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I, Terri Hurdle, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Urban Educational Leadership.

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2600
The Development of Leadership Skills of African American Women in Sororities:

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by

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Abstract

Since their inception colleges and universities have taken on the role of developing their students as leaders and good citizens, through their leadership programming. However, the theoretical frameworks utilized within these programs have excluded groups that have been traditionally marginalized, especially African American women. Thus far, few if any theories or programs deal with the descriptors of leadership for African American women or include their perspective. Moreover, historically Black women have experienced the dehumanization of their character through concepts not created or voiced by them as illustrated through the current villainization of First Lady Michelle Obama as being an angry Black woman. Some Scholars believed that these stereotypes were formed during slavery and were used to justify the treatment of African American women. Due to these concepts and the fact that the vast majority of leadership theories are based upon male characteristics there is a need to understand how this group of young women develops as leaders.

This investigation utilized a qualitative approach in an effort to understand how African American women develop as leaders and the university’s responsibility to them. In addition, the study focused upon young women who were members of Black Greek Letter Organizations to gain their perspective on their development as leaders and the programs offered by the university. The study also included the voices of Student Life practitioners who provided their point of view regarding institution’s offerings. The study also infused the following theoretical models to guide its approach: Astin’s Theory of Leadership Involvement, Black Feminist Thought, and Critical Race Theory. The findings for this investigation revealed that African American women develop as leaders by being involved and gaining leadership opportunities.
The outcomes also displayed that their membership in Black Greek Letter organizations assisted in growing their confidence and maturity.
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to those who have poured into me throughout my lifetime starting with E. Marie Gentry, my dearly departed grandmother who saw something within me. She was determined to see me succeed academically. I would also like to thank my grandfather Warren T. Gentry, who also played a significant role in my upbringing, know that you are very much appreciated. To my Great Grandmother Mary Jackson, thanks for always seeing a beautiful woman in me, know that because of you I see a “pretty girl.”

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Chapter 1

Narrative

A third-year female African American student enters the recreation area of the Office of Minority Affairs. There she joins a large cluster of women who are assembled to gather information on four prominent African American sororities. Tonight, members of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta, and Sigma Gamma Rho will share a platform that will highlight and provide facts about their respective organizations. She, along with the majority of women in the room, was excited and nervous about the opportunity to join one of these great groups. Initially, she thought that this chance would elude her because her university did not have nor did they strongly endorse Greek-letter organizations. However, the small population of African American women at the university had a strong interest in bringing these groups to the campus.

Originally, this young woman became interested in sororities through a popular television show entitled *A Different World* and later through Spike Lee’s movie *School Daze*. Although, she became married to the idea of joining a sorority after visiting several historically Black Colleges and Universities such as Spelman, Tuskegee, and Florida A&M. During the visit(s) she was able to meet members of these great organizations and they provided her with additional information about their history and service to the community. The conversations allowed her to note their contributions to science, education, and key political movements. As a result of these encounters, her desire to join one of these respective groups was fueled.

Another reason for the young woman’s excitement was due to the possibility of joining an organization that was interested in developing her further as a leader and woman. Yes, her campus offered several leadership opportunities and she was the current President of the Black Student Association yet, even in this role her voice is reduced because the African American
male leadership is resistant to her ideas. If allowed, becoming a member of an African American sorority would provide this shy young woman with the chance to direct, support, and give voice to issues that reflect African American women.

**Introduction**

For a number of African American women, membership in a historically Black Greek Letter sorority has traditionally served as an agent of support, leadership opportunities, and personal growth. Within this space Black women organized, mentored and trained for leadership. Phillips (2005) argued that the motivation for membership in these organizations was due to “their growing presence at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWI); thus the natural course for African American women was to develop organizations where they learned and lived to bring about change in a racially hostile nation” (p. 341). The sorority offered these women who were outsiders on their campus as well as the greater society a sense of place that was developed for them and by them.

Prior to the establishment of African American sororities, Black women had limited access to participate in any developmental training or organizations because of pre-existing hegemonic structures at universities and within America (Phillips, 2005). Examples of this oppression came in the form of racism and sexism. The racism that most African Americans encountered was related to their intellectualism. Research conducted by scientists such as Darwin and Gobineau was used to support the theory that Black people were intellectually inferior. “Added to this scientific racism was Whites’ insistence that African American women were immoral and lacked the virtuous characteristics of White women” (Phillips, 2005, p. 343). Consequently, they were not viewed favorably within the United States.
As it relates to sexism, African American men added to their burden by also placing African American women as third-class citizens. Prior to the Emancipation Proclamation a document that provided limited freedom to slaves in select states; African American men and women were united in their quest to build up the race. This was because “during this time, Blacks were concerned with uplifting their race—men and women—and thus were not focused on gender issues” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 19). However, once African American males were able to receive instruction in a number of academic disciplines, and the majority of Black women were regulated to elementary and secondary teaching professions, the unified philosophy of uplifting the race disappeared. The liberty education brought to young men led to African American women’s marginalization. As a result, “double oppression—racism and sexism—was born for African American women when their subordinate status was assumed and enforced by white and black men as well as white women” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 19). Therefore, the Black Sorority provided a voice in which Black women could express their concerns about their community, such as the lynching of African Americans through the personality of Ida B. Wells as well as the Women’s Suffrage movement the efforts of Delta Sigma Theta and Alpha Kappa Alpha.

Moreover, when African American women sought membership in professional and civic organizations they were not fully embraced into these organizations, “even well-educated and professional African American women were not wholeheartedly welcomed into liberal women’s organizations” (Neuman, 2007. p. 170). Neumann (2007) stated that a large number of African American women were members of national organizations such as the American Association for University Women and the American Nurses Association, but on a local level they were denied participant privileges by the chapters due to their race. Membership in historically Black Greek-
Letter Organizations (BGLO) provided Black women with leadership training because the opportunities to participate in these activities were few according to Giddings (2006).

The creation of Black sororities supplied African American women with a safe place to develop however, prior to their establishment, fraternal organizations were founded on college campuses and were viewed as a vehicle for student’s leadership development. America’s colleges and universities were founded when the country was in its infancy stage. New leadership needed to be established in order for the country to continue its growth. According to Brubacher and Rudy (1997) one of the early philosophical tenets of higher education was to train leaders for service to the community. Many people believed that Greek-lettered organizations emulated “the highest form of leadership because they embody not only academic achievement but also service and leadership to the community” (Williams, 2004, p. 4). Therefore, the establishment of fraternal groups provided educators with an excellent means to expand their students’ leadership skills.

The establishment of Greek organizations on college campuses was the conduit that led to more universities taking on the responsibility of leadership development and programming. Universities began to include this commitment within their institutional mission statements as well as through their programs of study. An example of this is Georgia State University (GSU) whose mission statement includes the following verbiage: “to educate leaders for the State of Georgia and the nation, and to prepare citizens for lifelong learning in a global society (Georgia State University, 2011, ¶ 1).

Incorporating this ideal into university mission statements demonstrated a university’s dedication to leadership development. The College of Business at the University of Cincinnati (2009) infused leadership development into its Carl H. Lindner Honors-Plus program. The
educational course targets highly motivated and academically prepared students. The students within the program take part in a core curriculum that includes: an honors business curriculum that focuses upon analytical as well as communication skills, seven quarters of paid work experience, a month long study abroad trip, and a leadership program sponsored by Cincinnati’s Proctor & Gamble Company that focuses upon academic and experiential leadership.

Even though universities have demonstrated their support of leadership development, initially these programs excluded a number of constituencies, particularly women. This was due to the original focus of America’s higher educational system, which was the “training of young men for the ministry and for future leadership positions within colonial government” (Aleman & Renn, 2002, p. 3). This belief limited women’s admission into colleges and universities. Also, the nation based its beliefs and policies on a Judeo-Christian philosophy. Those who believed in this ideology felt that women were subservient to men. Aleman and Renn (2002) acknowledged that “within American society, women were confined to one sphere of life, the domestic, and only men were part of the public—political, economic, and social—sphere of the larger communities. White women were expected to conform to a “cult of true womanhood” that demanded piety, obedience, purity, and domesticity” (p. 3). African American women were also categorized largely as domestic partners to their husbands because society did not view them as monetary contributors to their households. They were also perceived as not being human so the greater society did not see their educational attainment as a priority, nor did they see the value in developing them as leaders.

As a result of the exclusionary policies practiced by the universities, early theories and programs were based upon male beliefs and attributes. For example one of the trait theories was titled the “Great Man” theory that was “defined as idealized, masculine, heroic myths, rather
than the realities of ordinary leadership” (Christie & Liguard, 2001, p. 4). The theory embraced the attributes of past male military and political leaders. Later theories such as the ones created by Chickering, Perry, Holland, and Kohlberg, provided student development professionals with models that have been used for a number of years in relation to their work with college students. Many of these models do not include a historical point of view regarding Black women and their experience in America. Howard-Hamilton (2003) suggested that these concepts are universal in relation to their application, leaving out important cultural and factual accounts that assisted in shaping the idea of the Black woman in America; thus, the question must be asked are they applicable when developing them as leaders for this millennium. Therefore, an assessment of these programs through the lens of the African American sorority member is needed to ensure that this population is receiving services that are inclusive and helpful in their leadership.

**Statement of the Problem**

Historically universities have taken on the role of developing their students as leaders and good citizens, yet the programs and theories utilized to build their skills excluded marginalized groups, especially African American women. Moreover, to date, there are few (if any) theories or programs that deal with the descriptors of leadership for Black women or include their perspective. Howard-Hamilton (2003) declared that “finding and applying theoretical constructs that are appropriate for explaining and understanding the experiences of African American women can be challenging. Traditional theories used in student affairs practice, “ for example, are very general and so might miss important issues encountered or attributes embodied by African American women” (p. 19 ). This finding is problematic especially at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI ) that have a past history of exclusion and access concerning African American students.
Beyond this exclusion, African American women experience the dehumanization of their character through a number of negative concepts that have been historically associated with Black women. These concepts include the angry woman, Jezebel (promiscuous and loose) and mammy (nonsexual mother figure). Some Scholars believed that these stereotypes were formed during slavery and were used to justify the treatment of African American women (Gordon, 2008). Professionally, African American women are often viewed as being “too aggressive, too direct, too assertive, and too flashy for corporate America” (Livers and Carver, 2003, p. 78). Although, when these same traits are used to describe men they are viewed as positive.

Traditionally, African American women have learned to be strong and independent because of their history of marginalization. This factor among others must be taken into consideration when molding leadership programs for African American women. This point is critical as more African American women assume leadership positions that have traditionally excluded them.

As more Black women accepted positions of authority the history of exclusion within higher education heightens the need to acknowledge the recent changes concerning polices and laws governing admission, support programs, as well as scholarship standards. The revision of these policies have the ability to influence African American admittance into public institutions, thereby reversing affirmative action guidelines established in the late 1960s and 1970s; for example, in 1996 the State of California passed proposition 209. The passing of this policy prohibited any use of race, gender, and ethnicity in university admissions; therefore, colleges such as UCLA had to revise their admission standards and policies, which “resulted in declines in minority applicants and admissions to undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools” (Cheeseborough, 2000, p. 2). Additionally, state universities struggled to meet the academic
demands of a “diverse population and adhering to the elimination of Affirmative Action” (Chesseborough, 2000, p. 2).

In 2003 the Supreme Court supported the petitioners of a lawsuit who felt the University of Michigan violated the Equal Protection Act and Title VI; two laws that prohibited discrimination on the basis of race. “The Court held that the University of Michigan’s College of Literature, Science, and the Arts’ (LSA) undergraduate admissions policy, which automatically awarded extra points to members of underrepresented groups, was unconstitutional” (Gutierrez & Preston, 2004, p. 237). The judgment in this decision affected colleges and universities across the country who utilized an affirmative action approach in regards to their scholarships and admission’s standards causing a change in their university population in relation to diversity.

The changes to affirmative action policies and elimination of support programs have not only changed diversity on college campuses it has heightened the need for understanding and gaining knowledge concerning the leadership development of African Americans. Due to the fact that Black Greek Letter sororities were largely established to counter the lack of opportunity and challenge polices, they are a great conduit to understanding this group’s development; “African American’s experiences in the United States led them to create college-based organizations built on their past traditions of self-help, racial solidarity, and racial uplift” (Phillips, 2005, p.341). Furthermore as the population of Black women has fluctuated at universities the need for these supportive organizations has increased.

In addition to having services and organizations that support diverse groups such as African American women, universities should also review the leadership models that guide their leadership programs. The vast majority of universities have implemented traditional student
development theories into their leadership programs and services, yet the vast majority of these theories excluded the experience and culture of African American women that were discussed previously. It is the responsibility of student affairs professionals to evaluate whether these ideologies are effectively developing African American women’s leadership skills. They should also assess their responsibility to this population in developing programming that is inclusive of their experience. To date little research exists on this subject because past research has not focused specifically upon Black women. Hence, an assessment of African American women’s leadership growth on PWIs is necessary to understand the development of leadership skills at institutions that have in the past disqualified them.

**Purpose of the Study**

This investigation aims to determine how female members of Historically Black Greek Letter Organizations develop as leaders at PWI as well as explore the universities responsibility to these women. Specifically, this study addressed the following research questions:

1) How do African American women develop as leaders at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI)?

2) How does membership in Black Greek Letter Organizations shape African American women as leaders and influence their development?

3) Do the services and programs provided by the university aid in African American women’s leadership development, offer opportunities for leadership as well as address the university’s responsibility to this population?

This research study was important because prior to the 1960s PWI did not fully welcome or recruit African American students. This resulted in programs and services that were based upon a male and majority community’s experiences and theoretical framework. This narrow
point of view has left women, particularly African American women, without a voice, identity, and marginalized their roles; “traditional leadership literature focuses on males as the informants about leadership” (Waring, 2003, p. 31).

Another factor which underscores the need for this investigation is that a number of women are entering the workforce and assuming positions that were once predetermine for men. Black Issues in Higher Education (2004) projected in 2008; the workforce would include a significant number of women. The US Census Bureau recorded the actual number as 46.5 and estimated in 2018 the number will slightly rise to 46.9 (United States Department of Labor, 2012). If this assumption holds true, this factor underscores the need for leadership programs that are relevant, inclusive, and diverse.

Lastly, the vast majority of research that focuses on Black Greek Letter Organizations centers on hazing, alcohol, and pledging. Recently, scholars such as Kimbrough, Patton, and others have added to the discussion through their investigations on these topics: leadership, advising Greek organizations, and scholarship. However, little data exist on how membership in these organizations has influenced the leadership of Black women. This factor is astounding, especially since these organizations have produced a number of African American female trailblazers who have impacted politics, education, and business. Examples of torchbearers from these organizations include: Daisy Bates, Advisor to the Little Rock Nine, Gwendolyn Sawyer Cherry, the first African American woman to attend the University of Miami Law School and who served in Florida’s State legislator, and Autherine Lucy, the first Black Student to attend the University of Alabama. For organizations to produce this type of leadership, additional investigation is needed to examine the influence membership in Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLO) has on their leadership.
Summary

In summary the purpose of this academic review was to provide a definitive answer regarding how members of African American Sororities develop as leaders at Predominantly White Institutions. As we proceed further into the 21st Century women are assuming roles that traditionally have been designed for men, however, the curriculum utilized in most college campuses are not based upon the most inclusive theoretical frameworks. In general, African American women have come from marginalized experiences that have influenced how they have come to view the world.

Moreover, membership in fraternal organizations is said to provide valuable learning experiences for students, therefore it is important to clarify how participation in these organizations assist in this population’s growth as leaders. Lastly, due to the fact many colleges and universities have taken on the responsibility of training and developing new leadership, data are needed to review whether or not they are fulfilling their institutions goals concerning the education and instruction of these potential leaders.

Chapter 2 provides a detail review of the history of African American education, Black Greek Letter Organizations, and past research on this subject area. It also provides an overview of leadership concepts and theoretical frameworks. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in this qualitative review, while Chapter 4 describes the results from the data. Chapter 5 analyzes and summarizes the research study.
Definition of Terms

The following terms used in the study are listed to assist the reader in understanding the terms and ideas included in this study.

African American, black, and Black- are used interchangeably within this document in reference to Black women in the US.

Alumni Members-refers to members of Greek Letter organizations who have graduated from undergrad and now operate out of the graduate chapter

Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLO) - refers to the current members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council; members include Alpha Phi Alpha, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi Delta Sigma Theta, Phi Beta Sigma, Zeta Phi Beta, Sigma Gamma Rho, and Iota Phi Theta

Greeks- refers to undergraduate members of Greek Letter organizations on college campuses

Leadership Development-relates to the overall process of how students are developed as leaders and the programs and services offered by the university to assist with this process

Leadership Opportunity-refers to the opportunity for undergraduate students at the university to participate in student groups, gain leadership positions, university programs and services

Student Leaders-describes members of the undergraduate community who participate in student organizations and accept executive/management positions within the organizations

Student Life Professionals- refers members of the university community who operate in the following roles administrators (Vice-President) and staff (Directors, Program Directors, Program Coordinators)
**Student Organizations**-refers to undergraduate college organizations approved and managed by the university; student group types include academic, religious, athletic, political, professional, community service, Fraternities and Sororities

**Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC)**-refers to the association for men’s collegiate fraternities

**National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC)**-refers to a joint organization that includes the nine most prominent Black Greek Letter organizations

**Pan-Hellenic Council (PHC)**-describes the umbrella organization for over 26 national sororities
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

The History of African American Education

The history of African American education in America finds much of its roots in slavery. Persons who were imported from the continent of Africa were brought here to further advance the economy in the United States through free labor. According to Woodson (1919) Africans were shipped to America to “meet the needs of their environment” (p. 1), which was providing a free workforce. Consequently, their education was not seen as a priority, but the owners knew some form of training was needed. “It required little argument to convince intelligent masters that slaves who had some conception of modern civilization and understood the language of their owners would be more valuable” (Woodson, 1919, p. 3). Unfortunately, they were unsure about how to accomplish this goal. Several masters moved towards more brutal forms of training because they did not want slaves to have a yearning for freedom. The owners also felt that “slaves could not be fully enlightened without developing a longing for liberty; not a few masters maintained that the more brutish the bondmen the more pliant they become for purpose of exploitation (Woodson, 1919, pp. 1-2); this group of owners convinced southerners that slaves should not be educated.

According to Woodson (1919), the education of African Americans took place during two time periods the insurrectionary and industrial revolution. The insurrectionary movement is the age when America was introduced to slavery and people began to see the value in educating slaves. However, this point of view changed with the advent of the industrial revolution, which “changed slavery from a patriarchal to an economic institution” (Woodson, 1919, p. 2). The change was due to the economic gains made during this period. The industrial revolution
generated inventions such as the cotton gin and it allowed farmers to manufacture products faster. Trotter (2000) asserted the following concerning the cotton gin:

The creation of the cotton gin placed African American’s labor power rather than their technical knowledge at the center of agricultural production. Slaves were now seen as resource. Moreover, cotton soon emerged at the center of Southern and US economic growth and stimulated the growth of the industrial movement. (pp. 19-20)

African slaves became the center of economic growth through their free labor, thus, the desire to educate them lessen.

Prior to the Civil War, freed African Americans were granted limited access to colleges and universities such as Oberlin and Berea College located in Ohio and Kentucky. This occurrence took place despite the fact that during the antebellum period very few Predominantly White Universities offered admission to African Americans. If admission was granted it was limited and came with a number of conditions. For example, Woodson stated that “only after much debate did Union College agree to accept a colored student on the condition that he should swear that he had no Negro blood in his veins (Woodson, 1919 p. 103). Religious denominations such as the Quakers and Methodist established universities for African Americans, Ashmun, later, renamed Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and Wilberforce University in Ohio.

Moreover, because of the strong belief that Blacks were inferior many were denied admittance into universities Woodson stated that “we have no record that as many as fifteen Negroes were admitted to higher institutions in this country before 1840” (Woodson,1919 p. 265). This idea was also reflected through public policy and political legislators. An illustration of this philosophy was shown in the Dred Scott case, which resulted in the decision that Africans
and their descendants were not protected by the United States constitution. Justice Taney stated that:

They [Negroes] had for more than a century before [the time of the Declaration of Independence and of the adoption of the Constitution of the U. S.] been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. He was bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic, whenever a profit could be made by it. This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race. It was regarded as an axiom in morals as well as in politics. (Moore, 1941, p. 183)

This ideology restricted their growth academically during the Antebellum period.

The end of the Civil War produced the greatest amount of educational opportunity to African Americans. Following the Civil War, America established a plan to bring the country together through Reconstruction. The purpose of the Reconstruction Plan was to assist the states that had seceded from the Union by establishing a process that would allow them to regain their rights as United States citizens. The program instituted agencies, services, and schools for the recently freed slaves. The organization that was primarily responsible for creating these educational opportunities for former slaves was the Freedman’s Bureau.

The Freedman’s Bureau was established to work specifically with the newly freed slaves through the founding of Black universities and other services (Washington and Nunez, 2005). As a result of this private educational institutions such as Fisk, Hampton, and Howard were created so that African Americans could be educated. These schools became known as
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). These schools were seen as a sign of hope for the recently freed men because African Americans had an unwavering faith in education and its ability to build community (Butner, 2005). Education was seen as a passport to a better future; hence, slowly but steadily a number of African Americans enrolled in these institutions.

**African American women and education.**

Even though African Americans were slowly gaining access to higher education, the greater community did not waiver in the opinion that Blacks were less than human and education was not for them (Howard-Hamilton, 2003) especially African American women. African American women were seen as domestic helpers rather than scholars and only a few individuals displayed concern about their scholarship. However, prior to the end of the Civil War there were a few schools that admitted African American women. One of those institutions was Oberlin University, which was responsible for granting the first degree to an African American woman. According to Slowe (1933) Mary Jane Patterson was the first “Negro” woman to receive her degree from an institution of higher education in 1862; this was a significant achievement for African American women for the following reasons: she received her degree before the establishment of HBCUs for women and she graduated from a PWI, an unique occurrence during that time.

To further assist African American women in their pursuit of education, two post-secondary institutions Bennett and Spelman were founded for Black women. Bennett was established in 1873 through the financial assistance of Lyman Bennett who “donated $10,000 for the purchase of land and the construction of a large building for a classroom and dorm” (Chenault, 2002, p. 16). Originally the school began as a co-educational institution for former slaves. However, as the school progressed it became an academic institution for only African
American women. In 1881 two educators from the American Baptist Mission founded Spelman College; their initial intent was to create a seminary for Black women. The school was originally named the Atlanta Baptist Seminary; though, in 1884 the school was renamed in honor of John D. Rockefeller’s mother-in-law Laura Spelman after he contributed a sizeable donation. “In 1901 Spelman Seminary awarded two college degrees to black women, and in 1924 the name was officially changed to Spelman College” (Chenault, 2002, p. 17). Both schools have been heralded as institutions that have influenced the empowerment and growth of African American women.

