
Unaffiliated	186	106	63.7
Greek-affiliated	152	155	50.5
Overall percentage			56.9

It was also hypothesized that Greek members would become more similar in personality and political preferences over time spent affiliated to their respective

organizations. Linear regression was used to determine whether or not Greek-affiliated students become more similar in personality and political preference over time spent affiliated with their respective organizations. Results were inconclusive, with no patterns emerging among separate organizations or among Greek students as a whole. Only five organizations displayed significant coefficients in two constructs or fewer. Coefficients for these linear regressions by group can be found in Table 8. To maintain confidentiality, each organization has been renamed.

Table 8. *Standardized Coefficient Betas of Greek Organizations' Change in Constructs Over Time Spent Affiliated*

	Constructs				
	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism	Openness	Conservatism
Gamma <i>n</i> = 8	<i>B</i> = -.902 <i>p</i> < .03	--	--	--	--
Epsilon <i>n</i> = 11	<i>B</i> = -.981 <i>p</i> = .001	--	<i>B</i> = -.766 <i>p</i> < .03	--	--
Zeta <i>n</i> = 39	--	--	--	--	<i>B</i> = .333 <i>p</i> < .04
Iota <i>n</i> = 68	--	<i>B</i> = -.362 <i>p</i> < .01	--	<i>B</i> = .404 <i>p</i> < .01	--
Kappa <i>n</i> = 23	--	<i>B</i> = -.581 <i>p</i> < .05	--	--	--

Note. A dash indicates that there was not significant data for that cell.

As members spent more time (in years) in organization Gamma, they were less extraverted ($p < .03$). This result was true also for members of organization Epsilon ($p = .001$). Time spent in organization Epsilon also affected neuroticism, with members displaying less neuroticism over time as a function of year in school. Members in organization Zeta displayed a tendency of being more politically conservative over time ($p < .04$). Analysis on organizations Iota and Kappa revealed that members were less

agreeable over time spent within their organizations ($p < .01$ and $p < .05$, respectively).

Members in organization Iota also were more open to experience over time ($p < .01$).

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to seek out quantifiable evidence of positive aspects of Greek letter social organizations. By doing so, this study hoped to add reasonable data to help answer the question, “Is Greek life worth it?” Students affiliated with Greek organizations have shown that they are more likely than students not affiliated with a Greek organization to be extraverted, emotionally stable (the antithesis of neuroticism), and politically conservative. These findings confirm previous research (Park et al. 2009; Rhoads, 1995) and partially support the hypotheses set forth for this project. As predicted, no significant difference was found between Greek members and unaffiliated students in the likelihood of being agreeable. However, Greek-affiliated students were projected to be less likely to be open to experiences and less likely to be conscientious compared to unaffiliated students. These hypotheses were not supported by the data, although the literature does not suggest either direction on these constructs.

It comes as little surprise that Greek-affiliated students are more likely to be extraverted than the average college student. By self-selection, students determine for themselves whether or not they want to join a Greek letter social organization. Social fraternities and sororities encourage social involvement (Asel et al., 2009), which nourishes extraverted students’ higher social and activity needs (Park et al., 2009). This is

not to say that an introverted student would not join a social fraternity or sorority, but that he or she is less likely to do so than a student high in extraversion. Students low in extraversion might receive their energy from other sources than social interaction. If a student gained energy from solitude and studying in college, perhaps he or she would be more inclined to join an honor society. Such honor societies were once combined with social fraternities, but now are said to foster more intellectual activity than social fraternities (De Los Reyes & Rich, 2003). Within an honor society, an introverted student might find individuals similar to him or her.

There are several perspectives to examine for reasoning why Greek-affiliated students are less likely to be neurotic than unaffiliated students. Park et al. (2009) set forth that, due to the high demands of Greek life, students who often experience negative emotions stay away from the Greek system. On the other hand, Greek organizations as a whole might be deciding for themselves whether or not neurotic individuals join. Fraternity and sorority recruitment habits and standards might limit student intake to only those deemed emotionally stable. If a student seems too anxious, stressed, or depressed, Greek organizations might reject the request to join by the prospective recruit. Another possible perspective that would explain why Greek members are less likely to be neurotic could be the contribution of social support by fellow members. Woodward et al. (1996) observed sex differences in social support between fraternities and sororities. Even though fraternity members provided each other with less emotional support than sororities provided their members, fraternities were able to support in other areas such as technical challenges or tangible needs. Woodward et al. also observed sororities provided less tangible support to their members, but were stronger at supporting via listening to

one another than fraternity members. Social support in any form has the potential to benefit the target of support emotionally, which could decrease neuroticism within the Greek system.

