AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Emanuel Magaña for the degree of Master of Science in College Student Services Administration presented on April 27, 2012.

Title: Understanding the Experiences of Students in Latino/Latina Fraternities and Sororities.

Abstract Approved:

__________________________________________________________________________

Mamta Accapadi

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of students in Latino/Latina fraternities and sororities. Five students were selected to take part of the study and were interviewed using a qualitative case study methodology grounded in critical race theory. Five themes were identified: the support system that Latino Greek Lettered Organizations (LGLO) offer, going Greek, challenges, differences from other Greeks, and shifting identify of the organizations from Latino to multicultural. Student affairs practitioners, educators, and researchers will be able to use the findings from this study to better support LGLO’s and consequently the success of Latino students on college campuses.
Understanding the Experiences of Students in Latino/Latina Fraternities and Sororities

by
Emanuel Magaña

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Emanuel Magaña, Author
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Research indicates educational achievement for minority students is not the same as their white counterparts. Minorities in general do not attend universities at the same rate as traditional students (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Ortiz, 2004; Torres, & Talbot, 2000; Yosso, 2005). With the rise of Latinos in colleges it is important to understand what the dynamics that play out in Latino communities on college campuses. The climate on campuses is not always supportive for Latinos (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Carter, 1996; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008; Terenzini et al, 1994). Furthermore, Latinos struggle with finding a place or a support network. They often have to face stereotypes or racial barriers (Hurtado, 1994; Longerbeam et al., 2004; Ortiz, 1994; Rodriguez et al., 2000). Additionally, students may struggle with identity issues and balancing their ethnic background while assimilating to mainstream culture (Ortiz, 2004; Torres 2003). Latinos face many different challenges in college. In order to fully serve Latinos, professionals must be able to understand these challenges so that they may meet the needs and concerns of students.

Involvement in student organizations has shown to be a strong tool for retention (Astin, 1984; 1993). Many Latino students find community through involvement in student organizations such as Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA )or Hispanic Student Union. Organizations such as these have their foundations in the Chicano movement of the 60s and 70s (Muñoz &
Guardia, 2009). However, a relatively new phenomenon has occurred within Latino student communities at the university level. Within the past thirty years there has been a rise in Latino Greek Lettered Organizations (LGLOs) in the Southwest, Northeast, and California (Muñoz and Guardia, 2009). Latino students are coming to campus and encountering a wide variety of Latino/a organizations which include LGLOs. Because of the relatively recent history of LGLOs, student affairs professionals may not fully understand their role, scope and function.

There have been limited research studies done related to Latino Greek Lettered Organizations. One chapter has been written about the topic as well as one published essay about the Latino Identity development for men in LGLOs (Guardia & Evans, 2008; Muñoz & Guardia, 2009). There have also been a few masters theses that have examined LGLOs in some form (Nuñez, 2004; Reyes, 1997). Each of these studies on LGLOs offers few recommendations for future research. There is clear need for additional research related to LGLOs to gain further insight into how these groups are institutionalized or embedded in the campus infrastructure.

**Contextualizing LGLOs in Greek Life**

Traditionally white dominated Greek organizations (Torbenson, 2005) date back the origins of this country and have had a virtual monopoly on the discussion of Greek life. Contrarily, historically Black Greek Lettered Organizations (BGLOs) do provide some window of understanding for the
development of LGLOs. In fact, most LGLOs have a striking similarity to BGLOs (Kimbrough, 2003).

The rapid growth and expansion of LGLO chapters at the campus level led to the development of large national bodies grouping themselves into umbrella organizations (NALFO, 2008). There is great diversity in how national bodies for LGLOs are structured. Many of the larger organization feature fully paid staff that support the organization while others are run by groups of volunteers. The existence of the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations, an umbrella council for LGLOs, reflects that these organizations are spreading across the nation, extremely organized, and entrenched in the conscience of a large group of people.