**Separate but equal: african american education.**

The establishment of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) provided African Americans with the opportunity to enter post-secondary programs. However, the creation of these schools also provided another platform for the separate but equal policy that permeated the United States. Butner (2005) determined that “after the Civil War, legal segregation and the isolation of African Americans in society at large was reflected in an education system that was established as separate and ‘un’equal; educational institutions were established specifically for Blacks, creating HBCUs” (p. 265). The acceptance of this philosophy permitted the legal separation of services for African Americans. This ideology was practiced in the United States from 1877-1900 and was reflected in America’s social, professional, and educational settings.

One of the reasons that the separate but equal policy was fully endorsed was due to the compromise of 1877. Prior to the establishment of this philosophy, the Reconstruction era brought to African Americans a number of changes that included citizenship and participation for African American males (*emphasis primary investigator*) in the political system. However,
the compromise reversed a number of these decisions. The Compromise of 1877 brokered an agreement between the Republican and Democratic parties regarding the disputed presidential election between Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel Tilden. According to the popular votes Tilden had won the election but there was a challenge to the votes. “Recasts of the votes did not resolve the challenge that then was submitted to a special committee” (Bell, 2004, p. 40). As a result, an agreement was made between the Republicans and Democrats that gave the South back to the Democrats and the Presidency to the Republicans. One of the conditions of the settlement was withdrawal of “the remaining federal troops in the South” as well as the inclusion of “southern democrats in his (Hayes) cabinet and support of southern capitalism” (Bell, 2004 p. 41). This led to the overturn of the Reconstruction polices that benefited African Americans, especially in the area of education.

The biggest modification to Reconstruction’s policies came from the infamous 1896 Plessey vs. Ferguson decision. Homer Plessey who was a resident of Louisiana was arrested for violating the state’s separate accommodations law for African Americans and Whites in relation to the utilization of the state’s railroads. The spirit of the law mandated that Whites and African Americans sit in cars separate from one another. Mr. Plessey was recruited by the Citizens' Committee of New Orleans to challenge the law; the ultimate goal was to have the case go to the Supreme Court and question the separate but equal policy. The civic group received their wish and the case went to the court, however, the decision reached by the justices upheld the law. The court’s decision also paved the way to “sanctioning the doctrine of separate but equal” in addition, to “reified the assumption of black inferiority that would be inscribed in the law for nearly sixty years” (Washington & Nunex, 2005 p. 140).
The Plessy Decision declared that facilities, schools and restaurants should be separate for Blacks and Whites, but equal in quality. However, they were not equitable, especially in the area of education. Washington and Nunez (2005) asserted that the “Black schools were far from equal to those for Whites. Faced with the burdensome expense of maintaining a dual school system, school boards routinely diverted expenditures from black schools to white schools, leaving the black schools with little resources, under paid and unprepared teachers as well as inferior facilities” (Washington & Nunez, 2005, p. 141). This political change also affected the recently established HBCUs. The Freedman’s Bureau abandoned the colleges previously founded by the organization leaving their management to the states. Thus, the following took place:

The schools that had been established for the ex-slaves were neglected as the Freedman’s Bureau withdrew and turned them over to the states. Black southerners who for a while formed majorities in state legislators and sent twenty-two representatives to Congress, saw suffrage repealed throughout the south by state sanctioned poll taxes White primaries, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses, and by 1910, they were disenfranchised. (Washington & Nunez, 2005 p. 139)

The dismantling of Reconstruction polices through the elimination of the Freedman’s Bureau left HBCUs with very little if any financial capital or other assets. Consequently, missionary societies and religious denominations such as the Baptists, Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), and the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) established universities for African American Students. Through the efforts of these religious groups and missionary societies Historically Black Colleges and Universities were able to survive; although the institutions faced a number of impediments on a daily basis. The obstacles faced by the
universities included “the inadequate preparation of the students they served. Hence in 1900, while most White students received pre-collegiate training in high schools about nine tenths of all students in Negro institutions were pre-collegiate enrolled in elementary and secondary classes” (Washington & Nunez, 2005, p. 143). Furthermore, educational tools such as university libraries and research labs were inadequately equipped, yet, the institutions managed to find success graduating 1,941 students by 1899 accounting for eighty-seven percent of all African American graduates in the country.

Despite the fact that HBCU were established and open to African Americans, a number of Black people held a strong desire to attend Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). They believed a degree from these institutions would guarantee their acceptance and success in America. Washington and Nunez (2005) asserted that Blacks thought “it was a mark of achievement to earn a degree from one of the ‘better’ black colleges, but for many status-seeking blacks, one or more degrees from white institutions in the North- with the advantages of superior educational offerings, opportunities for graduate achievement, and contact with the elite of the elite- was a symbol of upper-crust status” (p.148). But, PWIs were reluctant to admit African American and this hesitancy was displayed in the number of individuals who attended these schools. In fact it was not, “until the turn of the century, northern White Colleges had produced just one-sixth of all black college graduates, and few institutions could claim more than a handful of the total number” (Washington & Nunex, 2005, p. 148). Although, Schools such as Oberlin (Ohio), Amherst (Massachusetts), and Bowdoin College (Maine) were the first to graduate African American students, the students who were allowed to attend these schools were exceptions and not the general rule.
Even though very few African Americans had successfully graduated from PWI’s, the new century brought a number of transformations to these schools in relation to their student population. One of the first changes was reflected in the admission of African Americans at PWI. Lucas (1994) stated that prior to World War II African Americans represented one out of ten students at PWI in the south. This number represented a handful of students. At the conclusion of the war, African American admittance rates began to increase. In 1954 four hundred and fifty-three African American students attended southern institutions (Lucas, 1994). African American enrollment at PWI outside of the south was five thousand in 1939, “representing five-tenths of total enrollments in the north, and about half of these students were concentrated in fewer than two dozen institutions” (Lucas, 1994, p. 240). This number would increase to sixty-one thousand from 1940-1950, yet this figure represented only forty-seven percent of total African American attendance at PWI, and only three percent of total college enrollment.

The biggest change to education and PWI would be the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision (Tihanyi, 2007). The Brown vs. Board of Education judgment ended the separate but equal policy that had been in place for nearly sixty years due to the Plessey vs. Ferguson verdict. This court case (Plessey vs. Ferguson) solidified a philosophy of separation regarding services, programs, and education within American society. In the south and other parts of United States, African American students were denied their constitutional rights that were guaranteed to them through the 14th Amendment; this amendment affirms the rights of American citizens and provides protection for their civil and political rights. The 14th amendment was the basis of the Brown vs. Board of Education lawsuit, which resulted in the
May 17, 1954, Supreme Court judgment that ended the legal support of segregation. The judgment allowed African American students to attend the school of their personal choice.

The Brown decision gave Black students the right to choose concerning their education; however, the Courts delayed the application of the law through a new legal term, “slow and deliberate speed.” The Brown decision was announced in 1954 but the Courts decided to postpone action for a year to evaluate further arguments on the question of relief (Bell, 2004). When the Court returned they opted for a procedure that would authorize each lower court the right to decide the law would be applied academically and administratively, through slow and deliberate speed. This affected African American enrollment at Predominantly White Institutions because states made the decision when and if their schools should integrate. For instance, shortly following the decision “a black student by the name of Autherine Lucy registered for classes at the University of Alabama only to be expelled immediately thereafter on the grounds she had conspired to aid in the rioting by White students accompanying the news of her admission” (Lucas, 1994, p. 241). In 1961 James Meredith forced the University of Mississippi with the assistance of Medgar Evers (Civil Rights Activist) and the federal government (the governor federalized the guard unit to block his entrance) to allow his enrollment. After the forced admission of Meredith, other institutions (e.g., University of Alabama) finally complied with federal regulations regarding the admission of African American students. After Meredith’s enrollment, Black students began to seek admission into PWIs in larger numbers.

The integration of Southern universities increased the number of African Americans seeking enrollment at PWI. “In 1964, there were an estimated 15,000 blacks enrolled in predominantly white colleges in the South, representing a fourfold increase since 1957. Meanwhile black undergraduate enrollments in Northern colleges had increased from 45,000 in
The Fraternal Movement

Service programs and student organizations for african american students.

During the mid-twentieth century two areas within higher education began to mature and expand: Student Affairs and the use of student development theory. Both of these areas began to grow as off campus social issues influenced college culture. Issues that affected the campus included “the social upheaval caused by the Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, and the Women’s Movement” (Hamrick, Evans, & Schuh 2003, p. 31). Student Life professionals searched for direction in understanding their campus community. In addition to the aforementioned issues, Student Life professionals also utilized theory and the area of Student Affairs to accept a growing population at Predominantly White Institutions: Black students. In an effort to include Black students into university culture and tackle other societal concerns that have an impact, a series of services, programs, and leadership education initiatives were established and universities further committed themselves to the development of their students.

Even though universities were committed to the development of its students, the influx of African American students challenged the Faculty and the professional staff within Student Affairs. College professionals were challenged by the new student population because of the historically low numbers of African Americans who attended these institutions. It was not until “1966, that traditionally White colleges and universities were admitting more Black students than ever because of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which banned discrimination in education” (Rogers, 2006, p. 18). Initially the atmosphere on these campuses was less than hospitable; White faculty members, staff, and students did not welcome them to campus, also
there were no supportive services to assist this population. There was also a lack of student
development theory or services that targeted this constituency. To address this issue schools
created services and offices designed to support Black students which included: the Office of
Minority Affairs, Paul Roberson Black Cultural Center located on Penn State’s campus and
scholarship programs. African American students also assisted in this endeavor through the self-
formation of student organizations (e.g., Black Student Association, Gospel Choir) and the
chartering of historically Black Greek Letter Organizations on these campuses.

**The greek-letter movement.**

The Greek-letter or fraternal movement began on the campus of William and Mary in
1776. Phi Beta Kappa established itself on this campus, thus becoming the first Greek-letter
fraternity in the United States. The terms fraternity and sorority are defined as a group of people
connected to one another for a common purpose. The prefix of the aforementioned terms means
brother (Frater) and sister (Soror) in Latin. The founders of fraternal organizations wanted to
form a group that capitalized on this definition, while simultaneously providing an outlet for
like-minded individuals interested in intellectual exchange and social activities.

In addition to brotherhood, the founders of fraternal groups wanted to create spaces for
students that were maintained by students. During higher education’s early years, administrators
did not know how to maintain a balance with students in relation to classroom academics and
social programming. Students decided to correct “the perceived wrongs of the college
administration, providing activities for students, and obtaining more rights for students”
(Torbenson, 2005, p. 42). One of the perceived wrongs was the “paternalistic attitude” that was
shared by the college administration and implemented through the daily lives of students. For
example students would have their days regulated to a routine that included: “pay, pray, study, and accept” (Torbenson, 2005, p. 39).

The creation of fraternal organizations provided students with a developmental option outside of the structured campus life experienced during the early years of the university. As time progressed the fraternal experience would spread to college other campuses: Union College located in New York, Miami University located in Ohio, and the University of Alabama. However, the emphasis for the creation of new fraternal groups was more of a result of the struggle between the college administration and the students. Instead of separating the teaching and supervisory duties, American Colleges, with their required class and chapel attendance, punitive policies, and daily recitations made it impossible for students and professors to develop close and amicable relations (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997).

Another reason for the expansion of Greek Life on other college campuses was the competition between Phi Beta Gamma a local fraternity and Phi Beta Kappa at Union College. Initially the two groups were under the guidance and vision of students, however, “both organizations eventually came under faculty control, leading students to establish three new organizations that used Greek letters and implemented many of the characteristics of Phi Beta Kappa” (Torbenson, 2005, p. 44). The characteristics that Torbenson alluded to were the secret handshake, passwords, and rituals. This resulted in the founding of the Union Triad, which was three individual Greek societies: Kappa Alpha, Sigma Phi, and Delta Phi. All three organizations laid the groundwork for the establishment of the idea of the social fraternity at universities. This is why Union College is referred to as the “Mother of Fraternities.”

For women, the founding of sororities is linked to coeducational colleges in the Midwest and South. During the 1830s, women were admitted to these schools however, they were few in
number. Consequently, they created women’s organizations that were similar to the well-established fraternities (Torbenson, 2005). Another element that contributed to the founding of sororities was the questions that arose regarding the probability of women joining male fraternities. Torbenson stated that “there was no ban on women members, for this had never been an issue, and although few fraternities allowed women to join, many excluded them” (p. 45). It was not until the mid-1800s that women began to establish sororities. The first female fraternity was founded in 1851 on the campus of Wesleyan Female College one of the few universities established only for women. The name of the organization was the Adelphean Society for women. The mission of the group was to supply its constituents “the mental, moral, social, and domestic improvement of its members” (Alpha Delta Pi, 2009 ¶ 2). The organization later renamed itself the Alpha Delta Pi and became the first secret society for women.

The creation of women’s groups also spread to Midwestern campuses. On the campus of Monmouth College (Illinois University) Pi Beta Phi (known as I.C. Sorosis until 1888) was founded and now has the distinction of being the first national women’s fraternity. This was because previously established sororities remained local organizations until the late 1900s. Kappa Alpha Theta founded in 1870 gained the distinction as the first fraternal organization for women. The group gained this honor because they were the first organization of women to utilize Greek letters to characterize themselves as a fraternal association. The aforementioned organizations were designated as fraternities until 1874 when a Latin professor at Syracuse University suggested “the use of the term sorority; this term soon became popular to distinguish female and male fraternities” (Torbenson, 2005, p. 46).

African Americans were not allowed to join the previously established fraternal organizations at Predominantly White Institutions because of racial discrimination; “due to the
pronounced racial segregation that was characteristic of the period, Black students were regularly overlooked in the bid for fraternity or sorority membership” (McKenzie, 2005, p. 181). In an effort to counter their exclusion from these groups African American students created their own organizations that were similar in structure but also included racial awareness, cultural traditions, and social activities (McKenzie, 2005). In 1905 a group of young African American men joined together to form a study group at Cornell University, an Ivy League institution located in Ithaca, New York. The establishment of the group allowed them to support one another and initiate a bond that was non-existent for many of the African American students on the campus.

The original mission of the group was the academic and social well-being of its members; however, the participants were also concerned with the current conditions facing a number of African Americans including segregation, prejudice, and the mobility of Black people in America. This was due to the influence of African American intellectuals such as W. E. B. Dubois. Dubois was a prominent scholar and social activist who was the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard University. Scholars such as Dubois used their intelligence to battle Jim Crow in all its forms (Bradley, 2007) through the Niagara movement. The Niagara Movement was an effort by African American intellectuals to encourage the political and social uplift of all Black people.

The group used the Niagara’s Movement’s purpose as an impetus to create Alpha Phi Alpha (Alpha) on December 4, 1906 at Cornell University. The establishment of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. allowed this group to be known as the first continuous intercollegiate Black Greek Letter Organization (BGLO). Later, four additional organizations would be established for African American men: Kappa Alpha Psi (1911), Omega Psi Phi (1911), Phi Beta
Sigma (1914), and Iota Phi Theta (1963). Both Omega Psi Phi and Phi Beta Sigma were founded at Howard. Kappa Alpha Psi also shares the distinction with Alpha of being established at a PWI; Iota Phi Theta, had its beginnings at Morgan State University another HBCU located in Baltimore, Maryland.

In addition to providing social justice to the African American community, BGLO were also seen as the new vanguard of leadership for the African American community. This idea was associated with Dubois who established the talented tenth philosophy, which, according to Harris and Mitchell (2007), “suggested that the negro race, like all races is going to be saved by its exceptional men” (p. 144) and that “a singular group of well-educated men and women would set the agenda for the progress of the entire race “(p. 144). As a result, BGLOs served as training ground for this new Black leadership paradigm. Graham (1999) displayed support for this idea in his book *Our Kind of a People: Inside America’s Black Upper-Class*. In the book, he made the following assertion about BGLOs:

These [Black] Greek-letter organizations provide a forum, post-college, through which some of the best-educated Blacks in America [can] discuss an agenda to fight racism and improve conditions for other less-advantaged Blacks. (p. 85)

He further stated that “while the Black Fraternity experience begins in college, it is an activity that has even greater importance after graduation” (p. 86). The founders of BGLOs established these organizations to assist in developing African Americans for leadership. Members of BGLOs through association and mission were assigned the daunting task of being frontrunners in the fight against political, social, and economic discrimination faced by African Americans. The training and education that they received within their fraternal organization would assist them in this goal.
In 1907 African American women decided that they also wanted to create a fraternal experience for themselves. In the fall of 1907 Ethel Hedgeman Lyle, who was the primary founder of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA), began working on the idea with a group of friends to create a sorority on the campus of Howard University. The establishment of Alpha Kappa Alpha along with the other three primary African American sororities, provided women with a method to answer the racism they encountered within American society such as Jim Crow that promoted the separate but equal policy. Neumann (2007) acknowledged that “they (sororities) came about because, in a society based on the dominance of the White race, Black women struggled to carve out a place for themselves” (Neumann, 2007, p. 170). The organizations provided a voice for women and a sense of place in a culture that excluded them. The sorority also allowed women to participate in a number of social issues concerning them. Neumann verified that the members of Alpha Kappa Alpha took part in the Women’s Suffrage movement and financially supported the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) an organization that promoted and fought for civil rights.

After the founding of Alpha Kappa Alpha, three additional African American sororities were formed: Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta, and Sigma Gamma Rho. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority was founded on the campus of Howard University on January 13, 1913. The group was formed by twenty-two discontented members of Alpha Kappa Alpha who chose to leave AKA and establish a sorority that was more politically active. In an effort to emulate this goal, the “Deltas became the first Black sorority members to march for Women’s suffrage (Neumann, 2007, p. 171) two months after its founding. Furthermore, Osceola McCarthy Adams noted that “the spirit of the times (in particular, the women’s suffrage movement) was a driving force behind the Delta’s formation” (McKenzie, 2005, p. 191). The members of Delta also wanted to
establish an organization that would create a network of college aged women and provide the membership with activities that transcended the traditional sorority experience that included primarily social events such as teas and parties. Their goal was to “provide its members with continued opportunities for community service, activism, and fellowship after they left school” (McKenzie, 2005, p. 191).

In 1920 yet another Greek organization for African American women was established at Howard University, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority (Zeta). The idea for the group came from Phi Beta Sigma founder Charles Robert Taylor who wanted to create a sister organization to his own. The challenge for Taylor and the five founders of Zeta was the two pre-existing sororities on Howard’s campus that included Alpha Kappa Alpha and Delta Sigma Theta. Both organizations had already established a strong following at Howard University making the successful addition of a new organization a challenge. However, the founders of Zeta believed that an organization was needed “that would address more substantive issues germane to society in general and the Black community in particular” (McKenzie, 2005, p. 196) as well as an organization that was not based on sorority elitism.

Unfortunately, the remnants of racism influenced some African American sororities who allegedly employed physical traits and economic status as criteria for membership. Lullelia Harrison a member of Zeta Phi Beta stated that several young ladies were not extended membership invitations to the pre-existing organizations that were on Howard’s campus. She further noted that the founders of Zeta were not concerned about the shade of potential members’ skin color nor were they limited by the barriers of other biases, the doors were open to all women (McKenzie, 2005). The founders of Zeta focused their efforts on issues that affected the community such as pregnancy, education, and leadership, thus their motto “A Community-
Conscious, Action-Oriented Organization.” In addition, the founders of Zeta made a lifelong commitment to Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity as their brother organization by including them in their constitution. To date Zeta Phi Beta and Phi Beta Sigma are the only constitutionally bound historically BGLO.

The last major African American sorority founded was Sigma Gamma Rho in 1922 at Butler University, a PWI located in Indianapolis. “The youngest of the four Black Greek-letter sororities, Sigma Gamma Rho (SGRho) holds the distinction of being the only one not established at Howard University” (McKenzie, 2005, p. 198). In addition, the sorority was formed during the rebirth of the revitalized Ku Klux Klan (KKK) that had a significant number of members in the state of Indiana and the city of Indianapolis was its primary headquarters. The Ku Klux Klan was a hate group supposedly dedicated to the advancement and protection of White America’s interest. The organization had revitalized and restructured itself based off of two major historical events “the anti-Semitic lynching of engineer Leo Frank in Atlanta and the release of D.W. Griffith’s film masterpiece The Birth of a Nation” (Pruitt, Neumann, & Hamilton, 2007 p. 126). It was because of these events that the KKK’s membership grew to include over 300,000 members and the primary founder Mary Lou Allison Gardner Little saw a need to form this organization.

The founders of Sigma Gamma Rho encountered a number of obstacles on and off the campus such as racial hostility at Butler and possible reprisal from the Ku Klux Klan. Yet, the seven women were determined to create a sorority that was dedicated to the education of youth. The women of Sigma their created philanthropic thrusts such as the National Education Fund (NEF) and affiliate organizations for youth called the Rhoers, a group for young girls. Their resolve to establish Sigma Gamma Rho challenged pre-conceived ideas American society had
about African American women. According to Pruitt et al. (2007), African American women were seen as intellectually, culturally, and sexually inferior, as a result many did value their contributions to society. The members of Sigma Gamma Rho were able to rise above these perceptions through their reliance on “racial autonomy, community building, and constructive activism in an effort to topple racism, poverty, and hopelessness” (Pruitt et al., 2007, p. 126).

**Research on Black Greek Letter Organizations**

Research on BGLO, is somewhat limited. The research is limited because it was not until the 1980s that investigators began to see the value in studying this population. Kimbrough (1995) believed that “the fate of the nation's collegiate Greek-letter organizations promises to be a major concern for student affairs professionals as the 20th Century comes to a close. Many of the issues raised during the 1980s remain unresolved” (p. 63). The issues that Kimbrough referenced revolved around “the legitimacy of Greek-life as it relates to the academic mission of higher education” (Kimbrough, 1995, p. 63). Researchers Horowitz (1995) and Maisel (1995) did not find any redeeming qualities regarding their fit within higher education; however, Kimbrough believed that Black Greek Letter Organizations contributed positively to the campus community especially in the area of leadership. He acknowledged that, though much maligned on a number of college campuses in America, most Greek-letter organizations play a key role in developing student’s leadership skills (Kimbrough, 1998).

Kimbrough (1998) went on to say that if college students are able to receive the tools they need to succeed in school and life, than those groups that assist with their leadership should not be dismissed. In regards to historically Black Greek-lettered organizations and its production of leaders one can look to WEB Dubois (Alpha Phi Alpha), Mary Church Terrell (Delta Sigma Theta), Arthur Ashe (Kappa Alpha Psi), Actress Hattie McDaniel (Sigma Gamma Rho), and
Marian Anderson (Alpha Kappa Alpha) all of whom who led the way politically, artistically, and socially.

Yet, to truly distinguish how membership in BGLO influences leadership it must be connected with students’ involvement. Astin (1999) constructed a student development theory based on student involvement. The tenet of the theory stated that “student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). The premise associated with this theory is that the more involved students are in their total college experience (academics, student organizations, and interaction with professors as well as staff) they will be successful and develop a strong connection to the university. Therefore it is important for students to connect to their campus not only through scholarship but by also creating a sense of place through involvement in student groups. BGLO is an example of this space through the opportunities they provide for their membership by offering support, guidance, and the chance to expand their talents and skills.