This study asked if Greek members, an overarching social demographic group comprised of several smaller social demographic groups, could possibly share political views. It was found that the Greek members surveyed were more likely to be politically conservative than nonmembers. Even though many Greek members show signs of conservatism (Rhoads, 1995), it is very possible that the results could have been due to the demographic of the sample studied. As the sample was taken from a regional university in the east south-central region of the United States, these findings may not hold true for all fraternity and sorority members. Where certain political parties and their views hold stronger influence, results may differ.

Due to the forces of self-selection and accentuation, it was hypothesized that Greek members would become more similar to one another in regards to personality and political preferences over time spent affiliated with their respective organizations (DeSimone, 2009; Park et al., 2009). Cross-sectional linear regression on each Greek organization by year in college did not yield any patterns in Greek member change over time. Of the sample, few organizations responded at a rate greater than 30%. The remaining organizations had poor response rates, with many not even represented within the sample. Had more participants responded to the study, patterns might have arisen. Of the few significant data points that resulted for these hypotheses, none represented a change in Greek members' conscientiousness. Two organizations decreased in extraversion over time (year in school). Similarly, two other organizations decreased in

agreeableness over time. One organization increased in emotional stability over time, which is a positive result of the Greek system. If an organization can take neurotic students and give them social support and help them build confidence during the turbulent time of college, Greek members might begin to be seen in a different light. One organization increased members' openness to experience over time, another commendable quality. College students joining organizations facilitating close-mindedness would, in a sense, defeat the purpose of the college social experience. Finally, one organization displayed a change in members' political preferences towards higher conservatism over time spent affiliated with the organization.

Limitations

By far, the largest limitation to this study is the sample. The size of the sample was sufficient for determining differences in likelihood of personality traits between Greek members and nonmembers, but was insufficient for identifying change over time. Due to the number of participants in most organizations represented in the study, analysis may not have had power to be certain about the few significant results in Greek member change over time spent affiliated. If each Greek organization had response rates approaching 100%, clear patterns and statistical power might have emerged in Greek member personality and political preference change over time. Because the study was administered online via email, most students disregarded the study. However, even with a relatively small response rate, enough participants were recruited for significant results in the first part of the study.

Furthermore, the sample has potential to be biased. All participants were students from the same university in the eastern south-central region of the United States. This

university was also limited as to what Greek organizations were present on its campus. Other organizations, students from other universities, and universities in other regions of the United States have potential for different results.

In addition to the limitations of the sample and its size, this study faced other limitations in its design. In order to properly measure Greek member change over time, a longitudinal study following freshmen students through their senior year would work best. This study was cross-sectional, examining change in Greek members by looking at present freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Several years would be necessary to complete this study as a longitudinal study. The current study was conducted under time constraints not allowing such a longitudinal design to be fully utilized.

Furthermore, Greek-affiliated participants were not presented with an item inquiring about the amount of time they had spent affiliated with their respective organizations. Analysis was conducted by examining students by classification, or year in school. This procedure assumes that all Greek-affiliated participants joined their respective organizations in the first year in college and remained through their fourth year. In reality, many students join in their second or third year as well, which would disrupt the function of personality and political preference change over time affiliated.

The final major limitation to this study is the measure of conservatism. The measure yielded results consistent with some of the literature (Rhoads, 1995), but the measure has no verified validity. The measure was modeled after the Mini-IPIP, but created by the author of this study. It is possible for the measured political preference results to be invalid.

Future Research

Future directions for this research would begin with validity studies for the measure of political conservatism. By administering the conservatism measure along with previously validated political measures, validity can be confirmed. Another possible option could be to replicate the study while using another appropriate measure to examine political preferences of Greek-affiliated students.

This study was intended to be a gateway into studying Greek organizations and their members from new perspectives. By objectively focusing on the positive aspects of fraternities and sororities as well as the negative aspects, the value of joining such an organization can be quantitatively determined. Research has yet to be conducted on aspects such as Greek organizations' relation to the workplace. Greek organizations teach members professional processes such as recruitment, training, organizational structure and hierarchies, and business rules of order among other things. Studies could also be conducted on how fraternities and sororities self-govern. Researching Greek members' friendships and social networks might provide useful insight for structuring other organizations to promote more social involvement. Greek organization community service, philanthropy, and the motivations behind such service also could serve as another topic of study.

Conclusion

The results of this study have produced positive and neutral implications for Greek organizations. If Greek organizations had been found to facilitate negative personality aspects in members' lives, reasoning would follow that college students should not join such organizations. For example, if Greek members had scored

significantly lower than nonmembers in openness to experience, the data could have been interpreted such that Greek affiliation facilitates close-mindedness. Administration would not support organizations that encourage uniformity and having narrow perceptions of the world. If Greek affiliation had correlated with significantly lower levels of conscientiousness, it might be concluded that Greek organizations do not emphasize carefulness or self-discipline, possibly pushing members away from conscientiousness. Again, it would be illogical for any person or entity, university or not, to support the endeavors of an organization developing negative personality traits in its members. This study found that Greek-affiliated students are more likely than unaffiliated students to be low in neuroticism. If Greek organizations can impact their members such that college students become more emotionally stable, fraternities and sororities might have other untapped benefits waiting to be discovered. For this reason, in-depth research examining collegiate Greek letter social organizations should continue. Doing so might unlock hidden potential for college students to develop into stronger, working adults contributing to society.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHICS

What is your age? _____

What is your gender?