**Statement of the Problem**

The growth of LGLO’s on college campuses offers us the opportunity to understand Latino student involvement and the Latino student experience through a different lens. By grasping the experiences of the students in LGLOs, we may better understand the community and develop ways to better support the success of the community

As we consider LGLOs, we are faced with multiple questions. Which unit within student affairs should take the role of advising these groups? What resources do Greek Life offices need in order to better support LGLOs? Can Multicultural or Diversity offices address the concerns of these groups without understanding the issues and esoteric language of fraternal organizations? The
The purpose of this study is to get a better understanding of the experiences of students in LGLOs at a public university in the Northwest.

**Research Question**

What are the experiences of students in Latino/Latina Greek Lettered fraternities and sororities?

**Definition of Terms**

To gain a full perspective of this topic, I offer definitions for terms central to this study. These definitions allow us to have a common understanding of these terms as used in this study.

**Latino:** Specifically, Latino refers to a language spoken by Italians (Acuña, 2011). However, it has become a convenient term to categorize various people from different nationalities that share the common language of Spanish or ancestral ties to Latin American countries (Acuña, 2011). For the purpose of this study, I may use Latino and Hispanic interchangeably because Hispanic is a term that the U.S. Census has used to define this group. (Humes, Jones & Ramirez, 2011). I recognize that these terms have different histories, political implications, and impact on communities.

**Greek Organization:** Traditionally single-sex social organizations that exist on college campuses that are denoted by ritual and traditional practices. Male organizations traditionally refer to themselves as fraternities, while female organizations refer to themselves as sororities. Both words are derived from
Latin words- frater meaning brother and soror meaning sister. (Torbenson, 2005). The terms Greek or Greeks may be used interchangeably with this term.

Latino Greek Lettered Organization (LGLO): Greek organization that identify with either a large Latino membership, are founded by members of Latino origin, or specifically geared for students who identify as Latino (Muñoz and Guardia, 2009).

**Significance**

There is limited literature written about Latino Greek Lettered Organizations. The development, growth and expansion of LGLOs is a fairly recent phenomenon in Greek Life and on college campuses. While there are studies that have examined some of the factors related to LGLOs on college campuses, there are very limited studies that directly examine the experiences of students in LGLOs. Research that provides insight on the student experience in LGLOs will be very valuable for student affairs professionals in Greek Life. Student affairs professionals will have insight into the world of students in LGLOs and hopefully be able to better understand and relate with these students.

**Methodology**

A qualitative approach informed by critical race theory is taken with this study. The work of Yosso (2005) and Rendón (2008) both establish the importance of hearing the voice of minorities. Because of their disenfranchisement due to institutional oppression, the minority experience is
frequently silenced. I use critical race theory to center the voices of the students’ experiences in LGLOs as the primary agents of knowledge. This approach is relevant because of the rich history and importance of the students’ lived experience.

I interviewed five different students from different LGLOs at a predominantly white institution in the Pacific Northwest, Valley State University. In order to qualify for the study, participants had to be a part of their organization for at least one year to ensure that those being interviewed had a full experience and understanding of being a member of a LGLO.

**Limitations and Scope**

For this study I did not have the resources to conduct interviews across the nation nor the ability to personally sit down with different organizations at different institutions. The research that was gathered does not address the entire LGLO student experience given the participant pool consisted of five people. It must also be understood that the study is being conducted at a predominantly white institution compared to a Hispanic Serving Institution in which the Latino population and culture is much more pronounced.

Furthermore, I was an active undergraduate member of an LGLO at the university where the study is being conducted. My insider status as a member of a LGLO may have caused participants to hold back with their answers or give incomplete responses due to lack of trust or other various reasons. Alternatively, students may have offered me a different level of insight because of my insider status. Furthermore, as I interview students who share the same
organization affiliation with me, I may have a biased interpretation or analysis of their interview compared to other participants. However, I have not been an active member for more than a year and do not have as strong relationship with members compared to when I was an undergraduate student.

Summary

The purpose of this study will be to examine the experiences of students in Latino Greek Lettered Organizations. This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one, the introduction, offers a general overview of the study. Chapter two is a review of the relevant literature to contextualize this study. In chapter three, I explain the research methodology I used to investigate the research question. The last two chapters are a reporting of findings and a final discussion with recommendations for future research and practice.

Introduction. In the introduction I set up the background of the study. It states current problem and sets up the research question. I also define several terms that are used throughout the study and articulate the significance of the study. I also give an overview of the research methodology that is being used and address limitations of the study. Lastly, I briefly summarize each section of the study.