**Leadership and Higher Education**

Since its inception higher education has taken on the responsibility of preparing students for leadership. Leadership development practices have been associated with universities because of the availability of student organizations, campus services, and programs designed to enhance students’ skills (Kimbrough, 1996). Universities have viewed these programs as valuable assets in relation to the retention and matriculation of its students. Kimbrough (1996) alluded to the fact that as schools strive to increase the numbers of students graduating in a respective time frame (4-5 years) that institutional leaders refer to the data suggesting that leadership and involvement are key factors in retaining and matriculating students.
Higher education has demonstrated through implementation of programs and services its commitment to the study of leadership and the development of student leaders; despite the fact, that existing literature does not provide a singular definition of the term; each researcher has created his or her own meaning. Northouse (2004) associated this problem with how we define terms such as love, peace, and democracy. Different people base their definition of the aforementioned words through their own personal understanding and experiences. However, there are common phrases associated with leadership that individuals include in their definitions: the ability to guide, manage, create vision, and the ability to motivate. For this investigation, leadership will be defined as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 2).

One reason for the inconsistency of definitions is the variation in leadership theories. Throughout the years researchers have fashioned theories that they feel fits the attributes and time period. Mello (1999) acknowledged four prevailing models of leadership were pushed in the twentieth century (p. 163). Those four theories were traits, behavioral, situational, and charismatic. Each version was created to answer questions not resolved by the preceding model. For example, the traits theory was in vogue during the 1940s because researchers believed that specific attributes explained the success or failure of a leader. The type of characteristics researchers would look for included “physical characteristics, personality characteristics, social characteristics, and personal abilities and skills” (Mello, 1999, pp. 163-164). However, when researchers could not find the connection between leadership and attributes, interest in the theory declined and moved towards behavioral theory, which made the correlation between characteristics and performance.
Behavioral theory rests on the premise that leadership is the result of a subordinate’s reaction to their leader’s performance, meaning that subordinates imitate the actions of their leaders. Therefore, scholars during this period believed that ‘leaders are made and not born’; this was a prevailing idea in the 1950s and 1960s. Both Ohio State University and University of Michigan conducted in-depth studies on this theory. The studies focused on “two different dimensions of leader behavior; consideration (the concern for people) and initiating structure (the concern for productivity)” (Mello, 1999, p. 164). Unfortunately neither review was able to make a connection between behavior and leadership style, however, the research “did further the study, ascertaining that behavior was a factor which explained leadership effectiveness within a given context or setting (Mello, 1999, p. 164), leading to the dismissal of behavioral theory as a dominant philosophy.

The dismissal of behavioral theory gave rise to situational analyses that were popular during the 1960s and late 1970s (Mello, 1999). The foundation of this theory believed that the effectiveness of leadership is connected to contextual factors that include the relationship between the leader’s traits, which determines the outcomes and behaviors of the subordinates. The leader who practices this theory must adopt their leadership style to the group that they are trying to guide. Critics decried the theory because the methodology measured the leader’s management style through the least-preferred co-worker inventory (1999), meaning that the leader determined their leadership style based upon the most immature workers. “The model implied that as one or more of the three contingency variables of leader/member relations, task structure or leader position power changed, the possible corresponding mandate that task or relations-oriented leadership be substituted for the other meant that leader would have to be replaced” (1999, p. 164). Due to the limitations of this theory it was discarded and scholars
began to embrace “outstanding leadership theory,” which included three sub-theories within the model: charismatic, transformational, and visionary leadership theory.

Mello (1999) stated that “outstanding leadership theory was based upon the belief that stress (either individual or organizational) is a key to facilitating the leadership dynamics” (p.165). Moreover, those who practice this theory influence their organizations in three ways: commitment to the overall vision, the leader forsakes their own vision for the sake of the organization, and outstanding organizational leadership (Mello, 1999). However, the theory was limited in providing an explanation on how objectives are achieved and the theory did not take into consideration the ordinary factors that produced positive results for organizations. Also the theory utilized major crises or stress as the motivating factor to produce success; it did not take into consideration leadership in groups not facing major problems. Even with these shortcomings a number of people subscribe to this leadership model, particularly the transformational model which has been associated with women’s management style.

Leadership models associated with women’s leadership.

Initially the programs and models associated with women’s leadership development provided limited opportunity. They provided limited opportunity because they were based on male traits; thus when women gained entry into leadership courses, they were encouraged to pattern their behaviors after men. Schmidt (1994) acknowledged that the first books written for women seeking leadership opportunities encouraged them to downplay their “feminine” actions “to fit the male models developed by theorists [sic] i.e., discard to a great extent that which was more characteristically female and become more masculine in their behaviors” (p. 2). Attributes of good leadership were associated with male behaviors (e.g., aggressiveness, resolve, and candor). Female leaders were advised to use these qualities to better aid their success; however,
when women utilized these skills they were not well received. In fact these actions had “negative repercussions for the women role incumbents in these organizations” (Schmidt, 1994, p. 3).

To assist with the void that existed in relation to leadership models, women developed seminars, literature, and workshops to cultivate their skills and provide a space for women. For example, in the 1970s, groups such as Women in Leadership (WIL) implemented a seminar through the Educational Leadership program at Eastern Michigan University. The seminar evaluated the history and substance of leadership theories and “the sociological and psychological assumptions, especially as related to gender-role differences” (Schmitt, 1994 p. 3). The WIL course and others similar to it benefitted women and allowed them to discover their role as leaders.

In addition to leadership workshops, women’s organizations administered and sponsored studies to identify leadership models that complimented their management style. International Women’s forum (IWF) implemented a research study that identified leadership models for women. Within the study, researchers noted that a number of the women’s responses symbolized behaviors that were associated with transformational theory such as charismatic and interactive. Transformational leadership produces positive change within team members through the motivational efforts of the leader. It also revealed other actions that were linked with transformational leadership which included having concern for others and interpersonal skills such as hard work or personal interaction rather than organizational stature (Rosener, 1990).

Kark (2004) believed that the connection between transformational and women’s leadership was due to the women-in-management literature and gender reform perspectives. “These studies focus mostly on the question of gender differences in leadership style, examining if women and men leaders differ in the extent they apply transformational leadership and
transactional leadership” (p.163). The goal of the studies was to determine the difference between male and female management styles so that they could make a distinction between both groups.

Kark referenced past investigations conducted by Eagly and Johnson who reviewed 167 studies that compared male and female management styles. The studies revealed that there was no difference between both genders concerning the use of an interpersonal oriented style and task oriented style which is associated with men. Although, the investigations did confirm that female leaders adopted a more democratic or participative style that is stereotypically associated with women (Kark, 2004). An explanation as to why women leaders may subscribe to this model could be attributed to the high standard of leadership they must maintain as managers and an unwillingness to adopt traditional forms of authoritative styles that could lead to resistance.

In regards to the research studies Kark (2004) noted that they did not offer a full explanation of why women’s leadership styles are closely associated with transformational leadership. A possible explanation for not having a clear connection was the literature utilized as the foundation for the studies. The models and ideas used within the investigations employed established leadership ideas and models with limited novelty and consideration of gender (2004). The questions asked in these studies were limited in their understanding of the role of gender, therefore, testing them against women’s leadership attributes is problematic because in the past women’s skills were not included in these studies.

**Theoretical frameworks that support african american female development.**

Finding frameworks that are inclusive of African American women’s experiences in America is essential because they assist in shaping how they learn and view themselves; however, “finding and applying theoretical constructs that are appropriate for explaining and
understanding the experiences of African-Americans can be challenging” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 19) because the models used in several collegiate leadership programs have omitted the history of race in their philosophies. Past theories that have been used by Student Affairs practitioners individually and collectively include Chickering, Erickson, and Perry. Both Chickering and Perry’s models deal with students’ cognitive development while Erickson’s theory discusses how their interactions with the school environment influence how they identify. Yet, what is missing from all three models is the issue of race and how it influences individual development and identity.

Patton, McEwen, Rendon, and Howard-Hamilton (2007) noted that a number of the aforementioned theories were established during three distinct periods 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. However, the first models that directly cited racial identity were established in the 1970s as more African American students were admitted to PWI; additional theories emerged during the 1980s and 1990s through scholars such as Cross. The theories utilized by Student Affairs practitioners are those that do not incorporate the historical significance of race and its role in America. “Unfortunately, except for racial identity development theories and race as one social identity in Jones and McEwen’s and Abes, Jones, and McEwen’s models of multiple identities, little attention has been devoted to incorporating race into the theories most widely used in the profession” (Patton, et al., 2007, p. 41). Thus, it becomes important that current Student Affairs professionals review their programs to certify that the theories utilized in their leadership programs are not one dimensional regarding theories, mission, and goals.

Moreover, researchers such as Patton and Howard-Hamilton believed that the models currently used within Student Affairs programs and services (i.e., leadership programs) must be inclusive of African American women’s experiences in America. They supported this belief
because “African American women’s experiences are different from those of other women and
those of African American men is steeped in the historical progression and ideology of black
people in the United States” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 19). An example of this can be
showcased in the negative images associated with Black women in an effort to punish them and
in this researcher’s opinion lessen their voice on issues of equality. Hill-Collins (1990) stated
that “portraying African American women as stereotypical mammies, welfare recipients, and hot
mommas has been essential to the political economy of domination fostering Black women’s
oppression” (p. 67). Therefore, African American women are forced to fight these labels as well
as other issues of intolerance. In addition, the exclusion of these issues in the leadership
development of African American women leaves a void, in the understanding of how African
American women have become aware of their place as leaders.

In a recent article, Patton, McEwen, Rendón, and Howard-Hamilton (2007) stated that
“although these theories contribute substantially to higher education and student affairs work,
they are limited in their use of language about race and considerations of the roles of racism in
students’ development and learning” (p. 20). The purpose of theory is to gain an understanding
of attitudes and behaviors. In addition, to ensure reliability the frameworks should include all
factors that will contribute to finding a conclusive answer. Therefore, if it is true that the above
models do not provide a full answer in relation to Black women’s development, then it becomes
necessary to locate frameworks that do. Therefore, it has been suggested that in order to develop
a broader understanding of African American women, their development, and their intersecting
identities scholars have suggested the following frameworks, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and
Black Feminist Thought (BFT).
Hill-Collins (1990) defined Black Feminist Thought as “specialized knowledge created by African-American women which clarifies a standpoint of and for Black women. In other words, Black feminist thought encompasses theoretical interpretations of Black women's reality by those who live it” (p. 3); in addition, the theory was based upon three precepts. The first framework is molded and created from the lives of African American women, even though Hill-Collins asserted that most of the stories were not documented by them. The second principle refers to the individuality and the connections that Black women share. The last framework references the commonalities that were shared amongst African American women including diversity, class, religion, age, and sexual orientation of black women; as a group these are multiple contexts from which their experiences can be revealed and understood (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

The question then becomes how can BFT assist in developing African American women as leaders? Adding BFT and its frameworks to current leadership programs may be able to assist in developing a more comprehensive leadership program not only for African American women but for the general population. This would benefit all individuals because a number of assumptions exist regarding Black women and if the source of these images were fully explained all would have a better understanding of how these stereotypes have influenced African American women’s status in America. In addition, the adding of BFT validates African American women’s voice, culture, and talents, which would provide Black females with the confidence needed to seek leadership positions without any reservations.

Another theory suggested by scholars as a possible framework for African American women’s development is Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT was developed by a group of law students who were persons of color; “this framework emphasizes the importance of viewing
policies and policy making in the proper historical and cultural context to deconstruct their racialized content” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 22). CRT addresses the role that race has played in American policies and laws in an effort to provide a thorough explanation of how marginalized groups are viewed. Those who ascribe to CRT believe that “ideas such as color blindness and meritocracy systematically disadvantage people of color and further advantage whites” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 22).

CRT when applied to the field of education takes on a different meaning than when it’s applied to law. CRT centers itself within research to “challenge the traditional paradigms, methods, texts, and separate discourse on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact on communities of color” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 23). The theory also seeks to provide students of color with a framework that allows them to explore how race, gender, class, and socioeconomic status affected their place in society. Through academic programs such as law, psychology, sociology, history, ethnic and women’s studies allow for the exploration of this subject.

Another factor associated with CRT is counterstories; the goal of counterstories is to give voice to marginalized people. Counterstories were shaped in the form “of discussion, archives, and personal testimonies because it acknowledges that some members of marginalized groups, by virtue of their marginal status, tell previously untold or different stories based on experiences that challenge the discourse and beliefs of the dominant group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Counterstories allowed persons who had been historically without a voice to argue against preconceived ideas articulated by the majority community. However, in order for this method to be productive and useful for the intended group a counterspace must be established; “counterspaces serve as sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a
positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained” (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 70).

The use of counterspaces allows African American students to foster their own learning and cultivate areas that are supportive and validates their knowledge. Examples of counterspaces that were developed by African American students include: ethnic/political groups (Black Student Association), academic groups such as NSBE (National Society of Black Engineers) and Black Greek Letter Organizations.

**Summary**

Universities since their inception have demonstrated a strong commitment to leadership development. College professionals through the guidance of student development theory have created a great deal of services and programs for their students. The question associated with these programs and services concerns their inclusiveness of marginalized groups, particularly African American women who are often viewed through perceptions not created by them. The presence of Black Greek Letter Organizations provided African American women with a counter-space within the university and African American Greek members with leadership opportunities. It is for these very reasons why African American sororities serve as a primary resource in determining how this population develops as leaders. To date, there are few studies that focus on the leadership development of African American women and as more members of this population enter the workforce an understanding of how they develop as leaders is important.
Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine how members of African American Sororities developed their leadership skills at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) as well as evaluate the school’s responsibility to this population. This chapter describes the research procedures utilized to collect data, answer the guiding questions for this study, theoretical frameworks, purposeful sampling, and provide a profile on the individuals that participated in the study.

Research Inquiry

During the 1980s research concerning Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLO) increased. Interest in these groups grew as a result of popular culture through television shows such as *A Different World*, music videos, and Spike Lee’s controversial movie *School Daze*. Kimbrough (1996) a noted scholar and expert on BGLO conducted a study that “determined the impact of membership in a historically Black fraternity or sorority based on campus type” (p. 1). In the study Kimbrough sent surveys to members and non-members who attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and PWI. The majority of the surveys returned were from Black Greek members while the non-members who attended Predominantly White Institutions did not respond in significant numbers. Even with these limitations the findings showed the Black Greek members were involved and they held one or more leadership positions.

In 2004 Williams added more information on BGLO in relation to their development as leaders at PWI. In his academic review Williams focused on students development as leaders in which he verified whether or not membership in fraternal organizations assisted in developing the members’ leadership skills. The study also assessed if the members developed abilities that were essential to their future or academic success at a PWI. To gather data on this subject Williams surveyed Kappa Alpha Psi members. He mailed over one-thousand surveys and
received 216 responses producing a 22.6% rate. The findings from the study affirmed that attaining and developing leadership skills were essential to the subjects overall educational experience and membership in Kappa. The participants also shared that their affiliation with the organization assisted with their leadership training. Another outcome from the study was that the members were not concerned with gaining leadership positions as they matured as leaders.

Both Kimbrough (1996) and Williams (2004) studies were well developed and added to the literature on BGLO, although each study excluded elements that would have assisted in providing a more comprehensive answer to their studies question. Kimbrough’s study evaluated students’ campus involvement using Astin’s theory on involvement as a theoretical framework. Two principles mentioned in Astin’s theory on involvement were the role of the staff and the influence policy can have on a student’s involvement. Both of the aforementioned principles could affect a student’s opportunity and willingness to take part in activities. Therefore, if a student does not connect to the programs sponsored by the institution he or she may not participate, consequently affecting the student’s view of the institution and their place within the university community. Missing from Kimbrough’s study were questions that could assess and compare involvement with the opportunities provided by the university as well as the staff’s interaction with students. The addition of these questions would have addressed membership influences, development and the institution’s role in providing leadership opportunities.

In regards to the investigation conducted by Williams (2004), he included only one member of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), which was Kappa Alpha Psi. As a result of including only one fraternal member of the NPHC, he limited his study in regards to sample size and gathering information from the other members (fraternities) of the council concerning their view of leadership development and attaining leadership positions. Also, Williams’s
findings displayed similarities between leadership roles, traits, and skills that could not be explained. The similarities could not be explained because he utilized a quantitative method that provided a mathematical result, however, it did not explain as to why this was outcome. Lastly, in regards to both investigations neither study provided an answer regarding how students developed as leaders.

A qualitative inquiry was used in an effort to gather information regarding leadership development of African American women. According to Patton (2002) qualitative inquiry allows researcher to gain a full understanding of the situations through direct participation and observation. Qualitative was not applicable to this study because it fails to provide an answer to questions regarding trends and changes, especially when studying leadership. Conger (1998) stated that in regards to the study of leadership “one of the greatest shortcomings of quantitative research has been its inability to draw effective links across these multiple levels to explain leadership events and outcomes” (p. 109). Action-Research was not utilized because the goal was to gain an understanding of how this group developed as leaders and gather a point of view regarding the university’s services. In regards to the research design a qualitative inquiry was utilized due to prior inquires on BGLO and their leadership has been quantitative. A qualitative investigation allowed the participants to give voice to their experience(s) through the use of (1) observation, (2) open-ended questionnaire, and (3) interviews. These methods aided in explaining how this population developed as leaders and provided a review of the university’s mission in relation to this population.

This investigation began with the question of leadership and its role within higher education using the following research questions:
1) How do African American women develop as leaders at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI)?

2) How does membership in Black Greek Letter Organizations shape African American women as leaders and influence their development?

3) Do the services and programs provided by the university aid in African American Women’s leadership development, offer opportunities as well as address the university’s responsibility to this population?

In addition, the role of leadership was used to review the experiences of African American women who attend PWI and were members of BGLO. As a group this population’s distinctive experiences as African American women, scholars, and leaders have been historically unique within American culture. These guiding factors were used to develop an understanding of how African American women progressed as leaders. These elements also assisted in developing the conceptual framework for the study illustrated in figure 1. Figure 1 illustrates the components that influence African American women’s development, leadership opportunities and their development as leaders.
Note: The model reflects the primary investigator’s conceptual framework concerning the factors that influence the leadership development of African American females and the possible outcomes that are a result of the influences.
Qualitative Inquiry

Fraenkel and Wallon (2006) defined research as the “formal systematic application of scholarship, disciplined inquiry, and most often the scientific method to the study of problems” (p. g-7). Ongoing research allows academic disciplines to add to their knowledge base which continues through the growth of these areas. In relation to the study of Black Greek Letter Organizations, literature for this population has grown because more scholars have seen the value in researching this group. The research model that has been used to review this group has been mostly quantitative however, in order to gather more in-depth information concerning this BGLO a qualitative analysis is needed. Qualitative research allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the human experience by “capturing and communicating the participant’s story” (Patton, 2002, p. 10). Miles and Huberman (1994) offered a more detailed explanation of the goals and intent of this research method that included the following objectives:

- Qualitative research is guided through continuous contact with a “field” or life situation.
- The goal of the researcher is to gain an all-inclusive overview of the environment of study and how it reasons, functions, and rules of engagement.
- The researcher through data collection captures the thoughts and insight of the participants through a process of deep attentiveness, empathetic understanding, and the suspension of personal preconceptions about the issue under discussion.
- The central focus of the task is a main task is to explain the ways people in specific settings gain an understanding, validate, and, otherwise manage their day-to-day situations (pp. 6-7).

Qualitative methods are also useful when the sample size is small. Patton (2002) stated that “qualitative inquiry typically focuses on relatively small samples, even simple cases” (p. 46).
The ability to survey small populations, particularly underrepresented groups, allows the researcher to gain opinions, feelings, and knowledge from these populations. In regards to African American women this finding is true because historically this population’s definition of self has been defined by others. Qualitative inquiry through the use of interviews and focus groups allows participants to tell their story from how they have to come to view the world. Ospina (2004) supported this supposition when they acknowledged that using this method allows the researcher to understand the phenomenon from the actors involved rather than learning it from the outside.

Implementing a qualitative technique is also helpful when studying leadership. Qualitative methods are flexible; therefore the methodology allows scholars to understand sudden changes and trends that take place within society. Ospina (2004) emphasized this idea through four principles “flexibility to follow unexpected ideas during research and explore processes effectively, sensitivity to contextual factors, ability to study symbolic dimensions and social meaning, and increased opportunities” (p. 2). The perception of leadership and how it is defined changes constantly depending on contextual situations in society. Furthermore, qualitative procedures are not limited to a specific approach which makes this form of inquiry open to change, and when studying leadership makes this inquiry more reliable when studying this subject.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

The theoretical frameworks utilized for this study included Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement, Black Feminist Thought, and Critical Race Theory. Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement connects effort with involvement. The more time students invest into their academics, activity, or group the deeper their affinity for the institution. Astin (1999) believed
that a student’s involvement is influenced by five postulates: 1) investment of physical and psychological energy, 2) involvement occurs along a continuum, 3) involvement can be quantitative (the number of hours a student spends studying or in activities) or qualitative (comprehension), 4) student learning and personal development in proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement, 5) policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement (p. 519). For student affairs practitioners the most important components of this theory are the last two suppositions because both influence the level of student involvement; moreover, if students are fully invested in their college experience they will develop more as people and leaders as well as have an affinity for the institution.

Black Feminist Thought (BFT) was also used as a guiding framework for this study because it allows Black women as well as others the freedom to use their own voices and convey their experience. This belief is based upon the assertion that if Black women are liberated through the elimination of classism, racism, and sexism as well as oppression then all people are freed (Hill-Collins, 1990). Also this concept supported the idea that Black women were agents of knowledge, therefore, their personal accounts are relevant and valid. “Black Feminist Thought demonstrates Black women’s emerging power as agents of knowledge, by portraying African American as self-defined, self-reliant individuals confronting race, gender, class, and oppression” (Hill-Collins, 1990, p. 553).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was established by persons of color who were a part of the legal profession. Ladson-Billings (1998) credited its early beginnings to Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman. “Critical Race Theory sprang up in the mid-1970s with the early Derrick Bell (an African American) and Alan Freeman (a White) both of whom were distressed over the slow
pace of racial reform in the United States” (p. 10). The focus of the theory was threefold, first the belief that racism is a norm in America, the inclusion of storytelling to examine myths and presumptions within society through the use of voice and declaring one’s reality (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Critical Race was used within this investigation not only to provide voice but to take into consideration the history of the university where the study took place and allow participants to give their personal testimonials.

The three theories utilized for this study complemented one another in the following manner, BFT and CRT both prescribe to principles that are inclusive to marginalized groups and challenge the belief of society as a whole. For this study African American women were the subjects because Black women continue to experience isolation and little information exists concerning their leadership development. As cited in Ausmer (2009) “there is no more isolated sub-group in academe than Black women” (p. 66). This isolation is a result of the sporadic numbers of African American women in attendance at universities as well as the small number of Black women in leadership positions at these institutions is small. Therefore, the administrators at these schools must go beyond a general approach in regards to developing strategies and programs to assist in their success (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Moreover, their development as leaders takes on a greater significance as African American women assume roles and professions that traditionally have not included them in executive positions (i.e., College Presidents, CEOs, etc.) more information is needed concerning their development as leaders.