Male

Female

What is your race?

African-American

Asian American

Caucasian

Hispanic

Other: _____

What is your classification (by year)?

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Are you in a Greek-letter social organization at WKU?

Yes

No

(If Yes)

To which organization do you affiliate yourself?

Alpha Delta Pi

Alpha Gamma Delta

Alpha Gamma Rho

Alpha Kappa Alpha

Alpha Omicron Pi

Alpha Phi Alpha

Alpha Tau Omega

Alpha Xi Delta

Chi Omega

Delta Sigma Theta

Delta Tau Delta

FarmHouse

Iota Phi Theta

Kappa Alpha Order

Kappa Alpha Psi

Kappa Delta

Kappa Sigma

Lambda Chi Alpha

Omega Phi Alpha

Omega Psi Phi

Phi Beta Sigma
Phi Delta Theta
Phi Gamma Delta
Phi Mu
Pi Kappa Alpha
Sigma Alpha Epsilon
Sigma Chi
Sigma Gamma Rho
Sigma Kappa
Sigma Nu
Sigma Phi Epsilon
Zeta Phi Beta

APPENDIX B

MINI INTERNATIONAL PERSONALITY ITEM POOL (MINI-IPIP)

Directions: Please answer whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), feel neutral (N), disagree (SD) or strongly disagree (SD) with each of the following statements. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

1. I am the life of the party	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. I sympathize with others' feelings	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. I get chores done the right way	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. I have frequent mood swings	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. I have a vivid imagination	SA	A	N	D	SD
*6. I don't talk a lot	SA	A	N	D	SD
*7. I am not interested in other people's problems	SA	A	N	D	SD
*8. I often forget to put things in their proper place	SA	A	N	D	SD
*9. I am relaxed most of the time	SA	A	N	D	SD
*10. I am not interested in abstract ideas	SA	A	N	D	SD
11. I talk to a lot of different people at parties	SA	A	N	D	SD
12. I feel others' emotions	SA	A	N	D	SD
13. I like order	SA	A	N	D	SD
14. I get upset easily	SA	A	N	D	SD
*15. I have difficulty understanding abstract ideas	SA	A	N	D	SD
*16. I keep in the background	SA	A	N	D	SD
*17. I am not really interested in others	SA	A	N	D	SD
*18. I make a mess of things	SA	A	N	D	SD
*19. I seldom feel blue.	SA	A	N	D	SD
*20. I do not have a good imagination	SA	A	N	D	SD

Scoring: SA = 5, A = 4, N = 3, D = 2, SD = 1; items with an asterisk (*) are reverse-scored: SA = 1, A = 2, N = 3, D = 4, SD = 5.

Subscales:

Extraversion: 1, 6, 11, 16

Agreeableness: 2, 7, 12, 17

Conscientiousness: 3, 8, 13, 18

Neuroticism: 4, 9, 14, 19

APPENDIX C

POLITICAL CONSERVATISM SUB-SCALE

Directions: Please answer whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), feel neutral (N), disagree (SD) or strongly disagree (SD) with each of the following statements. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

21. I am politically conservative	SA	A	N	D	SD
*22. I am politically liberal	SA	A	N	D	SD
23. In the last election I voted conservative	SA	A	N	D	SD
*24. In the next election I will vote liberal	SA	A	N	D	SD

Scoring: SA = 5, A = 4, N = 3, D = 2, SD = 1; items with an asterisk (*) are reverse-scored: SA = 1, A = 2, N = 3, D = 4, SD = 5.

Subscale:

Conservatism: 21, 22, 23, 24

Original measure by Armstrong, M. B. for this study.

APPENDIX D

GREEK ORGANIZATION SAMPLE RECRUITMENT LETTER

WKU Fraternity/Sorority Presidents,

I am conducting a survey for my Honors Capstone Experience/Thesis. If you could please help me by filling it out, I would be very appreciative! You will be providing some brief demographic information and then answering some questions about your opinion. It should take no more than five minutes to complete.

Furthermore, by participating, your organization has a chance at winning some money towards the philanthropy of your choice! The three fraternities and three sororities with the highest percentage response to this survey will win a donation. The first highest percentage of responses per organization will win \$200, second will receive \$120, and third will receive \$80.

Thank you so much and please encourage your organizations' members to complete this survey as well so that you can win some money for philanthropy!

Here is a link to the survey online:

https://wku.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_8CzTYnaWLVuMPFW

Sincerely,

Bo Armstrong

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