Literature Review. I begin the with literature review with a brief examination of minorities in higher education. I offer a review of Latinos in higher education to create context of the Latino student experience. I then review the importance and impact of student involvement in order to understand the significance of campus organizations. Next, I discuss Greek
organizations with particular emphasis on the history of Latino Greek Lettered Organizations. Lastly, I bring up student development theory to establish the rationale for the support of students joining these organizations.

**Methodology.** In this section I describe the way the study was conducted. I specifically discussed the need for a qualitative study grounded in critical race theory. To answer the research question, first person narratives would best capture the experience of being a member of an LGLO. I recruited participants that were part of LGLOs and conducted individual interviews. This was done by sending out emails to both the Office of Greek Life and minority listservs. I also sent emails to the presidents of different organizations in order to get a broad pool of participants. Once I received responses from students, I screened them for eligibility, had them sign consent forms, and conducted the interviews. Once all the paperwork was finished I conducted the interviews with each student.

**Findings.** In this chapter I summarize the findings that were presented from the interviews of each subject. I summarize the interviews I conducted with each participant. I further present the coding process of the interview data, and share the themes that emerge from this process. These themes are organized and examined to find out what the experience convey for students in LGLOs at Valley State University.

**Discussion.** In the last chapter, I analyze the findings, expand on their content, and link them to current literature related to LGLOs. I offer recommendations for and offer reflections on the future of LGLOs.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of students in Latino/Latina Greek Lettered fraternities and sororities. In the previous chapter I introduced the topic and laid out the research question. In this chapter, I will review the current literature on Latinos in higher education as well as Latino Greek Lettered Organizations (LGLO). This chapter is organized into five sections. The first section is an overview of minority student issues in higher education. The next section will cover Latinos in higher education. I offer a general overview of Greek Life. In the next section, I will cover Latino Greek Lettered Organizations. Lastly, I will touch on the student development theories that provide the foundation and rationale for the research and give motivations for why students join these organizations.

Minorities in Higher Education

Minority students can have vastly different experiences from their white peers (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). The existing academic literature illustrates a very different world for minorities in general when they come to college. Research has shown that minority success is still not on par with the success of their white counterparts (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Ortiz, 2004; Rodriguez, Guido, DiBrito, Torres, & Talbot, 2000; Yosso, 2005). Minorities face multiple barriers that keep them from making it to college. Factors such as financial aid, economic status, and family values play strong roles in distinguishing how
college is chosen (Longerbeam, Sedlacek, & Alatorre 2004). It is not hard to argue that the transition for minority students in general is not an easy one.

While getting admitted to a university is already challenging, retention is another barrier for minority students. Campus climate has a large effect on a student’s marker for success (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Carter, 1996; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008; Terenzini et al., 1994). Minority students are impacted by many different factors on a campus including isolation or racism. Minority students have remarked that the only reason to stay at a certain university was in order to change its climate (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). If the campus is not welcoming or does not have specific programs or departments to support minority students, it can hinder retention. Without a meaningful connection, minority students are more likely to leave school because of the transition adjustments than their white counterparts (Ortiz, 2004; Terenzini et al., 1994). Paralleling the minority student experience, a closer examination reveals that these trends are similar for Latino students in higher education.

**Latinos in Higher Education**

The 2010 Census reports that Latinos are now over 50 million and represent 16% of the total population. Similar to many other minority groups their number still lag for college enrollments. Latino student college enrollment is disproportionately lower that the growth of the community at-large (Longerbeam et al., 2004; Rodriguez et al., 2000; Torres, 2003). The educational pipeline to college for Latinos is very different compared to white students.
Latinos are much more likely to attend schools that receive less funding, achieve lower test scores, and are in a lower socioeconomic neighborhoods. Latinos are also less likely to be encouraged to attend college and/or may not have the financial resources to attend. In many ways the educational system has failed in getting Latinos to college (Yosso, 2005).