**Purposeful Sampling**

To gain meaningful participants for this study purposeful sampling was used. In qualitative inquiry purposeful sampling is useful because it selects “information rich cases;
purposeful sampling is sometimes called purposive of judgment sampling” (Patton, 2002, p. 230); the researcher determines the rationale for gathering the information. The purpose of this research study was to examine how African American women who are members of Black Greek Letter Organizations developed as leaders at Predominantly White Institutions; it also evaluated the university’s responsibility to this population. The investigative process took place at a Research I University located in the Midwest that, like most other PWI’s had been challenged with issues of diversity and inclusion. An example of the schools challenges was illustrated in a university magazine in which a 1960s alumnus indicated that White Greeks were given preferential treatment over African American Greek students. Later in 2002, an African American female member of the Greek community commented that she felt that the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) was a stepchild within Greek Life. This student based her opinion on the Greek retreats and trainings she attended.

To date, the university still faces quite a few challenges, however, it has made strides through the establishment of the Diversity Council, the inclusion of diversity initiatives in its latest university plan, and the support of a twenty-five year old diversity program that challenges students. It was this researcher’s opinion that even with these efforts the university still has work to do especially within its Greek community. The campus currently has an active NPHC, seven of the nine member organizations are recognized by the university. Greek Life was established at the university in the 1840s. The first BGLO on the campus was Delta Sigma Theta (1920) followed by Alpha Phi Alpha (1920) and Alpha Kappa Alpha (1921) respectfully (University of Cincinnati 2011, ¶ 4). The campus also has a Pan-Hellenic Council and Inter-Fraternity Council that houses collectively 29 historically White Greek Letter Organizations as well as two
Multicultural Greek Organizations. All three councils are guided by a Program Coordinator who works in the Office of Student Activities and Leadership Development.

**Participant Selection and Entrée**

The target population for this study was African American women who were current members of Black Greek Letter Organizations and members of the professional who worked with this population. The student participants were selected because they were current members of BGLO sororities and they could provide the most up-to-date information about their development and the university’s services. The professional staff of the university was chosen because they were the individuals who implemented leadership programming and worked with the undergraduate Greek members. They were asked to provide an objective opinion on the programs and services sponsored by the university and its mission. The profiles of the participants were:

(a) Students aged 18-25 who were current members of BGLO sororities; and

(b) University Professional Staff whose expertise ranged from 2-20+ years of service; they produced leadership opportunities for this population. The participants were current and former staff members who worked within Student Affairs and Services.

To gain entrée regarding the surveying of undergraduate BGLO sorority members a meeting took place between the primary researcher and the Program Coordinator of Greek Life at the institution. At the meeting a full explanation was provided regarding the rationale for the study, process in regards to questionnaires, interviews, and the participants’ rights. Once a full disclosure and explanation was provided to the Greek Life Coordinator, permission was granted to solicit undergraduate members’ for the study. When consent was received the primary investigator met with the NPHC President to provide a detail explanation of the study and seek
her permission to present this investigation to the members of NPHC. During this meeting the investigator also shared with the NPHC President that all participants would receive a $5.00 gift card for their time and information prior to completing the open-ended questionnaire. However, during the recruitment period the Greek community was involved in several projects that prohibited them from meeting as a group this also interfered with the chapter’s regular meeting schedule. As a result, the NPHC President worked with the primary investigator to send out information about the research project to the organization’s list-serve that included a research overview that provided details on the investigation, information sheet, and spreadsheet to maintain their information (Name, Email, Mailing address). In addition, to this form of promotion the primary investigator also sent information to possible participants via email, Greek list serves, and met with members individually. As a result, ten (27%) members from the active African American sororities on campus agreed to take part in this investigation via email. Once participation had been confirmed an email that included the survey link, information sheet, and data sheet was sent to all.

All professional staff members were recruited through their affiliation with the university’s Student Life Department and their role in developing leadership activities, services, and program; moreover, these staff members interacted frequently with members of BGLO. Ten Student Affairs practitioners were sent an email that provided them with the following information: the purpose of the study and information sheet that listed their rights and privileges should they choose to participate, as well as a data spread sheet (name, email, mailing address). The data sheet was used to maintain the respondent’s information and to send them a gift card for their participation. The primary researcher also scheduled a meeting with each respondent to provide further explanation on the investigation and answer any questions that they may have
Regarding the survey. Once confirmation was received from the university staff members an email was sent confirming their participation, survey instructions and link, and their participant code to maintain confidentiality.

Confidentiality

Since the participants were current members of the university community (e.g., students and employees) it was extremely important to maintain their privacy. Therefore, all names, institutional marks and any other identifiers were not included in this study and will not be used in future presentations or publications. The information from this study will be maintained for three years by the primary researcher, after this period all data and materials associated with the study will be destroyed. In reference to participant rights and privileges all respondents were made aware of their right to remove themselves from this study.

Data Collection

This investigation was composed of two phases that included members from both cohorts (students and professional staff). The first phase encompassed two separate electronic surveys that provided preliminary information about the university’s leadership programs and services. The surveys were separate because the students were asked questions regarding their view of the university’s leadership programs while the staff answered questions concerning the role and influence of the university’s programs (i.e., is the university fulfilling its mission in regards to leadership development) on student development, particularly African American female students.

The staff survey contained nine open-ended questions and a space for them to add their participant code which was assigned during the recruitment process. Once participants confirmed their participation (some responded in person, while the majority confirmed their participation
via email), the link for the survey was forwarded to them for completion. The student survey was composed of ten open-ended questions and a space for them to add their participant code once they completed the survey. As each participant verified their intent to take part in the study they also received the survey link and participant code once they completed the survey. The online surveys included a different set of questions however, both explored: 1) leadership opportunities, 2) university mission, 3) and the influence of the fraternal system on their leadership skills. In addition, the focus of the surveys varied because students were asked questions concerning their decision to join a BGLO, organizational involvement, and how their participation influenced their leadership skills. The professional staff responded to questions regarding their interaction with this population and the value of the university’s programming efforts on female African American students’ leadership skills. The intent in doing an electronic open-ended questionnaire first was to survey a greater number of individuals, compare responses between the two cohorts and provide preliminary information regarding staff and students opinions regarding leadership development.

The second phase of the data collection process was the one-on-one interview. Four individuals were selected from the pool of respondents that took part in the electronic questionnaire. A total of nineteen qualified subjects provided feedback via the survey. The four individuals were selected based on the following criteria: years of service at the university (staff), length of membership in the sorority, professional role at the university (job level), and current academic standing (freshmen, sophomore, etc.).

Prior to the start of the interview, the investigator reviewed the informed consent form with respondents to ensure that they understood their rights and privileges. After reading the material contained within the document each respondent was asked to sign and date the form to
verify their understanding of the research and participation. A copy of this form was given to the respondents for their records and the original remained with the investigator. The data were formatted into a triangulation method that included open-ended questionnaire, interviews, and campus observation and history.

The four participants took part in an hour long campus interview; the location was a private conference meeting room. During the hour long session an audio recorder was used, with the consent of the respondents to document their responses. The recorder was paced on a table between the interviewer and respondent. In addition, notification was given by the investigator when recording began and if requested could be turned off if the participant felt uncomfortable. The primary investigator also used a formatted sheet to hand-record observations, and additional insights. The combination of taking hand-written notes as well as recording the conversation allowed the investigator to capture fully the information that was being recounted.

**Data Management**

As mentioned previously this investigation took place in two phases, the first was an electronic questionnaire the second portion was the interview process. When all of the questionnaires had been completed the data was downloaded and placed into data charts (Appendix J) that were designed by the primary investigator. Chart II (Appendix K and L) displays the management grid that allowed for the comparison of responses between the staff and students. The data from this information was coded, categorized and imported into Chart III (Appendix M) which included the following categories: leadership opportunities, involvement, Black women’s leadership development, resources, university mission and quality of university leadership programs.
Once the electronic surveys had been completed by the selected group of participants, the interview process began. At the conclusion of the interviews all of the information was transcribed and placed into a data management sheet that included an area to make notes and compare responses between the two professional staff members and the students. This form allowed the investigator to review emerging themes, code the data, and place it into categories that were associated with the guiding questions and conceptual framework developed for this academic review. The categories that emerged were: university’s leadership development, opportunities, membership influence, inclusion, and university resources. In addition, a number of sub-categories were revealed as the data were organized into concepts that simplified its understanding. Lastly, to compare the responses received from the interviews and electronic survey, a third grid was created to identify similar ideas and themes (Appendix N).

**Coding**

The purpose of coding is to define data and organize it in a manner that is realistic, clear, and in a format that is comprehensible. Ausmer (2009) indicated that it is the task of the researcher to simplify the information so that it makes sense because “raw field notes and verbatim transcripts constitute the undigested complexity of reality (Patton as cited in Ausmer 2009, p. 50). Scholars such as Seidel (1998) believed coding was a simple process because everyone knows how to do it. However, in order for the data to be relevant to the research the information must be organized carefully and thoughtfully in order to reveal emerging themes. For this study coding was assigned based on the research questions. Examples of the coding utilized for this study were: LI (leadership involvement), ULO (university leadership opportunities), and R (resources). Organizing the data in this manner revealed the themes and patterns associated with the study as well as emerging themes such as the issue of separation and
how leadership is defined. The codes were then categorized to identify connections that existed amongst the data.

**Validity and Reliability**

Creswell and Miller (2000) defined validity as how “accurately the account represents participant’s realities of the social phenomena and are credible to them” (p. 124). Strategies to ensure the credibility of a study are those procedures employed and developed by the researcher. Thus, “the credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork (Patton, 2002, p. 14).

To ensure validity, in regards to this study, the investigator implemented several strategies in an effort to present a credible study. One of the first strategies implemented was observing the campus Greek climate (2007-2010) through attendance at events sponsored by the community (i.e., Greek Week, Greek Banquet, and Council Meetings). In addition, the investigator performed informal interviews with students from the community and an administrator who had been previously responsible for BGLO. The information gathered from these inquiries assisted with the development of questions for the electronic survey and interview questions. In addition, to ensure that the questions were clear, understandable and able to answer the study’s guiding questions members from the university staff and students who were current members of Greek Life were asked to review these instruments.

Reliability refers to results which are consistent and presents an accurate account of the population researched. For this study the researcher recruited ten members (nine totally completed the survey) out of the thirty-seven active BGLO sorority members. This was due to small population of chapter members who were available and willing to participate in the study. In an effort to confirm reliability for the questionnaires the information provided by the
respondents was downloaded from survey monkey, an online service utilized by the primary researcher. There were no changes or altercations made to the subjects statements. After downloading the information, it was organized according to each participant’s responses and participant code. For the interview portion, the primary investigator used two forms of recording, hand-written notes and an audio recorder to accurately reflect the accounts given by the respondents. During the transcription process the primary investigator listened to the recordings ten times and compared the information to the hand-written notes to verify that the information was reflective of the respondent’s voice. In addition, the study also used data triangulation to further ensure reliability. Triangulation included the online questionnaires, interviews, and a review of campus history through observations and informal inquiries. The use of the triangulation in a study strengthens the material collected in the survey because the information is relying on more than one resource (Patton, 2002).

Participant Profiles

The following section provides a brief biographical profile of all of the individuals who volunteered their time for this investigation. To maintain each participant’s confidentiality the primary investigator assigned everyone with a special code that was only identifiable to the investigator. All names and markers associated with the institution are not reflected in the document. Each student was labeled as S1, S2, and so forth while the professional staff was labeled as P1, P2, and so forth. for the electronic survey. In regards to the interviews the student life professionals and students were given a pseudonym to maintain their confidentiality. All of the respondents gave strong and detailed information to each question.

Student Profiles

Student 1 (s1).
S1 was a sixth-year Senior Sports Administration student at the university. She transferred into the institution in the fall of 2009. S1 was a sixth-year student because she took time off to take care of her mother who was diagnosed with cancer. The family has a business that she managed while her mom was going through treatment. She joined Sigma Gamma Rho in November of 2010. Prior to joining the sorority she did not hold any leadership positions in campus organizations, although she was involved in the College Mentors for Kids. However, since becoming a member she has held two positions, financial secretary and parliamentarian.

**Student 2 (s2).**

S2 was a fourth-year senior from Dayton, Ohio and member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., a Spanish/Pre-Med major, she joined the chapter in the Fall 2010 when it was reactivated at the university. In addition to her membership in Delta, S2 was a participant in the university’s minority scholarship program in which she maintained a cumulative grade point average above a 3.0. Prior to joining the sorority she was a representative for the university’s budget committee, held membership in two honorary societies, Gamma an organization founded to acknowledge Black female leadership on campus and Journey an honorary organization, that until recently ignored Black female leadership.

**Student 3 (s3).**

S3 was a fourth-year Finance major from Hillard, Ohio. S3 was enrolled in a five year academic program that included a co-op and study abroad component. In addition, she was also a scholar in the college’s scholar program. S3’s leadership involvement included her membership in the university’s student organization funding board, where she held the position of Vice-President. Currently she serves as the President of Delta Sigma Theta sorority an organization she joined in the Fall 2010.
Student 4 (s4).

S4 was a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority and the current President of the organization. She was a Communications major who maintained a great deal of leadership involvement at the institution before she joined Zeta. S4’s leadership involvement included the Program Council, a student programming board, Diversity program, and the Public Relations Student Society. S4 stated that she did not hold any leadership positions prior to joining Zeta, however, she gained a great deal of leadership skills as a member of the aforementioned organizations. She is a native of Lorain, Ohio and joined Zeta Phi Beta in the Winter of 2008 when she was a sophomore/junior at the university.

Student 5 (s5).

S5 was a Bedford, Ohio native and member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. She was a third-year student majoring in Criminal Justice and Psychology. S5’s leadership involvement included academic organizations associated with her major such as the Criminal Justice Society, and leadership honorary. S5 joined Zeta as a sophomore. She held her first leadership position as member of Zeta.

Student 6 (S6). (Did not complete the survey)

S6 was a third-year student from Berea, Ohio and a new member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Prior to joining Delta she was heavily involved in Shades of You a student organization for women of color, student mentor, and a candidate for Alpha Phi Alpha’s Miss Black and Gold pageant. Currently, she is a Public Relations major at the university.

Student 7 (S7).

S7 was a native of Cincinnati, Ohio and current member of Sigma Gamma Rho and a Women’s Studies major. She joined the organization in the Fall of 2010 during her fourth year
at the university. She was a former member of the Black Student Association, African American Choir, and Black Career Group. As a member of Sigma Gamma Rho she maintained the position of Treasurer and Recording Secretary. S7 did not maintain any leadership positions before joining the organization due to her employment and fulltime academic schedule.

Student 8 (S8).

S8 was a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She transferred to the university from a Historically Black College. In addition, she was also a fourth-year student who maintained two majors, Africana Studies and Psychology. S8 was heavily involved in the campus chapter of NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Color People). As a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha she has not held any leadership positions but is very active in their activities and community programs.

Student 9 (S9).

S9 was a new member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority; she joined the organization in the Fall of 2010 when the organization implemented its membership intake for the first time in two years. S9 is from Gahanna, Ohio which is a suburb located in Columbus. She was a third-year Communications major who was involved in the institution’s Black Cultural Center where she was active with the Choir and served as an officer. As a member of Sigma Gamma Rho she has served as the President of the organization.

Student 10 (S10).

S10 was a member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority who joined the organization during the Fall of 2010 term. She is a native of Cincinnati, Ohio and Communications/Public Relations major. S10 did not hold any leadership positions prior to joining the organization due to her work schedule, however, as a member of Sigma she has held the following positions:
Community Service Chair, National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) representative and Vice-President.

Even though ten members from African American sororities opted to participate in the online study, only nine members information was utilized for this investigation. Student S6 decided to discontinue with the process. During the survey phase she only answered the first question. The primary investigator does not know why she chose to terminate her participation, however, as described in the consent form participants could opt out of the investigation.
Table 1

*Sorority Members Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Years Active</th>
<th>Sorority</th>
<th>Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sigma Gamma Rho</td>
<td>Sports Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Delta Sigma Theta</td>
<td>Spanish/Pre-Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Delta Sigma Theta</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Zeta Phi Beta</td>
<td>Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Zeta Phi Beta</td>
<td>Criminal Justice and Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>S6</em></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Delta Sigma Theta</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sigma Gamma Rho</td>
<td>Women’s Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alpha Kappa Alpha</td>
<td>Africana Studies and Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sigma Gamma Rho</td>
<td>Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sigma Gamma Rho</td>
<td>Communications/Public Relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Gender and race was not an issue as all undergraduate participants were African American females. In addition, because a number of organizations had not conducted membership intake due to internal issues and/or suspension a large number of the members were third- and fourth-year students. This also affected the size of their chapters which was small with the exception of Alpha Kappa Alpha which had 11 members but had the lowest response to the survey at the time of data collection. *Student S6 withdrew from the study.*
Professional Staff Profiles

Professional staff 1 (p1).

P1 was born in a small town located in Kentucky. He is a first generation African American male college graduate who earned his doctoral degree from the institution being investigated within this study. In addition, he has been employed at this same university for over thirty years and has held several positions at the institution that included: Residence Counselor, TRIO Counselor, Black Greek Life Advisor and Coordinator for Minority Programs and Services. He was appointed the Director of Ethnic Programs in 1987 and the Black Cultural Center in 1991, when the Center was first established at the university. In addition, he is a teacher in the Africana Studies program and nationally recognized speaker.

Professional staff 2 (p2).

P2 has worked in higher education for over six years. She is an alumnus of the university earning her Bachelors and Masters Degree from the College of Business. As an undergraduate she was an African American Vice-Presidential candidate for Student Government. Currently, she serves as the Assistant Director in the Black Cultural Center where her main responsibilities include managing two matriculation and retention programs for African American students, supervising three staff members, and the overall direction of the center.

Professional staff (p3).

P3 was a Program Coordinator within the Student Activities office, which is an entry level position at the university. In this role she coordinated a nine month intensive experiential social justice education program included 60-70 students per academic year. In this position she also conducted workshops and trainings that are based upon social justice issues. As a White female she is the first to acknowledge her privilege and how it has formed her view of the world.
Professional staff (p4).

P4 served as the Fraternity and Sorority Life Coordinator at the University, an entry level position that was responsible for the management of four Greek councils and leadership programming. He is an alumnus at the university who was very active in Greek Life as an undergraduate student. He has served in the position for over two years first as a Graduate Assistant and now as a full time staff member. He is a White male who works hard to understand the issues and culture associated with Black Greek Life.

Professional staff (p5).

P5 was an African American female who is also an alumnus of the university; in fact she received all three of her degrees from the university. Currently she serves the campus as the Assistant Director within the Ethnic Programs Office. As the Associate Director she managed the university’s largest student of color scholarship program, leadership activities, and developed programs that promoted diversity and inclusion.

Professional staff (p6).

P6 was a White Female and an Assistant Director in the Office of Student Activities. Before assuming the role of Assistant Director she served as the Fraternity and Sorority Life Coordinator from 2004-2008 where she advised and led Greek leadership initiatives such as the Future Greek Leaders Council and Ohio Valley NPHC Retreat. In the past she has also served as an Adjunct Professor for the university’s Success Seminar classes. P6 is an alumnus of the university where she received both her Bachelors and Masters of Communication and she described herself as lifetime alum. As an undergraduate student she was a member of a Pan-Hellenic Council (PHC) Sorority.
**Professional staff (p7).**

P7 was an African American male administrator with over thirty years of experience in higher education. His role at the university is a dual one; he is the Dean of Students and Associate Vice-President of Student Life, and one of a handful of African American administrators at the school. Technically, he is responsible for all out of classroom behaviors and large number of the leadership experiences at the university.

**Professional staff (p8).**

P8 formerly worked in the Office of Student Activities as the Greek Life Coordinator and Assistant Director. He is an Asian American male who came to the university in 2001. He now works in the Scholars Program at the university where he oversees a number of leadership experiences for students.

**Professional staff (p9).**

P9 was an African American female and proud alumnus of the institution. She completed all three degrees at the university and has been employed in this position for one full academic year. She was responsible for implementing campus events and special programs as an advisor to the Programs Council. In addition, she also managed two major celebrations on campus. As an alumnus and staff member P9 offers a unique perspective on African American women’s leadership development at the institution.

**Professional staff (p10).**

P10 has worked at the university for over three academic years. Initially he was hired as a graduate assistant in the judicial office, later after obtaining his law degree he was offered a position in the Ethnic Programs Office. He now serves in a mid-level position in the Office of Judicial Affairs. P10 graduated from a Historically Black College in the South where he joined a
NPHC fraternity. As an African American male and member of a NPHC group, P10 takes pride in mentoring and assisting students from this population.
Table 2

*Professional Staff Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
<th>Position Level</th>
<th>Race/Gender</th>
<th>Professional Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Supervisory</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mid-Level</td>
<td>African American Female</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Entry Level</td>
<td>White Female</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Entry Level</td>
<td>White Male</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mid-Level</td>
<td>African American Female</td>
<td>Associate Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mid-Level</td>
<td>White Female</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>African American Male</td>
<td>Vice-President/ Dean of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mid-Level</td>
<td>Filipino Male</td>
<td>Associate Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Entry Level</td>
<td>African American Female</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mid-Level</td>
<td>African American Female</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The above table reflects the participant’s gender, race, professional level as well as their roles at the university.
Participant Interview Profiles

The second portion of the investigation included the one-on-one interviews which featured four participants who were selected from the first phase. The individuals were selected based upon their years of service at the university and membership in the sorority, professional position, and academic year at the institution for the students. Each person took part in an interview which asked them six questions about the university’s programming and Black women’s leadership. In an effort to maintain their confidentiality their names have been changed. In this section are the profiles of the participants who took part in this phase.

Undergraduate greek member I (kim).

Kim was fifth-year African American female from northern Ohio who was active in a number of non-affinity groups prior to her joining Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. (Zeta). As a participant in the student organizations she was very active even though she did not hold any traditional leadership roles. She has been a member of Zeta for over two years and has held a number of executive positions that included the following positions: President, Vice-President, and Secretary. Kim was a first generation college student who was a devoted member of her organization. In addition to these fraternal roles, Kim also served as the Vice-President for Internal Affairs for her school’s Greek Week activities. Kim’s major was communications.

Undergraduate greek member II (sara).

Sara was a Cincinnati native and fifth-year student at the University and member of Sigma Gamma Rho. After waiting several years for the opportunity Sara joined the organization in the Fall of 2010. Before joining Sigma, Sara participated in a number of affinity groups that included the Black Student Association, Gospel Choir, and African American professional organization. Due to her academic requirements and work schedule she did not hold any
leadership positions in any of the aforementioned organizations. However, as a member of Sigma she has maintained the role of secretary and treasurer.

**Professional staff member interview I (William).**

William was a seasoned Student Affairs Practitioner who worked in higher education for over thirty years. A Chicago native, he received both his Bachelor and Masters Degree from a large Midwest school not far from his hometown. It was at his alma mater that he began working in higher education; his first position was in the area of Residence Life. He came to the university in the early 1970s and has held a number of administrative positions at the university. This African American male is a first generation college graduate, who has worked directly with sorority members through personal advisement, advocacy, and as a personal resource. He is one of a handful of African American administrators at the university.

**Professional staff member interview II (Sam).**

Sam was an alumnus of the university and has been employed by the institution for over two years. His professional career in Student Life began as a Graduate Assistant in the Office of Student Life in which he was responsible for Greek Life at the institution. He assumed this full time role on a part-time basis when his predecessor left the position suddenly. Once he completed his Masters degree at the university he was promoted to the position as a full-time professional responsible for all of Greek Life. Sam’s current position is an entry level one that is responsible for advising four major Greek Councils: Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), Pan-Hellenic Council (PHC), and Tri-Council as well as two Multicultural organizations. He is a middle-class White male who works hard to build an inclusive Greek environment.
It must be noted that the reason why two professional males were selected for the interview was due to their positions at the university. Sam was the current person responsible for directing Greek Life at the institution, this included leadership programs, events, enforcing policies, and providing service to the students. Therefore, he was in a position to provide the most up-to-date information regarding their leadership development. William was selected to take part in the interview process because of his role at the university. He is responsible for ensuring that his area effectively implements the university’s mission through programs, policies, personnel, and services.

The two young women were selected based on the length of time they were members in their respective organizations and their involvement on campus. Kim had been a member of the university’s Greek system for over two years, therefore she was more familiar with the support services provided by the university for Greek Life. Sara was a new member who could provide a fresh perspective concerning the programs in place to assist in their leadership development. Both of the young women had previously been involved at the institution as members of student organizations.

Summary

In the article Insights: Emphasizing issues that affect African American Women (2003) Hughes and Howard-Hamilton raised the question of how do stakeholders, including colleges and universities, African American women, and other institutions of higher education address the obstacles faced by Black women. In America, the images of Black women have been characterized by barriers constructed by race, sex, and class (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). These images tend to be negative and place Black women as second, and sometimes third class citizens. To gain a sense of place, particularly at Predominantly White Institutions, African
American women tend to assimilate in order to find systems of support and the feeling of inclusion. It is for this reason that “institutions of higher education and all of their stakeholders (students, faculty, and staff) need to be cognizant not only of the institutional environments for African American women but also the experiences and needs of African American women in higher education” (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 95). Therefore, the university must take an active role in developing programs and services that will not only provide support but create an inclusive environment for this group as they navigate the academic and social process on these campuses in their journey to become leaders and develop as people.

To address barriers faced by African American women universities must be intentional in how they develop programs and services for this population especially in the area of leadership development. This intention must be demonstrated through the mission of the university, its staff, and the university’s program and services. The purpose of this research study was to identify contextual factors that assist in developing African American women as leaders and the role of the university as it relates to their leadership growth. To date very little information exists concerning this population’s development as leaders. In addition, this study looked at African American sororities and the role they play if any in assisting with this process. Previous studies concerning BGLO have only focused on how membership affects their leadership development, but none have looked at the elements that assist in producing their growth. To gain a perspective of how these women further themselves as leaders an electronic questionnaire as well as interview process was used to generate reflective responses to these questions from the persons that implement the programs and the program recipients who were the students.
Chapter Four

Results

Introduction

This investigation focused its attention on the leadership development of African American women. The study was designed to review the factors that influenced their development as leaders, as well as the influence that the university’s programs, services, and staff have in relation to their leadership opportunities and involvement. The study used as its subjects, female members of Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLO) and student life practitioners who implement leadership programming. The research method utilized was qualitative and included an open-ended questionnaire as well as one-on-one interviews.

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how African American women developed as leaders at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in addition to assessing the university’s responsibility to this group. Another goal of this academic review was to give voice to the students and professionals who took part in this study. Furthermore, this chapter also provides feedback regarding the study’s guiding questions about the development of African American women as leaders, the university’s programs and services and the opportunity to lead at these schools.

To address the aforementioned questions the primary investigator recruited twenty members of the university community; 10 professional staff and 10 current members of BGLO (only 9 out of 10 BGLO members completed the assessment). The research process integrated two separate electronic open-ended surveys, interviews, and an historical overview of the institution as well as campus observations. The information collected through this process assisted the researcher in developing themes and patterns that were used to form a response.
regarding the leadership development of Black women through the experience of the students and professional practitioners at an Urban Midwest Research I institution. It must be emphasized that the information represented in this study does not speak for all African American female members of sororities or Student Life Practitioners. The study presents the opinions and thoughts of those individuals who volunteered their time to this research.

**Analysis Framework**

Attride-Stirling (2001) declared that in order for qualitative research to produce significant and advantageous results then “it is imperative that the material under scrutiny is analyzed in a methodical manner” (p. 386). One of the tools developed by scholars to code qualitative data was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis provides researchers with an evaluative tool that assists in assessing and managing information (Byrne, 2001). In addition, this methodology allows individuals to derive salient themes associated with the data received from the individuals who participated in the research. For this investigation thematic analysis was used to review and compare the information received from the subjects. After careful review the data supported the primary investigator’s assumption that the university through its programs, services, and staff influences the involvement and opportunities available to African American women on its campus. The data also revealed that Black women at PWI display their leadership through the acquisition of elected positions through BGLO and other affinity groups. Lastly, the information also displayed that the university has some work to do in regards to providing more leadership opportunities and support to all women. The aforementioned outcomes were responses to the investigator’s three guiding questions.

The themes associated with this study were determined through a coding process, that began with the guiding questions and the reviewing of the data to see if they provided a response
to the inquiries. The information derived from this stage was then placed into categories and language derived from the respondents. As a result, the following themes emerged: (a) leadership opportunities and involvement (b) Black women’s leadership, (c) involvement and leadership outcomes (d) inclusiveness, (e) resources, and (f) university mission/plan. Additional themes were also revealed that included the role of students and their willingness to work with non-Black staff, does leadership mean working in prescribed positions or does pure participation equate to leadership, and the fact that more students are working to support their education, therefore, their participation in leadership programming is limited.

Through the review of the data from the open-ended questionnaire, interviews, and university observations each theme was developed. This procedure ensured that the information was reflective of the respondents who took part in the study. This particular chapter displays the results of the investigation conducted by the primary researcher that encompassed the following institutional reviews: University, Student Life department, Student Activities and Greek Life.

**University Overview**

The university selected for this review was an urban Research I institution that was located in the Midwest. The institution was composed of a main campus that housed its bachelor programs and twenty-two certificate programs; the university also had two regional campuses (one was located in a rural community and the other was positioned in a suburb). Moreover, the institution also included two professional schools (law and medicine) as well as numerous graduate programs. The school’s total enrollment was 41,000 including 3,025 African American students enrolled in bachelor degree programs. More specifically, the number of Black undergraduate women in attendance at the institution was 1,919.
The Department of Student Life

The Department of Student Life housed ten offices that offered a variety of leadership opportunities to students in attendance. The offices comprising this area were the: African American Center, University Bands, University Daycare Program, Ethnic Programs, Judicial Affairs, LGBTQ Center, Residence Life, Student Activities, Wellness Center, and Women’s Center. Examples of leadership experiences sponsored through these offices were a day long women’s leadership conference for first-year students, student leadership conference, student of color matriculation and retention programming, as well as peer leadership and mentor opportunities. The gender and ethnicity of the Directors who supervised these areas were: six females (four were White, two African Americans) three males (two were African American and one White). Also it must be noted that one of the Directors was responsible for two offices within Student Life (African American Center, and Ethnic Programs). Lastly, the Associate Vice-President who was responsible for all Student Life Activities was a seasoned Student Affairs Practitioner and African American male.

The Office of Student Activities

The Office of Student Activities managed several leadership programs within the Student Life area. This office oversaw the following: Club Sports (34 groups), Diversity Education, Greek Life, Leadership Development, Campus Programming, Racial Awareness Group, Student Government, and Student Organizations. To assist in the implementation of these programs the office staff included four program coordinators whose titles were: Greek Life Coordinator, Leadership and Student Organizations Coordinator, Programming Coordinator, and Racial Awareness Coordinator. The unit also had two administrative assistants who supported the office initiatives. In addition, there were two Assistant Directors who supervised the Program
Coordinators, managed Club Sports and advised specific units within Student Government. Lastly, the office was held accountable by the Director who led and guided the office in relation to its goals and vision. She was the first African American female to hold this position at the university. Moreover, the gender and racial dynamic of the staff was comprised of five African American females, four White Females, and one White male who was responsible for Greek Life.

The Greek Life Community

Since 1840 Greek Life has been affiliated with the studied institution. Beta Theta Pi established its first chapter at Miami University (Oxford, Ohio) in 1839 and founded a second chapter at the university in 1840; they were the first Greek Letter chapter at the school. Later in 1885 Kappa Kappa Gamma established its chapter on the campus, thus becoming the first sorority on campus. African American fraternal organizations began to form at the university in the 1920s. On October 20, 1920 Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. became the first African American BGLO founded at the university through the persistence of seventeen women. In the same calendar year the men of Alpha Phi Alpha chartered its Alpha Alpha chapter at the institution. Greek Life was managed by the Office of Student Activities through one Program Coordinator and Graduate Assistant.

The Coordinator was responsible for the supervision of four governing Greek Councils, IFC (Inter-Fraternity Council), which was composed of nineteen historically White male fraternities, NPHC (National Pan-Hellenic Council) that had seven BGLO, PHC (Pan-Hellenic Council) represented eight sororities, and the Tri-Council. Tri-Council was the group that included all councils and members of the Greek community. In addition to the councils, the Coordinator also worked with two multicultural groups, Alpha Psi Lambda (Latino Co-Ed
Fraternity) and Delta Phi Lambda (Asian Interest Sorority). Both of these groups had campus advisors who assisted them because they were not a part of IFC, NPHC, or PHC. The Coordinator was also responsible for the leadership programming, meeting with chapter presidents, and retreats associated with Greek Life and he supervised a Graduate Assistant who was responsible for Greek Life’s special programming (i.e., Greek Week, Homecoming 5K, and Future Greek Leaders Council).

**Research Findings**

**Emerging Themes**

As mentioned previously the data collected for this study were gathered in two stages, the first phase was the electronic survey where students and staff answered questions regarding the university’s programs and their leadership development. This information was organized into two separate grids in relation to question responses. After reviewing these data, the information was placed into another data grid that allowed for the comparison and coding of responses between the professional staff and students (Appendix J, K, L). Upon completion of Phase I, the next stage began that was the interviewing of four individuals who had participated in the electronic questionnaire. The information received from this stage was transcribed and placed into a data grid that allowed the investigator to review the responses given from both the students and staff. To equally measure all of the responses provided in both stages, a final grid was composed to review the emerging themes and similarities shared by all of the survey participants. This portion of the chapter details the themes and findings revealed through the surveys and interviews. The student responses are listed first, followed by the professional staff.
Student Responses

Leadership opportunities.

During the data collection respondents from both stages answered inquiries regarding the leadership opportunities provided by the university and their influence if any on women’s development. The data revealed that African American women were involved, however, the majority did not hold leadership positions outside of affinity groups. In fact, only one student participant held a leadership position in a non-affinity organization. The student’s involvement in non-affinity groups is illustrated in Table 3 and Table 4 reflect their involvement in affinity student organizations.

Student participants in the surveys provided the following feedback concerning leadership and programming opportunities. Participant S2 shared that she was a member of the African American Choir and how her membership in this organization developed her organizational skills:

My involvement with the AACRC Choir helped prepare me for leadership because, the things that I didn't know how to do in order to complete my job; I learned them quickly and applied them to my position in my sorority.

Student S2 stated that her involvement in her scholarship program allowed her to give back as a leader, “I was the chair of the diversity committee in the Scholar Ambassadors program. I took on this role because I really wanted to give back to the Scholars program that has given me so much.” S4 shared that her involvement provided her with the self-confidence to step out from the familiar:
They helped a great deal, I was forced to leave my comfort zone and become a more social and outgoing individual, responsible for tasks not only affecting me but others in the group.

The student interviews revealed additional information in relation to the opportunities to lead on campus. Kim expressed the following opinion about leadership and involvement:

I would have to say that a majority of all leadership opportunities are available to students of color are available to students of color we just have to go out there and want it and work for it. I wouldn’t say it is the easiest for African Americans to run for Student Body President that would be a struggle but to say that we are limited cannot get a leadership role in an organization I would not say that-just because I think well my past experience is like at the university with the girls who are running for stuff is usually like I know this amount of people I am in this and this and the campus is majority white so THEY ARE GOING TO FLOCK TO WHO THEY know they are going to vote for who they know and with such a low minority population you just don’t have the support.

Sara, the other student who participated in the interview referred to the affinity organizations when discussing leadership opportunities:

There is definitely sororities, there is student groups in general Advance, BSA (Black Student Association), things like that, there is I think UCASA there are a whole lot of different African American groups that would be available for leadership for African American women.

The data revealed that Black women at this particular institution was involved and that leadership positions were available to them, however, most of these opportunities came from affinity organizations.
The respondents also expressed that their involvement in activities and leadership positions was limited due to their financial responsibilities. Another point of view that was expressed was the issue of time management; students had to limit their involvement because of financial obligations. Three student participants communicated that they worked a number of hours, and as a result could not commit to becoming a leader in the organization.
Table 3

African American Student Involvement (Non-Affinity Student Organizations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Student Involvement (# of Student Groups)</th>
<th>Leadership Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The chart reflects the number of non-affinity student groups the respondents participated in during the data collection. The number does not include their Greek affiliation or affinity organizations. Student S6 did not complete the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Student Involvement (# of Student Groups)</th>
<th>Leadership Position</th>
<th>Greek Leadership Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secretary &amp; Parliamentarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Member-At-Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vice-President</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The chart reflects the number *affinity* student groups the respondents participated in during the data collection. This number also included their Greek Affiliation.
Black women’s leadership development.

Another area that was explored within this study centered on how Black women develop as leaders. During the survey phase when the students responded to the question that connected their involvement to development, the majority stated that their participation helped them with group dynamics, networking outside of their comfort zone, and diversity issues. Student S3 shared the following “My involvement in campus groups has introduced me to the dynamics of groups. It has also helped me to learn how to properly prepare for programs and has exposed me to resources around campus.” Student S5 also revealed that her involvement in campus organizations assisted in building her confidence as a leader:

Being a part of campus groups you meet many people, you are able to become comfortable in talking to people and working in groups. Naturally I am a take charge person so being a part of these groups helped give me the confidence to be a leader.

Student (S7) communicated that her involvement allowed her to gain experience when “dealing with conflict and diversity as well as learning how to work in groups successfully.” Although, there were members from this study that had limited involvement due to their financial situation. Student S4 stated, “my lack of participation would be due to time constraints, and schedule conflicts. However, I find myself attending other leadership programs whether in a church or through off-campus organizations I am involved with.” Another student (S9) made the following remarks “my participation in campus leadership programs is very limited. I've heard about leadership programs but I've never taken the time to seek and find one to join.”

The interviews with the two students disclosed the effectiveness of the programs and services offered by the institution. Kim stated that she was not aware of programs that targeted Black women therefore, she was uncertain about the effect the university’s services had on
students. “[pause] I am not sure it’s very effective at all, if there are some things geared towards African American women’s leadership development I am not aware of it at all.”

Sara believed that the programs were effective because their involvement in these programs provides Black women with skills and leadership for their future:

   I believe it is very effective because it is giving African American women experience with their future endeavors like jobs that and other groups that they may even want to build on their own it definitely gives experience to these women and gives them opportunity to deal with different people and people of diverse backgrounds I just think it helps them in the long run.

In conclusion the data displayed that Black women participated in leadership activities on the campus, however, the majority gained their experience through affinity organizations. The others though active limited their activity because they of job responsibilities, which influenced their overall development.

**Leadership outcomes.**

This research initiative also examined the effect and outcomes that resulted from the student’s involvement on campus. The students who took part in the survey provided testimonials regarding the leadership programs, services, and initiatives provided by their campus. Student, S10 made the following statement “being a part of campus groups you meet many people, you are able to become comfortable in talking to people and working in groups.” S7 stated that” in campus groups, I gained experience dealing with conflict and diversity as well as learning how to work in groups successfully.” One student expressed a dissenting opinion regarding the university’s programs and commitment to African American women:
Our campus doesn’t foster leadership, if a person goes against the grain or has a different agenda it is not welcomed and shunned upon. The campus lacks originality, everything that happens (events and programs) has happened before. Also, this campus is a PWI (Predominately White Institution) and the attitudes of the students a few things. The first thing is that they do not care about real issues that pertain the Black community, and do care they simply feel like holding a program is enough instead of reaching out to fix the issues. The attitudes of students and some faculty members are very shoddy and people seem to place more importance on themselves than necessary.

In conclusion the vast majority of the respondents responded positively about their involvement and felt that these experiences assisted in shaping them as leaders. However, the descriptive opinion shared by Student S7 is a point that cannot be ignored.

Inclusiveness.

Another theme that developed within the study was the issue of inclusiveness. The online survey questioned students about their participation in campus leadership programs. Students provided feedback about their involvement in campus activities. Several Students stated that they did not take part in the services provided by the university due to lack of knowledge, off campus employment, and their own personal feelings regarding leadership activities at the institution. Student S8 disclosed her direct opinion about the programs and campus community: I personally decided not to participate as much as I would like because I cannot deal with people’s ignorance, “dirty politics,” and nonchalant attitudes. The following participant, Student S2 was one of the few students that partook in a variety of leadership programs such as the campus’s premier first year leadership program. Below is her statement:
My freshmen year I participated in Camp Cats. I really liked the program because it helped me to meet other freshmen students as well as upperclassmen. Additionally, I have attended the school’s leadership conference which gave me a different approach to leadership as well.

The other survey members shared that their involvement in the campus leadership initiatives were limited. Students S3 stated that she did not take part because of not knowing:

I do not feel like I’ve taken part in campus leadership programs this year. I believe some of the reason is not being informed of the programs. However, I also think that with the opportunities I am notified about, my other obligations take priority over it (whether it be school, work, or other meetings).

Student S4 also shared that her “lack of participation would be due to time constraints and schedule conflicts. However, I find myself attending other leadership programs whether in a church or through off campus organizations I am involved with.”

These same individuals were asked questions about their involvement in leadership activities that targeted members of the Greek community. The majority of the young women in the study (5) stated that they had not taken part in these programs because they were not aware of the activities. Student S3 responded that:

No I have not participated in workshops targeting fraternal organizations. Since my introduction to Greek Life I have not been familiar with those specific workshops though I think attending one would be very beneficial.

Student S4 made the following statement below:

I do not know of many, if any training programs targeting fraternal organizations but if I have not attended it would be due to ignorance.
However, two of the students within the research project declared that they had taken part in the university’s leadership programs and went on to provide positive feedback relating to their experience. Student S1 shared that the workshops provided great information for her: “Yes, because I believe the workshops provided great information about how to do things the proper way in a sorority.” Student S5 participated in the activities as an executive board member of the NPHC but she did not provide and information regarding her experience, “Yes I have as an executive board member for NPHC I attend all of the meetings and workshops.” One of the surveyed students stated that she does not opt into the leadership programs that include Greek organizations because the trainings are not relevant to Black Greek Letter Organizations:

I don’t believe that the IFC and Pan-Hellenic council’s practices or general advice is relevant to me or my organization; their (IFC and Pan-Hellenic) are very different, even aside from race. The culture of NPHC and these other organizations are completely different.

During the interview phase both students were asked direct questions about the issue of inclusiveness in relation to the leadership programs. Although, the participants were interviewed at different times both alluded that few programs and services embrace African American women. Kim commented that not many programs include African American women:

Not really not a lot most of the organizations I have been in don’t, I don’t’ know if this is due to the small numbers of African American women on campus but it is predominantly male/female Caucasian, as to why I don’t really know. I don’t really participate in the African American organizations on campus…So that could be why RAP is just diverse not really minority…It is probably because most African American are striving to be leaders in the African American community.
Sara’s statement was similar to Kim’s account in that she also believed that most African American women sought opportunities to lead in affinity organizations.

I do think there are certain organizations that include African Americans; I don’t necessarily believe that they all cater to African Americans. I want to say the minority groups definitely have African American leaders though I can’t speak to the other ones (student organizations) I am not a member of them as far as I see I do not see any women of color as leaders that are not African American groups.

In conclusion according to the women (students) in this study, when reviewing the role of inclusion at this institution revealed that most African American women seek opportunities for involvement from organizations that reflect their culture and promotes their leadership development.

**Resources.**

During the review of the data, another theme developed from the responses which were the matter of resources. The participants defined resources as financial means, academic support, as well as alumni and university support. The survey phase did not yield a great deal of responses from the students in terms of resources, however, the interview phase exposed that many Black Greek Letter Organizations may not be aware of the resources available to them. This stage also exposed that students may not feel they are important to the university because of their small numbers. Sara, signaled this belief in her response to this question, “I believe it’s there but I am not sure if AA students utilize what they have, but I do believe that it is there and readily available to everyone but I am not sure they use it.”

Kim went into more detail about the systems in place to support African American women:
As far as resources are concerned I think we have many resources however they (Staff from the university) are not familiar with the Black Greek Letter Organizations so to try to use the resources is more difficult so I would say it is a challenge to even attempt to use the resources like it is not there --funding, we do not receive funding because it is invitation (BGLO) only I guess don’t really know why. I think that’s why the university really does not reach out to help we are not really a big part of the campus so maybe we are overlooked.

It should be noted that one student did make a positive comment regarding the university’s resources. In fact it was her involvement in a wide variety of programs that broadened her network and made her aware of the intuitions programs. However, the students who had limited involvement were unaware of how to take advantage of these opportunities.

**University mission/institutional plans.**

In order to understand the connection between Black women’s leadership development and the university’s role, there must be a distinct awareness of the university’s mission. The mission and the institutional plan disclose the institution’s commitment to this process. The student’s survey responses all nine participants stated that they were not familiar with the university’s mission or any other plans to develop African American women as leaders. Student S8 expressed that “If I am considered a leader and of African American female status then I should know about these programs and as an upperclassmen be encouraged to participate.” The interviews did not provide additional information on this subject; however, the Professional Staff members provided detailed information on this area.
Professional Staff Responses

The goal of this research was to gain information from both students and the professional staff at the university about the leadership development of its students. This section will review the information shared by the staff about the development of their students through the themes that arose from the data.

Leadership opportunities.

One of the shared themes that arose from the data review for both staff and students was leadership opportunities. Students provide feedback based upon their experience while the staff offered information based upon their knowledge of the programs and services available at the university. A large segment of the respondents suggested that the opportunities offered by the institution were a great development tool for students. Professional staff member P7 felt that the leadership programs provided students with transferable skills “The University provides numerous activities that are embedded with leadership experiences that provide for transferrable skill sets to be used in the future.”

Staff member P10 concurred with the above opinion and names specific offices and programs sponsored by the university:

I do feel that certain offices provide programs that assist in producing good leaders.