The climate for Latino students is a difficult one. Other students may perceive them differently and may attribute common stereotypes such as the constant foreigner or difficulty with English (Hurtado, 1994; Longerbeam et al., 2004; Ortiz, 1994; Rodriguez et al., 2000). Latino student have to constantly face these stereotypes and do their best to confront and challenge them. However, this can prove to be difficult. Latinos may prefer to keep ties to their culture without confirming stereotypes such as speaking Spanish. (Ortiz, 2004; Torres, 2003). The varying phenotype for Latinos can also cause racism or prejudice from their peers or school professionals (Ortiz, 2004; Torres, 2003). The presence of accent can also attribute to discrimination for Latino students as well (Torres, 2003). Latinos are less likely to receive specific services and may not have an opportunity to interact with faculty and staff that are culturally sensitive or cultural competent.

In spite of these barriers, close to 12 % of Latinos are attending college (Torres 2003). Latino students in higher education settings face multiple challenges. Culture seems to be the first challenge that most students seem to encounter. Many Latinos grow up bi-culturally, and have to constantly navigate two different worlds (Torres, 2003; Torres, 1999). The identity development
process can be very challenging for many students. Language also proves a cultural factor in adjusting to college (Longerbeam et al., 2004; Ortiz, 2004; Torres, 2003). For some students speaking Spanish is a salient aspect of their identity. Latino students have to be able to speak Spanish in order to feel connected to their identity. This can be difficult for Latino students that have difficulty speaking Spanish or are not fluent. For some Latino students, it can make or break their sense of belonging to a Latino student community (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Torres, 2003).

Immigration status is also another factor contributing to the successes for Latino students (Ortiz, 2004; Torres, 2003). Student’s generation statuses vary. They may be first, second, third generation American students. They may also have family history that predates modern day US and Mexico borders. One’s immigrant status may affect the way they perceive or pursue college. The first generation may be less likely to attend college, particularly if they are recent immigrants and start with very little social and economic capital. However, there are still those that attend (Ortiz, 2004; Torres, 2003). First generation students can face the language barrier and familial pressure to stay at home. Second generation may face similar barriers as the first generation. The third generation is the most likely to attend college. However, this is not always a given. They face the barriers of assimilation or acculturation and challenges of identity in college (Ortiz, 2004; Torres, 2003). While the first the second generation may be very closely tied to their Latino identity, a third generation student may feel completely displaced from their culture. This can lead to questions about
identity and difficulties trying to find a community to associate with. The student may be too acculturated for the Latino community, but to Latino to identify with white students (Torres, 2003).

Another major factor is the influence of family. While some have noted that the reliance on family as a cultural norm almost borders on stereotype one cannot deny the affect it has on Latino students (Ortiz, 2004). Many students will decide on a university based on its proximity to family (Rodriguez et al., 2000; Torres, 2003). Latinos are also more likely to visit their family with greater frequency, as well as send money home to support the family. (Rodriguez et al., 2000). The dynamics between family and the student can also prove challenging. With pressure to be at home, Latino students can feel a sense of guilt for not visiting often enough. Latino students have to juggle the rigors of academic work with the pressure of honoring family obligations and expectations. (Terenzini et al., 1994). Most Latinos have families or parents that have no concept of college life. Consequently, explaining the work and college experience can very difficult. This can also lead to a difficult transition, as a Latino student has no outlet to share a common experience or seek guidance. The student’s family may be unsupportive. This is especially true for Latina students. A family may not expect academic success for Latinas and instead expect them to get married and have children (Rodriguez et al., 2000). Cultural norms lead to the family expectation of women to stay at home and care for the family.

Even with the all the barriers that Latinos face there are still positive marks that Latinos can be proud of. Latinos in general are more comfortable in a
diverse environment compared to their white peers (Longerbeam et al., 2004). They are also more likely to have friends that are of a different race or ethnicity. Latinos also have higher level of cross-cultural navigation skills. Even though many Latino students may not feel comfortable at their university, they are more likely to be involved in action to improve campus climates (Longerbeam et al., 2004).