Certain offices, such as Student Activities create many opportunities for students to serve on boards, handle budgets, make group and individual decisions, coordinate events, etc. Organizations such as Student Government and Activities Council give students, what I believe to be, real world leadership experience. I also believe that the university benefits from its large size. This creates an environment in which a multitude of
organizations can exist and programs can be implemented, thus providing leadership opportunities for a large amount of students.

Another point shared by staff members was that the programs did not have any value if the professionals that manage the programs did not hold the students accountable. For example P5 offered this account:

There are many leadership initiatives, organizations, and programs, but again, I feel that the programs alone aren't the key for producing good leaders. It is also the staff who run the programs (and hold students accountable), that assist in producing good leaders.

P1 supported this statement and added that students as well as other members of the university play a role in developing students as leaders:

It depends. Much of the university's leadership programming success depends on a student's initial exposure to it when they consider the university and their first few months as a new student. And whether or not aspiring leaders seek out or are handed these opportunities varies. It seems to me the most successful university leadership programs simply have strong individuals, particular mentors that really take a vested interest in a student's success. This can be academically, such as an academic advisor or professor, service learning, or co-curricular activities such as student activities. With this being said, I don't think it's necessarily the responsibility of student affairs professionals to create numerous leadership programs, but rather create an environment for others to explore their own interests.

It must be noted that not all of the professional staff members spoke highly of the university’s leadership programming and intended outcomes, for example P8 declared that it did not do a good job specifically when speaking to the development of Students of Color.
If you look at producing good student leaders of color...NO! I feel a considerable disparity exists in offering student leaders of color the skills AND empowering them to put their skills to practice. It's a case of the Haves and Have Nots,...and the gap is wider than ever before. Those that have the skills and network will be successful. In the last 11 years, we've had three African-American men and one Asian man serve as student body president, two African American men and one African American woman serve as student body vice president, and a whole bunch of African American students serving as at-large senators. But other students of color are not prominently placing themselves in positional leadership.

The subjects who participated in the interview phase agreed with the survey respondents in that they also believed that the university was offering great leadership opportunities to students. William, who served as the head of the Student Life Department spoke to the student organizations on campus, “I believe that there are over 300 recognized student organizations on campus all of which provide leadership opportunities for students.” While Sam went into more detail regarding leadership opportunities:

From what I have seen as a student and professional staff member, seems to me that some the more explicit leadership opportunities programs and services that they have are through the Cultural Center and Ethnic Program (offices) Turner Scholarship, obviously the NPHC whether they take positions within the council or their chapters leadership within the other two councils and positions within the Greek community-I think there a pockets throughout the university that kind of depend on if they have a connection to the faculty, staff do they have a mentor what are their peer support groups like I am sure in
The data displayed that the university was committed to involving its students however, it has yet to develop a framework that assists students in finding a clear direction and/or network that would provide clear opportunities for them.

**Black women’s leadership development.**

One of the main purposes of this study was to provide information in relation to the leadership development of African American women. Each of the respondents was asked how they viewed Black females development as leaders and the university’s commitment to this population. Information from both the electronic questionnaire and interviews demonstrated that the majority of the staff felt that the university offered a wide-range of leadership opportunities but very few have language that targets Black women. In the electronic questionnaire one professional staff member (P3) made the following observation, “Students of color and women (both women of color and white women) are not represented in student leadership, so except in the spaces where diversity and inclusion are intentionally broached the leadership doesn't address systemic challenges women.”

Staff member P5 made a similar statement:

Most of the leadership programs I see on campus are specific or large-scaled (i.e., student leadership conference, student organization leadership retreats, etc.), but I do not see many programs that are specifically geared to African American women. Most of the programs and services on campus seem to recruit all students unless they happen to come out of Ethnic Programs and the African American Cultural Center. The university's
mission tries to tackle diversity, but actions speak louder than words. I do not feel that the specific leadership needs of African American women are being met on campus.

Respondent P1 gave examples of leadership development tools on campus that target African American women, “there are specific offices concerned about women leadership Cultural Center, Ethnic Services, S.E.R.V.E UC.” P2 also disclosed that general topics offered through workshops and retreats are open to Black women:

I believe some of the leadership programs and services offered leverage topics and needs that would attract the African American women population. Topics such as, taking your leadership skills to the next level, what kind of leader are you and how to balance academics and leadership.

During the interview phase both William and Sam agreed that the members felt a greater connection to their affinity organizations. Sam believed that if Black women are not connecting to the leadership developmental opportunities it may be due to the large number of activities at the university as well as a cultural divide.

I think so but that is just what I think… Some of the disconnection is back to one of the survey responses; my role trying to advise our 35 fraternities and sororities from three different councils I definitely think NPHC they have a tradition of their own and that should be celebrated and I think definitely it is but I try as hard as I can to think of things that connects us all rather what are those threads that so IFC here is what their all about, PHC here is what they are all about, NPHC here is what they are all about how can we get them to work together I don’t want to say that I guess it does sometimes that waters it down a bit especially for African American women in the NPHC community
In conclusion there are opportunities for Black women to fully develop as leaders, however, the data showed that most seek this development through cultural programs and services.

**Leadership outcomes.**

The results or outcomes are a key area that Student Affairs Practitioners focus upon in regards to the leadership development of students. Although during the survey portion, many could not provide a definitive answer on student’s leadership outcomes. Within the survey one staff member P3 made the following assertion about student development and outcomes:

I think that the bulk of our leadership programs develop decent to strong leaders in a traditional leadership paradigm. That is to say, I don't think that the programs that have the broadest reach develop strong inclusive leadership skills. There are pockets within Student Life that do succeed in developing inclusive leaders (in contrast to what I'll call "traditional leaders"), but these programs are less well known and have fewer participants than the larger traditional programs. The interview participants were able to give more detailed information concerning the lack of a conclusive answer regarding leadership outcomes:

I think it is difficult to describe the effectiveness of the programs because you normally can only tell what’s by what’s demonstrated subsequent to the activities if indeed part. Results in African American women risking leadership involvement then we have been successful then the programs have been successful.

Sam the Greek Life Coordinator discussed during his interview that his lack of an answer was due to his limited involvement with members of this population:

Again I regret to say that I do not have that much direct experience my interaction with some of those women is through NPHC like especially those who serve as exec officers.
and I think I hate to say this most of my experience the interaction is to encourage them to do what they do I know some of them struggle academically not all of them I had a handful of NPHC officers asked them what do we want to do for the community how did meeting go last week what do you want to do for the remainder of the year, then I have to circle back to them with them the following week and I say wait I just checked your grades and you have not been registered for classes for two quarters what’s going on with you academically I want to be clear that is not a blanket generalization of them all but it seems to me that a key component a for co-curricular leadership opportunities it’s that they have the resources for them to be successful.

**Inclusiveness.**

The issue of the university’s programs being inclusive versus exclusive was significant when reviewing student’s involvement and development. Each respondent contributed information about the inclusiveness of the university’s programs based upon their personal experience at the institution. The staff responses were mixed, several members expressed that they felt the professional leadership had made strides to ensure that the leadership programs were inclusive, particularly Greek Life. Staff member P1 made this declaration: “In the last 10 years the leadership has been sensitive to students of color and they are hooked in; at the Diversity Conference there were a few BGLO members were in attendance” and P6 asserted that: Diversity and inclusion are a priority for the university and this new plan places a call to action for every entity of the university to put diversity and inclusion into action. The plan particularly addresses students of color because it empowers these students and gives them a voice and space to begin this much needed social change.

Staff member P8 remarked that the subject of inclusion is contingent on who you talk to:
It depends on who you talk to....The ones that are networked and integrated in the broader contexts of leadership and the University community doesn’t see the exclusivity. In another sense…are the leadership programs equipped enough to move beyond the basic leadership skills to include discussions of diversity and inclusivity?

Staff member P4 raised the question on what is the definition of inclusive for this student population in his comments below:

What would be inclusive? I'm honestly not entirely sure what African American members of UC's fraternal community are seeking. And I'll take some responsibility for not better knowing, but I also think the ball is in their court. Although the NPHC/African American fraternal experience is rooted in a different tradition than other Greeks (IFC, Panhellenic), all fraternal organizations have some fairly straightforward tenets: academic excellence, brotherhood/sisterhood, and service. Leadership programs and services don't need to complicate these tenets much. If students are individually taking some initiative to be successful academically, be social, and give something of their time and energy to the community, that's 99% of what the fraternal leadership experience is all about.

The respondents who took part in the interview phase provided additional information on the question of inclusion on campus. Both subjects felt opportunities to participate were available. However, the university may need to do a better job of connecting them to these opportunities. William (the administrator) believed that African American women had the same opportunities as other student leaders to take part in all forms of leadership development activities, but feel a greater connection to Black Student Organizations. “I believe the opportunity is provided. And we may find more Black women taking advantage of affinity groups they feel or more supportive of their personal or promote their academic well-being.”
The plans mentioned by the staff were an outward example of the university’s dedication to inclusion and diversity, although the data revealed that many students and staff did not associate this with the university’s programs and services.

**Resources.**

The investigation also provided information from both phases about resources sponsored by the university; students and staff referred to this issue. The first mentioned of resources, was displayed in the survey data. A professional staff member referred to the disparity of resources in relation to the Greek community. Professional Staff member P10 made this comment: The majority fraternity's large numbers afford them superior financial resources and ability to produce events and programs. NPHC organizations struggle to maintain sufficient numbers and thus lack formidable resources. However, I do believe each system is ripe with opportunity to learn and gain leadership skills.

Staff member P3 added this opinion: “from where I sit, they receive the least support from the university and are generally excluded from Greek "community-wide" activities. However, another perspective that was shared by several staff members was the responsibility of this population to also embrace those resources that are different from them, particularly those individuals who are responsible for programming. The most noted and detailed response regarding this issue was provided by P8:

I had the knowledge of how an NPHC institutional chapter should operate. With my experience as a student organization advisor I knew what needed to get done. BUT the students couldn't get past the color issue. The students lied about me to themselves, saying that I could not be trusted and I was to be avoided. That really hurt me and greatly affected my future experiences with NPHC groups. Well after my time as NPHC
advisor, one of my former NPHC presidents came up to me and said that she wished I had continued as the NPHC advisor because, "I knew what I was doing and I related to them." In the back of my head I thought, "I told you so....but that doesn't change the situation nor how hurt I was." Time has healed wounds....but I still have the experience of how I was discriminated against. That has affected my institutional and social position at the University.

During the interview process the participants were asked a direct question about the resources sponsored by the university. William believed that:

I believe that we do a better job of providing human resources to assist; then we do in them providing funding resources for organizations in the main I would rate the university’s attempts as average not exceptional; because I believe we can have more people for human resources and a better funding strategy.

The above mentioned belief was in dissent to the other opinions offered in regards to resources. Sam the individual responsible for all of Greek Life also offered an affirmative opinion:

I think we do (provide sufficient resources) I just think we need to focus it I don’t even think this is just relevant just to African American I think this the case for all students how many times do we sit here and students walk through the door and ask how can I get involved? How do I do that who do I talk to? And those are just the students who have the confidence to approach us hey I hear there are over 400 student groups where do I start? But for all students it is overwhelming that I think that we try to balance and that is the challenge for us to provide a broad based experience we want people to feel welcome and provide a wide diversity, but the flip side there are so many options that a
lot of people do not know where to start 300-400 student organizations where do I start they are there but we can do a better job of plugging people in without feeling overwhelmed with all the options

In conclusion, when discussing resources whether financial, human, or otherwise these efforts no matter how great can account to nothing if the students do not take advantage of them.

**University mission and institutional plan.**

Another area that was addressed in the investigation was the role of the institution’s strategic plan and mission in relation to the development of African American women and leadership programs. Respondents in both data collections were asked questions surrounding this concern. Within the past 10 years the university has implemented two major initiatives in order to have a more unified direction for the campus. The “21” plan was designed by all members of the university community under the direction of its former President; the new plan 2019 was created by the new administration at the institution. The model has been publicized a great deal at the university, however in this investigation none of the students referred to this plan when discussing the school’s commitment to African American students; it must also be reported that only five of the professional staff referred to this plan. This resulted in several comments from professional staff members who stated that there was no institutional plan in regards to African American students. This statement surprised the investigator because prior to the data collection the university had introduced its diversity plan and initiatives that included the recruitment of African American students.

The responses given by the professional staff regarding the university’s mission and institutional plan lead to a number of mixed accounts concerning the institution’s initiatives. Examples of the statements made by them included:
Staff member P1:

What plan? I know that the university talks about students of color, but there is no real recruitment plan, nor do I feel there is a plan to keep them here. I feel that many stay here due to the wonderful staff who knows how important is it for them to relate to people who look like them.

Staff member P8:

In their mission statement they speak about diversity but it is not practiced in a way that makes everyone feel included. The university also offers many services that are out of date and fail to meet the needs of current students.

Staff member P3:

The mission is largely academic with a focus on providing world class education and being a research one institution. In the mission is an emphasis on building the whole student, building democratic and/or pluralistic skills so that they can be effective global citizens. My experience is that diversity wasn't really recognized as a key part of being an excellent institution until maybe the last decade. So, due to failing to prioritize it, we didn't create a space where we address inequities students of color experience so we didn't do anything to address and combat these inequities. Some progress is being made, but it's being made slowly and the recognition that inclusion is key to success has yet to take off in our campus culture. So, we still create an exclusive environment that perpetuates privilege along areas of social identity, which continues to have a negative impact on the experience and achievements of students of color.

One Staff member (P6) thought the plan was a positive step in regards to diversity, empowerment, and inclusion at the university:
It is my understanding that the university is continuing to place students at the center, especially in regards to the new Five-Year Diversity Plan that was recently released. The university took about a year to develop this new plan and researched best practices to examine what has and hasn't worked among other things. Diversity and inclusion are a priority for the university and this new plan places a call to action for every entity of UC to put diversity and inclusion into action. The plan particularly addresses students of color because it empowers these students and gives them a voice and space to begin this much needed social change.

Another Professional Staff member thought that the issue of diversity and inclusion was a high priority as highlighted in P4’s response:

It is a high priority. The institution desires to be a truly inclusive and diverse university, which includes (but is not exclusive to) students of color. And it is important to not just enroll, but retain students of color and provide them a true sense of community.

Staff member P2 confirmed the above assertion in their statement:

My understanding is that the university is committed to creating a Just Community and to foster and inclusive environment. They plan is to use the Diversity Plan and the President's vision as the framework to achieve the goals.

In conclusion it must be noted that even though the university has several initiatives to achieve diversity, there is not a universal understanding of how this plan should be used to foster community at the campus.

**Study Overview**

The initial goal of this investigation was to collect data that would provide a plausible answer to how African American women develop as leaders, specifically at PWI and review the
university’s responsibility to this population. To gain an understanding of the aforementioned questions a qualitative inquiry was conducted. This approach was implemented to achieve a direct response from the individuals who implemented the programming and those who benefitted from them.

The students and staff who participated in this study did represent the information that was reflected in the literature. As stated in Astin’s (1999) leadership theory those students who are the most successful are those who feel connected to the university through their relationships with faculty, staff, and the programs implemented by the professional administration. The students in this study through their affiliation with student organizations and their sorority membership were able to develop a connection with their university. Furthermore, when reflecting on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the issue of building alternative spaces, students in this study reflected this through their overwhelming participation in affinity organizations. The affinity groups gave them the opportunity to lead. The vast majority with the exception of two respondents began their leadership journey in affinity organizations. CRT also allowed all of the participants to share their epistemology of how African American women at this institution benefits from the school’s programmatic efforts in relation to leadership.

Lastly, in regards to Black Feminist Thought (BFT) students personified this theory and replicated the literature when they stated why they joined BGLO. Five out of the nine respondents stated sisterhood was their reason for joining in addition to leadership development, the sorority’s mission, and lastly the goals and values of the organization aligned with their personal values. Membership in the organizations also gave them the opportunity to take part in executive roles and assist in defining the organization. Student S2’s comment was comprehensive of all respondents:
I joined a Black Greek Letter Sorority in order to find more women like myself that are African American. As I go further into my education, I will see less African Americans in general. I wanted to join an organization that I could contribute to for the rest of my life and not just a four year organization that I would forget after graduation. I also joined in order to gain networking opportunities.

**Summary**

The purpose of this investigation was to determine how African American women develop as leaders at PWI and the university’s responsibility to this population. The findings from this investigation determined that African American women developed through a number of factors, the first being involvement. The data from this investigation showed that student’s leadership skills were honed through their involvement in activities which allowed for practical application. Through their participation students were exposed to opportunities that trained them in several areas: program planning, etiquette, time management, marketing strategies, diversity, and group dynamics. The data also revealed key factors that contribute to these opportunities that were, the professional staff, university mission, resources, and inclusive environment.

In addition, several themes were discovered through this investigation as it related to African American women such as leadership development opportunities, Black women’s development, and inclusiveness vs. exclusiveness, resources, and the university’s mission/plans. The preceding themes provided additional information in regards to the factors that contribute to their willingness to participate in student activities and seek leadership opportunities.

Lastly, the findings displayed that the university’s responsibility to this population is to build an environment that fosters growth. From this investigation it was revealed that the university’s mission and strategic plan was inclusive of student of color development, even
though it did not formerly state African American women. However, from the review of the data the mission does not seem to be fully infused into the programming or promoted by the professional staff. Evidence of this was displayed when students did not make mentioned of the plans nor did fifty percent of the professional staff. This speaks to the collective understanding of the strategic initiative and its implementation university wide.
Chapter Five

Discussion

Narrative

The Student Life Center is jammed pack this evening! Over 700 students have crowded the Great Hall to see the newest members of the Black Greek Letter Sororities. Over 42 women will participate in a neophyte presentation that will honor their founders, their organization, and history. At the conclusion of the show all will receive gifts and accolades from their friends and family, then the real work begins....

The real work for these young women will include the implementation of their national initiatives on a local level that include programs on HIV/AIDS, Educational and Youth programs, as well as their own development within the organization. For some, their membership will lead to officer positions within the sorority and for all of them they will be viewed as role models to other women and young people. The ideal that will maintain their interest in their respective organization is their commitment to their sorority and its mission. They are also united as a group of women who support and see one another as sisters.

Introduction

Membership in Black Greek Letter sororities has effectively served African American women in several ways: as an agent of support, as a vehicle for social action, and as a place to celebrate solidarity among Black women. The intent of this investigation was to provide data in relation to African American women’s leadership development. In the past a number of researchers have conducted studies that review Black fraternal members leadership activities and the overall effect membership in these groups have on their development. However, very few if any of these studies focus directly on African American women or the factors that influence their
development as leaders. This investigation pursued participants who were members of Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLO) and Student Affairs practitioners in an effort to gain an awareness of how their skills progressed. The study also examined a university’s responsibility to their leadership development.

**Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this academic review was to examine how female members of African American sororities developed as leaders at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). For African American women, their membership in BGLO has served as a conduit to mentorship, a support system, and as leadership development. As Black women entered colleges and universities they sought out spaces and organizations that would provide a sense of place. Prior to the founding of Black sororities, African American women had limited access to developmental training or social and civic clubs. Therefore, the establishment of these organizations provided this population with a wealth of opportunities developed for and by African American women.

**Chapter Summaries.**

In an effort to justify this investigation Chapter One provided an introduction into Greek life as well as a historical context in relation to the role of Black women in America, higher education, and introduced the reader to the research problem and terms associated with this area of study.

Chapter Two presented applicable literature related to the investigation, such as Greek Life, leadership models that were associated with women, the role of leadership in higher education, and the history of African American education in America. The aforementioned areas provided credibility and a framework for the study. In addition, the information within the
literature contended that Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Thought were suggested as the best frameworks to use when working with Black women because both were inclusive of their experiences and identity.

Chapter Three provided information regarding the data collection, research methods, and the tools utilized to organize the details. The primary investigator for this review was an employee at the university and served in the Student Life Department. Due to the investigator’s position at the university and to maintain validity and reliability during the data collection the researcher operated as an insider utilizing an outsider’s lens to gain an understanding of the population being investigated. A qualitative approach was utilized in an effort to capture each subject’s voice and point of view. In addition, the data collection contained two phases; the first phase was the electronic questionnaire and it included two different sets of participants, current undergraduate members of BGLO and student affairs practitioners from the university. The second phase incorporated an in-depth interview process that included four participants from the first phase. The subjects for this phase were selected based upon their knowledge, expertise, and years of membership or service in their respective organization or professional position.

The goal of Chapter Four was to present the outcomes that were revealed through the open ended survey and interviews. Both phases provided information that assisted in explaining the investigators research questions and themes. Moreover, participants provided relevant perspectives that allowed for a comprehensive review through their voice.

Findings

To understand how African American women developed as leaders current undergraduate students and Student Affairs professionals shared their points of view through an open-ended survey and in-person interviews. This methodology also provided information in relation to the
question of inclusiveness, resources, and the university’s institutional plan and mission. Chapter Five provides a detailed overview of the results that were reported in Chapter Four.

**Research questions.**

**Question One: How do african american women develop as leaders at predominantly white institutions (pwi).**

Scholars such as Howard-Hamilton (2003) suggested that the overall development and socialization of Black women has been modeled and comprehended within the structure and agenda of the dominant society (p. 20). This supposition adds credence to the argument that a number of theoretical frameworks (i.e., transformational) and leadership programs are not inclusive of their unique experiences in America. Although there are theories that focus on identity and race such as Cross’s Black Identity theory, Black women not only deal with issues concerning race but also gender and negative imagery. It is for these reasons that leadership programs and theories that guide them must be multi-dimensional to be inclusive. Furthermore, the aforementioned assertions led this researcher to investigate how African American women develop as leaders at majority universities through the opinions and experiences of female members of Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLO) and Student Affairs practitioners.

The feedback provided by the Student Affairs practitioners and students varied but the vast majority identified two key elements that assisted with Black women’s leadership development: involvement and opportunity. In their responses students noted that involvement in student groups aided in honed their leadership through the improvement of their organizational skills, gaining expertise when dealing with issues such as diversity, grew their independence, and allowed them to network outside of their comfort zone. Sorority members who took part in this study participated in the following student groups: Shades of You (a
support group for women of color), NAACP, served as mentors through the African American Cultural Center’s (AACC) retention program, gospel choir, and as student ambassadors for the multicultural scholarship program.

The professional staff noted that students developed through their involvement in programs and services sponsored by Student Life offices such as the African American Cultural Center, Student Activities Leadership office, Ethnic Services, and other Student Life areas. The offices within student life offered leadership opportunities within student government, choir, mentor programs, women’s advocacy groups, and diversity programs as well as other student organizations. The practitioners felt these programs and students’ participation assisted in producing good leaders. This assertion provided credence to previous studies conducted by Kimbrough (1995) and Williams (2004) as well as Astin’s (1999) Theory of Involvement that connects student involvement and development.

In addition to involvement, the respondents also acknowledged that opportunity was another factor that influenced Black women’s development. The opportunity to lead and participate in student organizations allows leaders to enhance their skills through practical experiences. Within this study the results displayed student’s involvement and leadership positions. Chapter Four presented two tables that showcased the student participant’s organizational involvement and leadership roles. Table 3 reflected the student’s participation in non-affinity groups while Table 4 displayed their involvement in affinity organizations. The findings demonstrated that while African American women were active on campus, the majority gained an opportunity to operate in leadership positions through affinity groups and membership in BGLO. This outcome supported the literature because it disclosed that even though African
American women were active in several types of organizations, most have gained the chance to lead through groups that are modeled specifically for them.

Kim provided a possible rationale concerning African American women’s leadership roles on campus. She believed that even though the opportunity exists for them to lead in non-affinity groups she felt that the limited number of African Americans on campus would make it hard for them to be elected to these positions. Kim’s direct quote was “they are going to flock to who they (White students) know. They are going to vote for who they know and with such a low minority population you just don’t have the support”. This point also alluded to the depth of student’s network and knowledge regarding leadership opportunities. Amongst the survey participants only one student was elected to a leadership position outside of an affinity organization. She was Vice-President of the student group funding board (this group approved funding for the undergraduate student groups). Prior to joining the board she participated in leadership experiences sponsored by her major (business) and those offered by the university. As a result her network included additional support systems and resources that were not accessible to the other student respondents. Moreover, during the survey phase, when students referenced leadership opportunities the majority listed African American organizations such as the Gospel Choir, Black Student Association, BGLO, and other supportive student groups that targeted Black students. Therefore, the vast majority associated affinity organizations with the opportunity to lead. The creation and participation in ethnic organizations reinforces the counterspace theory discussed within the Critical Race Theory. In relation to leadership opportunities the creation of a counterspace allows for the creation of a positive racial climate where students can fully develop their leadership skills.
The professional staff also provided feedback about leadership opportunities available at the university. They believed that the students were exposed to real life experiences through groups such as the funding board which allocated money to student organizations. Respondents also alluded that the large size of the university allowed for a diverse number of student organizations to exist. The Student Life professionals also shared that these opportunities are available due to the staff members employed at the university. One Student Life professional stated that “the most successful university leadership programs simply have strong individuals, particular mentors that really take a vested interest in a student's success.” This comment also underscores the assertion made by Alexander Astin who believed the policies and programs implemented through the faculty, staff, and administrators affect how students feel about their campus as well as their involvement in activities.

Two professional staff members offered dissenting opinions regarding the leadership opportunities available at the university. Professional Staff member P8 (Staff member identification code) believed that a disparity existed at the university in relation to women and students of color holding leadership positions at the institution. P8 shared that:

overall I would say that students of color and women (both women of color and White women) are not represented in student leadership, so except in spaces where diversity and inclusion are intentionally broached the leadership doesn’t address the systematic challenges women (both of color and white) and other people of color face.

Another Student Life Professional (P3) believed that the university was not doing a good job of developing or empowering these students (students of color). This staff member also acknowledged that in the past eleven years the university elected only three African Americans (male) and one Asian male as student body president as well as one African American male as
Vice-President. In regards to Black women, within the past ten years none have chosen to run for President. However, in 2001 the winning Executive Slate for Student Government elections included an African American woman who became vice-president. This finding reveals that the university should review how the leadership opportunities at the institution are promoted, implemented and developed because only one segment (majority students) of the population is taking advantage of them.

**Question one summary.**

One of the key goals of this investigation was to gain an understanding of how Black women develop as leaders at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). The findings from this investigation exhibited that Black women developed through their leadership involvement and opportunities. The university offered a wide variety of leadership programs that students allow students to develop their skills. Students within this investigation held elected positions in university groups. The opportunities that they took part in supplied them with real life experiences that can carry into their professional life after college. However, the data also exposed that the vast majority received this experience through affinity organizations and that many were not leading in non-affinity groups. It must be noted the researcher does not have an issue with students leading in affinity organizations; however, this finding becomes an issue if students do not seek out these positions because they do not feel they would have the chance to gain a position due to the lack of support from students and professional staff. Consequently, the institution must be intentional in developing programs and services that empowers African American women, as well as become purposeful and deliberate in how it advertises and markets leadership opportunities that do not attract African American women.
**Question two: How does membership in black greek letter organizations shape African American women as leaders and influence their development.**

The goal of question two was to gain an understanding of how membership in Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLO) influenced African American women’s leadership and development. According to the literature Black women joined Historically Black Greek Letter Organizations to establish a sense of place, develop as leaders and become a well-rounded person through the opportunities offered by these groups. In this investigation the respondents provided feedback that upheld the information asserted in the literature. Students shared that their membership in their respective sorority supplied them with real life experiences because of the leadership roles they held in the sorority. In fact, eight of the student participants indicated that they held an executive position in the sorority. Furthermore, the students identified four areas where they experienced growth as leaders: time management, organizational skills, negotiation and conflict resolution. In addition to the development of leadership skills, respondents also shared that their participation allowed them to become more assertive and gain confidence in their personal abilities. Student S4 revealed that she has “been challenged more now than ever (in many different aspects of life), which has made me a stronger and smarter person. I am able to think *outside the box* and look at things with both a short and long term outcome.”

Student Life members could not offer a great deal of information regarding how membership shaped BGLO sorority members leadership and development. The majority of the respondents in both the interview and survey shared that did interact with the students but they did not share the quality or content of that involvement. Sam who during the investigation served as the Coordinator of Greek Life reported that the vast majority of his interaction was
encouraging those female members who were officers within NPHC to progress well academically. This revelation implied that the university may not be doing a good job mentoring or connecting with this population through their leadership programming. As a result, many of the staff who are responsible for their development cannot divulge, even in general terms information regarding their development in these organizations. This discovery could serve as an indicator of the success of the university’s programs, outreach, and services that target African American women. If the students who are the object of the services do not connect to the school’s initiatives or staff members, then the ultimate goal of developing this population will not be met.

Moreover, as stated in the literature the university’s history of excluding Black students may still have a lingering influence on the students and their participation in leadership activities. One student provided a sharp response in regards to the university’s leadership development programs that focus fraternal organization: “I don’t believe that the IFC and Pan-Hellenic council's practices or general advice is relevant to me nor my organization.” The other students did not reveal this sentiment in their responses; in fact the majority disclosed that they did not attend because they were unaware of the programmatic options available to them. This lends credence to a statement made by a practitioner that said student’s involvement in leadership programming is dependent upon their exposure and knowledge of the university’s offerings.

During the data collection phase of this investigation, both the students and staff provided similar responses regarding the dissemination of information about leadership programming. All stated that they delivered/received information via listserv, emails, word of mouth and through specific offices. However, the problem with the above promotional devices is that if students are not connected with specific offices and programs at the university, they may be excluded from
opportunities such as LeaderShape, which challenges students to change the world by working with integrity and producing results.

**Question two summary.**

The respondents in this investigation provided differing opinions regarding how membership in an African American sorority influenced Black females leadership and overall growth. Students provided clear examples of how their membership in BGLO added to their development. The students felt their self-confidence increased as well as their organizational skills had been refined. This finding shows that participation in BGLO can assist in preparing young women for professional experiences that go beyond the collegiate level. Unfortunately, the staff within this investigation did not offer any details about their leadership and development that could be associated with their participation in BGLO. This finding leads one to question how connected African American Greek sorority members were to the faculty and staff at this institution. If the university and the students they serve fail to establish a connection, the targeted population will disassociate from the programs and the staff members who oversee them. An example of this separation was given by one of the professional staff members.

In Chapter Four an excerpt of Professional Staff member P8’s experience as a NPHC Advisor was given. Professional Staff member P8 discussed in detail the rejection he felt from the students

Oddly, I recently reflected on my time as the NPHC advisor. I described myself as a neophyte in educating myself in the "Mysteries of the Divine Nine (Immortal Eight).” As being part of a liminal race, the students couldn't get past the fact that "I'M NOT BLACK" and, as such, I couldn't possibly understand what it meant to be part of I knew
enough and more than the average NPHC student (at the time) about the rules and public symbols, rituals, and knowledge of the respective organizations.

Staff member P8 went on to share that this experience affected his future experiences with NPHC groups. This revelation exposed the need for bridge building between BGLO members and the university to fulfill the university’s responsibility to these students. The institution must review how they market and promote their leadership programs in an effort to engage those students who may not see the relevance of the program to their experience as well as exposing the programs to students who may not know of these opportunities. Yet, it also important for student’s to be open to those in leadership and take a risk to trust their knowledge and standard of care of those staff members who are sincerely reaching out to them.

**Question Three: Do the services and programs provided by the university aid in african american women’s leadership development, offer opportunities as well as address the university’s responsibility to this population.**

Historically colleges and universities have offered a number of services and programs that assist with their student’s leadership development. For this investigation, the goal was to gain a perspective on how these programs aid in African American women’s development, offer opportunities, and address the university’s responsibility to this population. The institution that was reviewed offered a number of programs and services through its Student Life Department, Honors program, and other university efforts, yet several (seven) students re-counted that they did not take part in these programs. The reasons given for their non-participation were due to lack of knowledge, demanding work schedule, and the feeling that the university did not foster leadership development. The professional staff members communicated that the offerings
sponsored by the university (i.e., 300 student organizations), staff members, and leadership programming aided in the development of this student population.

The students who took part in both the survey and interview were asked questions about the university’s programs and services as well as their participation. Many recounted that they were involved in student organizations however, the majority did not attend the leadership opportunities available to them. Student S3 was the only individual in this study who was engaged in a number of leadership development programs and services. She described her experience as positive “I participated in Camp Cats. I really liked the program because it helped me to meet other freshmen students as well as upperclassmen. Additionally, I have attended the UC Leadership Conference which gave me a different approach to leadership as well.” Student S3 was an example of a student who was fully engaged and connected to the university.

Unfortunately, this was not the case for the majority of the students within this study. The participants shared that their involvement was limited because many of them held employment positions where they worked a great deal of hours and this was in addition to their academic responsibilities and extra-curricular activities. Student S7 stated that she fully took part in sorority activities “but because of focusing on graduation and working a full-time job, I am not active in other campus groups (programs) currently.” Student S9 revealed that even though she knew of the programming she did not take the time to participate in them. As a result, these students could not add further commentary in relation to how these programs assisted in their development.

One student shared that she made a decision not to take part in these activities because she did not believe that these activities fostered leadership, below is her full statement:
My lack of participation is because our campus doesn’t foster leadership, if a person goes against the grain or has a different agenda it is not welcomed and shunned upon. The campus lacks originality, everything that happens (events and programs) has happened before. Also, this campus is a PWI (Predominately White Institution) and the attitudes of the students are a few things. The first thing is that they do not care about real issues that pertain to the black community, they simply feel like holding a program is enough instead of reaching out to fix the issues.

S8 was the only participant who provided an opposing opinion about the university’s programs. Furthermore, her statement reflected the professional staff member’s responses who believed that the programming implemented by the university was sufficient and assisted with the development of students. The only difference between her statement and the staff’s was that she did not feel that the university or its staff specifically promoted her development as a Black woman.

Students S3 and S8 provided two dissimilar opinions about the quality of the university’s leadership programming based on their personal experiences. S3 felt that the university’s initiatives have assisted in her growth as a leader, while S8 believed that programs provided little assistance to her. Due to the diversity of their opinions the investigator could not provide a clear answer in relation to Question 3 from a student’s point of view. The student interviews were used to answer questions that remained unclear from the survey, however, their answers mirrored student S3 and S8. Sara felt the programs assisted in refining their leadership skills. She also felt that these skills could be transferred and utilized in a professional setting. Kim could not provide a definitive answer to this question, she remained unsure about how the programs and services influence her development and other Black women as leaders. Moreover, the other
students who took part in the online survey could not provide much information because many did not have time to take part in the university’s developmental programming. Consequently, these students could not contribute additional feedback on these programs or how the university’s initiatives assisted in their development.

The survey responses from the professional staff did provide additional insights on African American women’s leadership development. Members of Student Life referenced the school’s leadership activities when asked about leadership development (i.e., Student Government, Activities Council, and Student Groups). They felt that these activities fostered student’s development thus producing good leaders. This was the position held by the majority of staff members, with the exception of two practitioners, P3 and P8. P8 did not believe that the university was doing a good job developing them. He felt that there was a disparity in leadership offerings to leaders of color. P8 declared that a “disparity exists in offering student leaders of color the skills AND empowering them to put their skills to practice. It's a case of the Have's and Have Not's…and the gap is wider than ever before. Those that have the skills and network will be successful.” P3 asserted that the current programs sponsored by the university cultivate decent to strong leaders but lacks an inclusive element that would make it broad and far-reaching to a number of students. P3 went on to say that:

There is some movement toward creating leaders and programs and development curricula that are inclusive, but in terms of Paul Gorski's models around inclusive curricula or inclusive programming, I would say that we tend to vacillate between exclusion/status and heroes/holidays with only small, spread out pockets pushing beyond that into intercultural exchanges and working toward social justice.
The interview responses shared by the professionals did not vary from the majority opinion reflected in the online surveys. William (administrator) expressed that the only way to determine the effectiveness of leadership programs was through their participation in student organizations as leaders. Yet, it was in answering a question about the university’s mission that Student Life professionals disclosed their opinions about the effectiveness and inclusiveness of the university’s programs. P5 made the following statement:

Most of the leadership programs I see on campus are specific or large-scaled i.e., student leadership conference, student organization leadership retreats, etc… But I do not see many programs that are specifically geared to African American women. Most of the programs and services on campus seem to recruit all students unless they happen to come out of Ethnic Services and the African American Resource Center. The university's mission tries to tackle diversity, but actions speak louder than words. I do not feel that the specific leadership needs of African American women are being met on campus.

Four other staff members provided opinions that were similar to P5’s, in addition this group also believed that the university has not included language in its current mission on programs that adequately address the leadership needs of Black women.

Overall, when referencing the staff member’s responses, the investigator can say that the university is providing leadership opportunities to all students. The question then becomes how effective are these programs in fully developing these students. Staff members from this study were split in their opinions. Many believed that the current programming provided practical leadership experiences, however, for some the programs are organized in a manner that do not address the needs of African American women. This outcome reflected the need for
practitioners to review not only the activities but theoretical frameworks that shape these programs in an effort to fully develop and empower these women as leaders.

**Question three summary.**

The third question for this investigation asked whether or not the services provided by the university aid in African American women’s development, offer opportunities as well as address the university’s responsibility to this population. It is the investigator’s opinion that leadership opportunities were offered by the university, however, because of a lack of knowledge and time the student’s within this study could not take advantage of them. Those students who were aware and had the time to take advantage of the leadership opportunities had a great experience. The question then becomes did the experiences aid in their development? After a careful review of the staff’s responses, this investigator would say that yes, those who take part in the programs were able to sharpen their skills, however, the programs need to do more in the area of empowerment, inclusion, and personal development. In addition, the university should review its current programmatic practices to verify whether or not these activities are relevant to students in regards to gender, ethnicity, and theory. The aforementioned items must be reviewed if the university would like to have a greater influence on the students they serve.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

This investigation used as its guide three frameworks that could aid in the development of African American women, Astin’s Leadership Theory, Black Feminist Thought, and Critical Race Theory. A number of African American scholars felt that current leadership theories were not inclusive to the history and experiences of Black women, however for this research project the theories were used to answer questions regarding Black women’s development, provide a voice to the participants, and understand their point of view.
Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement

Astin’s (1999) theory focused on involvement and he defined this as the amount of psychological and physical energy a student devotes to their academic experience. He felt that the more highly involved students were the greater their satisfaction. The students in this study were active in student organizations and the staff that worked with them was responsible for the activities that they engaged in as participants. Several served as leaders in their respective groups and some of the students took part in the developmental activities sponsored by the university. Many felt that these activities aided in helping them develop their leadership skills.

The role of the professional staff members also reflected Astin’s theory because through their implementation of programs, policies and services they affected student’s participation in campus activities. The information derived from this study displayed that students did take part in student organizations and activities however, many did not take advantage of the developmental programs due to a lack of time and for some a disdain for the university’s offerings. In addition, this investigation exposed that the staff’s interaction with students was limited. The Coordinator for Greek programs because of the enormity of his responsibilities did not have a great deal of contact with the students. This revelation was also discovered through the remaining staff members’ responses, who indicated that they interacted with the Black Greek-Letter sorority members but could not report how these members benefitted from the university’s programs.

Black Feminist Thought

Hill-Collin’s (1990) Black Feminist Thought (BFT) was utilized for this investigation because of the foundations that shape its framework. The theory is based on Black women’s experiences and it takes into consideration how gender, race, and class influence how African
American women have come to view the world. Scholars such as Neumann (2007) believed that Black feminist philosophies were evident in the histories of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho. She also felt that Black feminism was different from White feminism “in that it emphasizes the freedom of people of color” (p. 169). For historically African American sororities their efforts to assist people of color came through their national public service initiatives that included educational development, economic development, health programs and services for youth.

Within this review the use of BFT provided a platform for the women in this study so that they could define how they developed as leaders. Students shared that their involvement in student organizations allowed them to build transferable skills that they can utilize in the professional world. In addition, many described their participation as a positive experience. An example of this was given by S7 who stated that her involvement allowed her to “experience dealing with conflict and diversity as well as learning how to work in groups successfully.” Another student (S2) offered the following statement “Being a Turner Scholar Ambassador has helped me to become more independent and has given me more confidence in my own abilities.” The accounts provided by the students were their personal beliefs regarding their leadership development in student organizations.

In regards to BGLO, the students felt that these groups gave them the confidence to lead. For the majority of the participants in this study many received the opportunity to lead within their sorority even though the vast majority participated in student organizations prior to their membership in BGLO. Student S1 felt that her participation in her respective sorority has allowed her leadership skills to “evolve into something bigger.” S2 asserted that as a new member she has been given the opportunity “to grow into my leadership skills. Planning and
executing events takes a lot of hard work and coordination.” Students in these organizations have the chance to not only lead but also create programs from their perspective, thus facilitating their growth as people and leaders. Moreover, they have created an environment that allowed them to not only grow it also allowed them to define and share how they felt their membership in BGLO and student organizations influenced their development.

The professional staff also answered questions regarding what role, if any, should gender, race, and ethnicity play in the development of leadership programs and services. All of the aforementioned descriptors are key elements within BFT. The investigation revealed that nine out of ten staff members felt that inclusion of race, gender, and ethnicity should play a major role in developing leadership programming for students. In fact P4 offered an answer that summarizes the participant’s responses:

I think gender, race, and ethnicity all play key roles in providing valuable leadership programs and services. Each one of these issues has so much to reveal about who we are and what students can learn. I just think there's so much out there about these topics that as student affairs professionals, especially in my capacity as the PC for Fraternity & Sorority Life, we have to focus this conversation and make some sense out of everything that's out there (for us and our students).

The staff members at this institution recognized that these three factors influence their experiences, thereby affecting how they view themselves, place at the university, and their growth as people and leaders. As a result, these elements should be intentionally infused into the leadership programming designed by the institution.
Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was established during the 1970s by legal professionals who were distressed by the slow movement of racial reform. The theory focused on three main viewpoints: racism was the norm in America, the usage of storytelling, and power of the individual’s voice. The utilization of CRT in this investigation not only provided a voice for students and staff, it also assisted in reviewing the use of counterspace through the establishment of BGLO at the institution which provided leadership opportunities for Black women. The use of CRT also noted the history of marginalization at the institution in relation to this population.

CRT was a key framework as the researcher sought to gain an understanding of the student’s involvement on campus. The student responses displayed that while all of them were involved in student organizations, the majority received the opportunity to hold a leadership position in their sorority. Furthermore, a large number of these students participated in organizations that targeted them such as the Black Student Association and Shades of You, women’s organization. This revelation showcased the use of counterspace on the campus. The counterspaces at this institution allowed the students to showcase their talents and skills as leaders. The usage of CRT also provided both the students and staff with a voice when offering opinions concerning the university’s leadership programming, staff, issue of inclusion, and overall development of Black women at the university.

Implications

The goal of this investigation was to review how African American women developed as leaders at a Predominantly White Institution as well as examining the university’s responsibility to this population. After an extensive qualitative examination the data from this study exposed a number of implications in relation to African American women’s leadership development and
the university’s responsibility. The implications that were exposed centered on African American women’s involvement in specific student groups, the issue of inclusion within student organizations and the implementation of the university’s mission statement.

The study revealed that African American women were involved in campus organizations. Moreover, their participation in these groups sharpened their leadership skills, allowed them to obtain leadership positions, and gain confidence in their abilities. However, a key finding in this study displayed that the majority of these leadership positions originated in African American student organizations. Several survey participants (four) held membership in non-affinity groups; however, only one had secured an elected position in one of these organizations. The study did not provide a conclusive answer concerning this finding, yet as the primary investigator it can be inferred that a disparity in leadership opportunity exists in the majority organizations at this institution. This assumption is based on the data provided by the students who referred to mostly student of color organizations when referring to their growth, and development as leaders as well as the information provided by several professional staff members.

The findings regarding involvement and opportunity are significant for several reasons first, the university strategic plan calls for a community that embraces global engagement and diversity. The institution defines Global Engagement as the development of student’s skills and knowledge so that they will be successful in the “modern” world. In relation to leadership development, this goal may be hard to obtain if the programs to assist with students’ leadership growth are not attractive to a wide variety of students and the opportunity to lead in non-affinity organizations is perceived as being non-accessible. The perception that the accessibility to lead in non-affinity groups was revealed in the data and in Table 3 (Chapter 4), which displayed the
student participant’s involvement in majority organizations. In addition, professional staff members mentioned that the university does not have a plan to develop African American women’s leadership. P6 made the following point concerning leadership development and women “it is a sporadic occurrence nothing that is strategically implemented; if you stopped the President and asked him about programs for women's leadership development he would have to defer to Student Activities and Ethnic Programs.”

The findings also implied that the university may not be inclusive and diverse in regards to their implementation of programs. This outcome is evident in the data when professional staff answered questions surrounding the mission and student responses to their involvement. P9 asserted that “CU prides itself on racial diversity but in actuality they are far from it. In their mission statement they speak about diversity but it is not practiced in a way that makes everyone feel included. UC also offers many services that are out of date and fail to meet the needs of current students.” The fact that the university has references to diversity and inclusion in its strategic plan and mission is great however, if it is not practiced amongst the institutions community (students, staff, faculty and administration) then their attempt to create a Just environment is counterfeit.

Another area exposed through the data collection was the lack of personal involvement or mentorship for these young women. Staff members mentioned that they interacted with this population, however, many did not share any information regarding the content and quality of the interaction. This implication makes one question how many of these women have mentors or role models. Mentors and role models can serve as an important resource in a number of areas such as networking, gaining personal introspection and knowledge as well as a guide. Professional Staff member P3 stated that:
Within Student Life there are a lot of women employees that serve as role models, many of whom are African American. It's my belief, though, that women are over-represented in front line staff for reasons connected to institutional sexism and racism (low wages, expectations of being, "nurturing" and general devaluing of the work's nature), not out of an intentional interest to have representative role models. Students can find some role models within faculty, but female faculty of all races are lacking and African American faculty of all genders are sorely lacking in our institution.