**Greek Life**

Greek Life has its origins in both the first student organizations known as literary societies and that of the Freemasons (Torbenson, 2005). Students organized into literary societies to provide an outlet for social activities that colleges did not offer. These literary societies eventually evolved into fraternities. The first recognized fraternity established was Phi Beta Kappa established at William and Mary College in 1776 (Kimbrough, 2003; Torbenson, 2005). Many early members were Freemasons and established very similar traditions and rituals to early fraternities (Torbenson, 2005). During the latter half of the 19th century, sororities formed as a response to female exclusion from fraternities on male dominated campuses. Females were barred from joining almost all fraternities and thus began organizing their own groups to accommodate the growing number of women attending colleges (Torbenson, 2005).

Popular media has popularized many of the negative stereotypes of Greek Life. Binge drinking, sexual assault, and hazing are frequent images that can come to mind when one thinks of these organizations. However, research has
shown that many members in these organizations tend to be more involved, develop better socially, and consistently graduate (Pike, 2000). Greek organizations may be known for their stereotypes yet they are great resources for students seeking leadership, networking, and community on their college campuses.

One cannot mention Greek Life however, without touching on its discriminatory past. Many different organizations featured very explicit racist policies and exclusionary practices. (Gose, 1997; McWilliams, 1950). Most, if not all of the organizations barred minorities from joining their organizations. While most of the discriminatory policies no longer exist, there is still a strong division of race in the Greek system that exists today (Gose, 1997; Hughey, 2010). Part of this has to do with carry over from these old policies. Members in these organizations can still be very ignorant of their multicultural world and may continue racist and discriminatory practices (Gose, 1997). Because of these discriminatory practices and in an effort to uplift themselves, minority communities began to establish their own Greek organizations at the start of the 20th century. Historically Black Greek Lettered Organizations are the most well known of minority based Greeks. While having similar foundations to historically white Greeks, they have some very different customs and practices. Black Greek Lettered Organizations have added hand signs, chants, and unique regalia creating a culture that is unique and different than traditional white founded Greeks (Kimbrough, 2003). While many of these unique aspects are not
officially recognized by the organization, they create a one of a kind of identity that is apparent to campuses across the nation.

While films such as School Daze and Stomp the Yard have helped popularize Black Greek Lettered Organizations, there still exist other Greek organizations that are tied to diverse cultural groups that may not be highlighted in pop culture. Latino and Asian American Greek Lettered Organizations have been around for almost as long as Black Greek Lettered Organizations (Kimbrough, 2002). However, their presence has not been fully realized until the last the thirty years. Both Asian American and Latino Greek Lettered Organizations have seen huge explosions in popularity and numbers in the last 30 years and continue to expand nationally (Kimbrough, 2002).

**Latino Greek Lettered Organizations**

Research on Latino Greek Lettered Organizations is sparse in comparison to the amount of knowledge on both historically white Greek and BGLOs. There have only been a few published accounts that study these groups and the impacts they are having on their members and their campuses. The following section outlines the history for these organizations and provides a background on common themes and motifs between the organizations.

Latino Greek Lettered Organizations can trace their roots to secret Spanish/Latin American college societies (Guardia & Evans, 2008; Muñoz & Guardia, 2009). The first of these organizations was known as the Union Hispano Americana in 1898, founded on the campus of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. This organization was founded on the ideal of Pan-Americanism (Muñoz &
Guardia, 2009). This group expanded to other campuses and eventually merged with both Pi Delta Phi (1916) from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Phi Lambda Alpha (1919) from University of California Berkeley, to create Phi Lambda Alpha Fraternity. Another secret society known as the Sociedad Hispano-Americana was founded earlier in 1904 at Louisiana State University. This organization eventually formed into the first Latino fraternity in existence reforming as Sigma Iota in 1912. Sigma Iota and Phi Lambda Alpha merged to create Phi Iota Alpha Fraternity Incorporated, the oldest Latino Fraternity currently in existence (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009).

The 1970’s eventually saw the birth of three more LGLOs. Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Incorporated and Lambda Theta Phi Latin Sorority, Incorporated were both founded on the campus of Keane University (then College) in 1975. In 1979, Lambda Sigma Upsilon Fraternity, Incorporated was founded in Rutgers University (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009).