The lack of role models and mentors has caused the majority of these young women to disassociate from the programs and staff implemented by the university; if students do not view these services as ones that can benefit them most will not participate. The university must begin to review its community and make a physical effort to have staff and faculty that reflects its student population. However, as discussed in the findings, students must be opened to receive support through the staff at the institution that are sincerely open to working with them because in the modern world they will need a myriad of support systems.

This academic review also revealed that a significant number of participants did not understand how the university’s mission and strategic plan should intersect with the institutions programs and leadership activities in relation to African American women. In fact out of all of the participants (students and professionals) only five mentioned the university’s strategic plan and mission. The purpose of strategic planning is to shape the campus community into a climate that is inclusive, open, and diverse not only academically but also in relation to its students and the activities offered. The mission should be infused into the programmatic initiatives, however the data showed that many did not see how these plans connected with them as students and staff, the question asked by a number of them was “what plan?” This disclosure displayed that
the university must do a better job of promoting the plan, its goals and expectations to the overall community. If this does not take place then the plan is just a group of words on paper with no power or influence on the university.

**Limitations**

The intent of this study was to gain an understanding of how African American women who are members of BGLO develop as leaders at a Predominantly White Institution and the role that the university has in their growth as leaders. It was not the intent of the investigator to differentiate how white students or non-Greek students develop as leaders. The study looked at a small pool of students and professional staff who provided their perspectives concerning, diversity, inclusion, the university mission, and the role of gender and race in relation to African American women’s leadership development.

As the primary investigator for this study I gathered data for the study as an insider looking from the outside. The fact that a number of the professional staff had worked with me as well as the students may have slightly influenced their opinions, even though mechanisms were put in place through the consent form and use of the online survey to limit my personal influence.

The investigation also incorporated one institution for its review. The university was used because of its history with African American students and their Greek population. The school is a large public Research I university that was located in a large urban city. Other schools located in the area were not included in this investigation, which may have provided a different perspective.

This examination also included a purposeful sample that included 10 students (only 9 completed the survey) and 10 professional staff members. The hope was to have more students
included in the survey due to the fixed number of staff members. However, due to the chapters not meeting during the data collection and other Greek activities I (primary investigator) did not get an opportunity to present to each chapter individually. If the study had generated more students during the survey phase, the findings would have likely produced more information.

**Recommendations**

After examination of the findings and themes it can be determined that several recommendations can be made from this study in quite a few areas that include: leadership assessment, creation of a women’s mentorship program, mandatory orientation for Greek Students, and the establishment of a student commission that will assist staff members with the development of inclusive leadership programming.

As this investigation has evolved I have gained a deeper understanding of what leadership means. I now define leadership as the opportunity to provide vision and guide a group of people in single or multiple objectives. This definition was formed after reviewing the information provided by the students and their involvement. Many were able to build their skills and talents through leadership experiences within their respective student groups. The only concern that this investigator had was in relation to their leadership opportunities, it seemed as if these experiences were limited to only African American student groups. If the university is truly serious about creating an environment that is “just” and inclusive these opportunities must be marketed not only so that African American women can pursue them but the university environment must be open to receiving them. Therefore, based on my expertise and research I believe the following recommendations should be implemented in relation to students, staff, administrators, and the university.
Students

In an effort to get more African American students involved in the leadership programming offered by the university, a leadership commission composed of students and staff needs to be established. The goal of this commission would be threefold: to gain an understanding of student’s expectations of the university’s leadership programming, gather student feedback so that the services are relevant to the student population, infuse theoretical perspectives based upon race, gender, and class. The commission would also review the programming to ensure that it is upholding the university’s mission and strategic plans.

The establishment of the Student Leadership Commission would empower students and encourage their involvement in the leadership programs, especially African American women, who from this study do not fully participate in the university’s leadership services. In addition, the leadership commission would assist in bridging the gap between Black female students and staff who do not have a good connection as reflected in this investigation’s findings. Through the implementation of the aforementioned objectives, the university will gain a more diverse audience in regards to student involvement. In addition, the students who serve on the commission will serve as leadership ambassadors and peer leaders who will assist with the recruitment of students that will take part in the developmental programs.

Staff

The relationship between the staff and students at the university seemed to be few and for some non-existent in relation to their leadership development. The study showed that the majority of the staff could not provide further information concerning student’s growth as leaders. Many equated their growth with the programs offered by the university because they felt that these offerings were sufficient to preparing students. However, the students revealed
that many of them did not take part in the programs for a number of reasons; therefore, the staff must assess the effectiveness of their programs in regards to fostering student’s skills and talents. In the survey responses the staff stated that they felt the programs offered by them were sufficient in developing student’s skills; although this was asserted based upon feelings and not data. It is this researcher’s opinion that the staff needs to be more accountable as well as knowledgeable concerning the efficiency of the programming offered to students. It is irresponsible of the professional staff to tout the strength of their programs based on personal beliefs and not data.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the leadership programs offered by the institution the staff members must conduct a qualitative and quantitative inquiry of their programs and services. Both forms of assessment would review the effectiveness of the university’s leadership programs and their participation. The quantitative study should be sent out to all student leaders to reflect a substantial sample of their opinion regarding their leadership development. The qualitative review would be in the form of focus groups to assist in gaining more feedback concerning the university’s leadership initiatives and its focus on race, gender, and ethnicity. The inventory assessments should utilize resources that will help strengthen their tool such as the LPI created by Kouszes and Posner (2002).

In addition to developing assessment tools that will review the effectiveness of the institution’s leadership programming, the evaluation should also examine the programs in relation to diversity, inclusion, and a multicultural framework. The university promotes several strategic plans that endorse diversity, yet, during the data collection only four staff members referred to the these plans sponsored by the university, while one staff member referred to the Just Community plan that has been in place at the university for over 17 years. The goal of all of
the strategic plans is to create an inclusive environment and framework for university programs. However, the findings did not reflect that the staff utilized these initiatives as resources for the development of their programs. The disconnect between the programs and university’s goals creates a void between what the institution believes it is doing and what is actually being implemented by the staff.

Furthermore, there are several models that are available and can be applied to test the school’s programmatic efforts in relation to diversity and inclusiveness. Paul Gorski has developed several resources and models that can assist student affairs practitioners in creating leadership curriculums that are all-encompassing. Another framework that would assist with the development of Black women is Black Feminist Thought. I believe this framework can be used to assist in developing services that would benefit and educate students, specifically a mentorship program for African American women. This program would provide models for young women in regards to their leadership, personal development, and professional development.

Another recommendation for the staff is to establish a mentorship program for African American women at the university. The mentorship program would further develop these women as leaders and prepare them more fully for life after college. The mentor would assist them with networking outside of their comfort zone while allowing them to navigate their own journey and development as a African American woman. It would also offer them opportunities that they may not be accessible to them. The findings from this study revealed that this is needed based upon their participation in current leadership programs offered by the university and their ability to gain access to leadership positions from all areas at the university.
Administrators

The online survey revealed that the professional staff thought their offerings were adequate however, this assessment was given without any quantitative or qualitative research. There is a need to do an intensive evaluation of leadership programs offered by Student Life to ensure that the programs are truly developing students as leaders. The administration should review the overall budget for student life and employ an assessment team to review its programs and services so that the programming remains relevant in the area of higher education and student life.

In addition, to developing an area that reviews its leadership offerings, Administrators should also ensure that their staff receives professional development through major organizations such as the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, and National Conference on Race & Ethnicity in American Higher Education (NCORE). These organizations also offer smaller conferences on Women’s Leadership as well as on Research and Assessment. Attendance at these conferences and others will ensure that staff members remain fresh in regards to their knowledge about Student Affairs and relevant theoretical frameworks.

Institution

The institution as revealed in this study developed a number of plans and initiatives to support the overall mission of the university and its commitment to students. Although the plans were well written and developed, there are quite a few issues associated with them. The first issue is that the campus community as a whole was unaware of how these initiatives should be implemented into its services, programs, and student organizations. For example the When questioned about how African American women’s development fit into these plans very few
could adequately expound on this question. Therefore, the university must become intentional in how they market the plan to the university community and its expectation that these ideals be utilized in the school’s programs. The findings reflected that there was a disconnect between the university and staff when incorporating these university polices into their programs. It is the institutions responsibility to ensure that everyone understands the vision and how it should influence the university’s programs and services.

The university should also develop with the assistance of its Student Affairs Practitioners specific programs that will enhance African American women as people and leaders (i.e., mentor programs). The history of the school and its response to this population cries out for this to be established and funded by the university, therefore, a financial commitment is needed and must be made to these students. The late Frank Hale from Ohio State University shared that “Diversity without finance is counterfeit,” therefore, if this university is truly committed to fulfilling its mission it must strategically finance programs that will prepare these women for the modern world.

Conclusion

Entrepreneur Oprah Winfrey said that “You don’t become what you want; you become what you believe.” In regards to African American women and their development as leaders this quote captures the spirit of the staff and students who were willing to share their knowledge in this study. Another quote that personifies the data revealed in this study was shared by Audre Lorde “When I dare to be powerful – to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.” For students one of the biggest risks they can take on is to become a leader and take on leadership positions. Staff also takes on risks as they do their best to implement programs and services that will benefit a diverse population.
This study exposed a number of outcomes concerning the leadership development of African American women who were members of BGLO at a PWI.

The goal of this study was to examine how African American women develop as leaders using as its target population sorority members from BGLO. The study revealed that these women develop not only through involvement but also opportunity. Opportunity for this study means the chance to lead and guide. Students in this study received the greatest support and opportunity through organizations that were fashioned for them, even though they were participants in non-affinity groups. Furthermore, their participation in their respective sorority added to their personal development in relation to their confidence and abilities. This study also revealed that the university must become intentional in how it markets, provides opportunity, and empowers this group of students. These factors are important as the university believes that its services are preparing these students to be successful once they end their collegiate career and transfer these skills into a professional environment. The time is now for the university and the community it serves to live what it says it does in relation to the leadership development of its students.
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Penn State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, USA
Appendices
Appendix A

Information Sheet for Research (Electronic)
University of Cincinnati

Department: College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services
Principal Investigator: Terri M. Hurdle
Faculty Advisor/ Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. Lanthan Camblin

Title of Study:
The Development of Leadership Skills of African American Women in Sororities: University's Responsibility

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this paper carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Who is doing this research study?
The person in charge of this research study is Ms. Terri M. Hurdle of the University of Cincinnati (UC) a doctoral candidate in the College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Service’s Urban Education and Leadership program. She is being led in this research by her faculty advisor, Dr. Lanthan Camblin.

What is the purpose of this research study?
The reason for this study is to evaluate the Leadership Development of African American Women in Sororities: A University Responsibility. The study will focus upon the leadership activities sponsored by your university and the influence they have on the subjects specified within this investigation.

Who will be in this research study?
The subjects for this study will include at minimum 10 African American Females (18-25) who are current members of a Black Greek letter sorority at a predominantly White campus. For the Professional Staff the goal is 8 (at minimum) who fall into the following age range (27-62) and work with this population.

What will you be asked to do in this research study, and how long will it take?
Participants will be asked to take part in an electronic survey that will last no longer than 30 minutes. Participants can take the survey in the following areas: home computer, office and/or campus computer labs.

Are there any risks to being in this research study?
It is not expected that you will be exposed to any risk by being in this research study.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?
Yes, there are benefits from your participation in this research study. Your participation in the study will assist in providing better support and leadership programs for the targeted population within this study. It will also assist Student Life professionals with a better understanding of this population.

Will you have to pay anything to be in this research study?
No, there is no cost to participate in this research study.

What will you get because of being in this research study?
Those who participate in this study will also receive their choice of three possible gift cards/certificate: Chipotle, Starbucks, or Subway.

Do you have choices about taking part in this research study?
Yes, you can choose not to take part in this research study.

**How will your research information be kept confidential?**
Information about you will be kept private by me Terri M. Hurdle, the primary investigator.

Your information will be kept by the Primary Investigator for two years. After that it will be given to the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board.

Agents of the University of Cincinnati may inspect study records for audit or quality assurance purposes.

**What are your legal rights in this research study?**
Nothing in this consent form waives any legal rights you may have. This consent form also does not release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

**What if you have questions about this research study?**
If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you should contact Terri Hurdle at 513-885-8392

The UC Institutional Review Board – Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB-S) reviews all non-medical research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the study, you may contact the Chairperson of the UC IRB-S at (513) 558-5784. Or, you may call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547, or write to the IRB-S, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, or email the IRB office at irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

**Do you HAVE to take part in this research study?**
No one has to be in this research study. Refusing to take part will NOT cause any penalty or loss of benefits that you would otherwise have. You may start and then change your mind and stop at any time. To stop being in the study, you should tell

The UC Institutional Review Board reviews all research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the study, you may contact the UC IRB at (513) 558-5259. Or, you may call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547, or write to the IRB, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, or email the IRB office at irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

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BY TURNING IN YOUR COMPLETED SURVEY (or BY TAKING PART IN THESE ACTIVITIES) YOU INDICATE YOUR CONSENT FOR YOUR ANSWERS TO BE USED IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY.

PLEASE KEEP THIS INFORMATION SHEET FOR YOUR REFERENCE.

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Appendix B

Adult Consent Form for Research (Interview)
University of Cincinnati

**Department:** College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services

**Principal Investigator:** Terri M. Hurdle

**Faculty Advisor/ Co-Principal Investigator:** Dr. Lanthan Camblin

**Title of Study:**
The Development of Leadership Skills of African American Women in Sororities: University's Responsibility

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You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this paper carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

**Who is doing this research study?**
The person in charge of this research study is Ms. Terri M. Hurdle of the University of Cincinnati (UC) a doctoral candidate in the College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Service’s Urban Education and Leadership program. She is being led in this research by her faculty advisor, Dr. Lanthan Camblin.

**What is the purpose of this research study?**
The reason for this study is to evaluate the Leadership Development of African American Women in Sororities: A University Responsibility. The study will focus upon the leadership activities sponsored by your university and the influence they have on the subjects specified within this investigation.

**Who will be in this research study?**
The interviews will include 4 participants: African American Females (18-25) who are current members of a Black Greek letter sorority at a predominantly White campus (2) and members of the professional staff (27-62) who work with this population (2).

**What will you be asked to do in this research study, and how long will it take?**
Participants will be asked to take part in a one hour interview with the primary investigator that will be audio recorded for verification purposes only. All interviews will take place on the university’s campus; Steger Student Life Center 7th floor Conference room.

**Are there any risks to being in this research study?**
It is not expected that you will be exposed to any risk by being in this research study.

**Are there any benefits from being in this research study?**
Yes, there are benefits from your participation in this research study. Your participation in the study will assist in providing better support and leadership programs for the targeted population within this study. It will also assist Student Life professionals with a better understanding of this population.

**Will you have to pay anything to be in this research study?**
No, there is no cost to participate in this research study.

**What will you get because of being in this research study?**
Those who participate in this study will also receive their choice of three possible gift cards/certificate: Chipotle, Starbucks, or Subway.
Do you have choices about taking part in this research study?
Yes, you can choose not to take part in this research study.

How will your research information be kept confidential?
Information about you will be kept private by me Terri M. Hurdle, the primary investigator.

Your information will be kept by the Primary Investigator for two years. After that it will be given to the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board.

Agents of the University of Cincinnati may inspect study records for audit or quality assurance purposes.

What are your legal rights in this research study?
Nothing in this consent form waives any legal rights you may have. This consent form also does not release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

What if you have questions about this research study?
If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you should contact Terri Hurdle at 513-885-8392

The UC Institutional Review Board – Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB-S) reviews all non-medical research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the study, you may contact the Chairperson of the UC IRB-S at (513) 558-5784. Or, you may call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547, or write to the IRB-S, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, or email the IRB office at irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

Do you HAVE to take part in this research study?
No one has to be in this research study. Refusing to take part will NOT cause any penalty or loss of benefits that you would otherwise have. You may start and then change your mind and stop at any time. To stop being in the study, you should tell

Agreement:
I have read this information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I give my consent to participate in this research study. I will receive a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep.

Participant Name (please print) ____________________________________________

Participant Signature ____________________________ Date __________

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent ____________________________ Date __________
Appendix C
Electronic Questionnaire

Professional Staff

1. Tell me about your position(s) at the University of Cincinnati.

2. What is your understanding of the university’s mission and plans for its students particularly students of color?

3. Do you feel that the leadership programs currently implemented by the university assist in producing good leaders? If so, how?

4. Describe how the leadership programs and services include all students, particularly African American women, to the university’s current mission and institutional plan.

5. How does the university advertise or promote its leadership programs and services to students?

6. Describe your understanding of the fraternal system at the University of Cincinnati.

7. Describe how their programs prepare students for leadership development.

8. In the past African American members of the UC’s fraternal community have stated that the leadership programs and services have not included been inclusive of them. How would you respond to this statement? Do you agree or disagree with this perspective?

9. Have you observed or worked with African American sororities in the leadership programs offered by Greek Life? If so, how?

a. What role, if any, should gender, race, and ethnicity play in the development of leadership programs and services?
Appendix D
Electronic Questionnaire

Student Survey

1. Why did you join a Black Greek Letter Sorority?

2. Prior to joining a Black Greek sorority were you involved in any campus organizations, if so which ones?

3. Did you have the opportunity to hold any leadership positions within the campus organizations? Why or Why not?

4. Discuss how your involvement in campus groups helped to prepare or fail to prepare you for leadership.

5. List any leadership opportunities that you have had as a member of your respective sorority.

6. Do you feel that your participation in a Black Greek Letter sorority developed your leadership skills, if so how?

7. Describe your participation in campus leadership programs. Or reasons for your lack of participation.

8. How are you notified about the campus’s leadership programs?

9. Have you participated in your campus’s training programs or workshops that target fraternal organizations? Why or Why not?

10. Are you familiar with the university’s mission and plan for leadership development of African American female students?

a. If so, do you feel they are helping to prepare African American women for leadership?
Appendix E
One on One Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Describe the leadership opportunities available on your campus that are available for students of color.

2. Have you participated in any of these activities (either as staff or student) why or why not?
   Describe your participation …..

3. Do you believe these activities include students of color, specifically African American women?
   If so, how?

4. Describe the effectiveness of your university’s programs and services in developing African American women as leaders?

5. From your experience as a __________, does your university provide sufficient resources (programs, staff, and/or funding) to develop African American students? If so, how?

6. Do you believe BGL sororities develop AA women as leaders? If so, how?

   a. Are these organizations better equipped to develop African American women?
Appendix F

Script

This study will focus upon the Development of Leadership Skills of African American Women in Sororities: A University's Responsibility.

The purpose of this study is to review and evaluate the services provided by colleges and universities as it relates to fraternal involvement and value.

All participants within this study will contribute to an online questionnaire. It is estimated that the electronic survey will take no longer than thirty minutes to complete.

At the conclusion of the electronic survey four individuals will be selected to participate in an one on one interview with the primary investigator; the length of time estimated for the one on one interview is an hour.

Please know that being a part of this study is your choice. If you choose to take part, you may stop at any time. There are no penalties for quitting. If you experience any discomfort during the focus group or desire additional help, the University Psychological Services will be available to you. Compensation for the study will include a $5.00 gift card from a local restaurant.

Do you have any questions for me at this time?
Together we will review the consent form. A copy for your records will be given to you. Thank You for agreeing to participate in my study.
Appendix G

Letter

Dear ____________,

My name is Terri M. Hurdle and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Urban Educational Leadership Program (UEL). The UEL program is an inter-disciplinary doctoral program that assists in developing leaders for service in urban areas. The intent of my communication is to request your assistance with my study that will examine the leadership development of African American women on a predominantly White Campus; I am looking for female members National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) to participate in this study.

Those who volunteer to participate in this study will take part in providing feedback through an electronic survey that will consist of ten questions regarding your university’s leadership programming; any information that you provide will be confidential. At the conclusion of this survey four individuals will be randomly selected to participate in a one on one interview with the primary investigator which will be comprised of six questions. In addition, because there is a small risk of harm, all participants will be made aware of the University Psychological Services.

Those who participate in this study will be given a $5.00 gift card to a local restaurant at the completion of the focus group. If you would like to receive additional information regarding the study please feel free to contact me at 513-885-8265 via phone and hurdlet@ucmail.uc.edu via email.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Terri M. Hurdle
Urban Educational Leadership
Appendix H

Letter

Dear ______________,

My name is Terri M. Hurdle and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Urban Educational Leadership Program (UEL). The UEL program is an inter-disciplinary doctoral program that assists in developing leaders for service in urban areas. The intent of my communication is to request your assistance with my study that will examine the leadership development of African American women on a predominantly White Campus; I am looking for Student Affairs and Services Practitioners to participate in this study.

Those who volunteer to participate in this study will take part in providing feedback through an electronic survey that will consist of ten questions regarding your university’s leadership programming; any information that you provide will be confidential. At the conclusion of this survey four individuals will be randomly selected to participate in a one on one interview with the primary investigator which will be comprised of six questions. In addition, because there is a small risk of harm, all participants will be made aware of the University Psychological Services.

Those who participate in this study will be given a $7.00 gift card to a local restaurant at the completion of the focus group. If you would like to receive additional information regarding the study please feel free to contact me at 513-885-8265 via phone and hurdlet@ucmail.uc.edu via email.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Terri M. Hurdle
Urban Educational Leadership
Appendix I

Email

The Development of Leadership Skills of African American Women in Sororities:
University Responsibility
Staff Email Confirmation

This study will focus upon the Development of Leadership Skills of African American Women in Sororities: A University's Responsibility.

The purpose of this research study is to review and evaluate the services provided by colleges and universities in relation to fraternal involvement and value.

All participants within this study will contribute to an online questionnaire. It is estimated that the electronic survey will take no longer than thirty minutes to complete.

At the conclusion of the electronic survey four individuals will be selected to participate in a one on one interview with the primary investigator; the length of time estimated for the one on one interview is an hour. Please know that being a part of this study is your choice. If you choose to take part, you may stop at any time. There are no penalties for quitting.

It is not expected that you will be exposed to any risk by being in this research study, however information will be provided in regards to the University of Cincinnati’s Counseling services. Compensation for the study will include a $5.00 gift card one of the following restaurants (Chipotle, Starbucks, or Subway). Your gift will be sent to the address that you listed on the participant sheet. If you have any questions for me please feel free to contact me at hurdlet@ucmail.uc.edu

Attached is another copy of the electronic consent form.

Information for this study will be collected April 14-19, 2011.

The attached link contains 9 open ended questions for you to answer. For the last question you will be asked to list your participant code so that your identity as well as your answers will remain confidential.

Survey Monkey Link
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DMG76NC
Participant Code: P8 (Professional Staff 8)

In closing I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration of this invitation.

Terri M. Hurdle
Appendix J
Data Management Grid I
Electronic Survey
{Professional Staff and Student Participant}

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Appendix K
Data Management Grid III
{Professional Staff and Student Participant}

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Appendix L
Data Management Grid II
{Professional Staff and Student Participant Emerging Themes}

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Appendix M

Data Management Grid II
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## Appendix N

Data Management Grid III

{Professional Staff and Student Participant}

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