The 1980’s saw the establishment of some of the largest and most well known LGLOs. In the Northeast, Chi Upsilon Sigma Latin Sorority, Incorporated, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Incorporated, and Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated were founded between the years of 1980 and 1989. The Midwest saw the founding of Sigma Lambda Beta Fraternity, Incorporated in 1986. Lambda Theta Nu Sorority, Incorporated, Nu Alpha Kappa Fraternity, Incorporated, and Gamma Zeta Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated were founded on the West Coast. Lastly, the organizations of Kappa Delta Chi Sorority, Incorporated and Omega Delta Phi Fraternity, Incorporated were founded in
Texas. Many of these LGLOs were founded in places that had large concentrations of Latinos (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009).

The 1990’s also saw the explosion of 17 different Latina sororities founded during a short five-year span. The various LGLOs founded over the years eventually organized into an umbrella council known as the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations. The organization currently claims 19 organizations as its membership (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009).

Similar to Black Greek Lettered Organizations (BGLOs), these LGLOs are unique and distinct from historically white Greeks and feature customs and traditions similar to BGLOs (Kimbrough, 2003). They are also distinct in that Latino culture and Latino membership is the primary or salient for these organizations.

Most, if not all the LGLOs are centered on community service and scholarship. These organizations emphasize service over philanthropy, a trait opposite to historically white Greeks. This is in part attributed to the long marginalized history of Latinos in this country. Without access to monetary funds and connections to wealth, organizations were forced to use manual labor to have an impact on their communities (Miranda & de Figueroa, 2000).

These organizations are not without their critics. LGLOs have been criticized for only being Latino on the surface yet assimilating themselves to white Anglo culture (Heidenreich, 2006). They are compared to early Latin American organizations such as LULAC that emphasized assimilation (Heidenreich, 2006). Critics claim that some organizations focus on
professionalism as a way of acculturating members to mainstream society (Heidenreich, 2006). Certain organizations have also been criticized on their use of certain mascots such as the Conquistador that Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. uses (Heidenreich, 2006; Peña, 2001). The focus on service is also not seen to be enough, as many organizations claim no political affiliation, which limits any real impact they can have on a community. Yet one can counter some of these claims by closely examining the history of the organizations. Some of the organizations were bred out of the political actions on campus or have a history of civic involvement (Peña, 2001).

**Student Development**

In order to examine student experiences one must be able to touch on the developmental aspect for student in LGLOs. According to Erikson (1980) and Chickering (1993), students go through various stages of development. However, it is not fully clear how LGLOs contribute to the development of students. There have been models that examine Latino identity development, however, only one peer-reviewed article has been published that examines the identity development for Latinos in these organizations.

Erikson (1980) writes about the independence and self-assertion that happens to student in college. Chickering (1993) takes this further by creating seven different vectors that students go through during their college experiences. However, these models do not take into that account the unique experiences of Latino students. The Bicultural Orientation Model (Torres, 1999) argues that a student views themselves based on how acculturated or how close
they are to their culture. This has effects on the way they interact with different students as well as how they view themselves on campus. Torres’ (2004) Latino Identity Development model is also distinct in the way Latinos see how their own experiences shape the way they view themselves. Cultural influences at home and on campus affect the way they see themselves and they way they develop. Lastly, Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) present a phase model of identity development for Latino students in which they may go though different phases or stay in one orientation. Again Similar to Torres’ model, this model is also, directly by their experiences.

Guardia and Evans (2008) are one of the few published researchers to write on the topic of identity development in Latino fraternities. Guardia and Evans’ (2008) research signaled that they are multiple factors that contribute to the identity development of Latino fraternity members and that the fraternity is just one aspect of a larger scheme that ranged from campus, home life, and language. The research affirmed that the fraternity helped students find a home away from home, and develop a closer relationship with their culture.

Involvement is one of the major characteristics of Greek organizations. Astin (1984; 1993) has written extensively on the subject of involvement and its benefits for students. While the benefits of involvement in a LGLO have not been examined, based on Astin’s research one can argue involvement in LGLOs, similar to involvement in any organization on campus, is beneficial to students. Astin’s (1993) research has noted that involvement in a Greek organization pays dividends in social skills and other areas of personal development.
The next chapter will cover the methodology used to conduct the research study. Chapter four will then discuss the findings of the research. Lastly, chapter five will provide discussion on the findings and provide best practices for student professionals.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of students in Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations at a predominantly white institution. In chapter one, I introduced the research question and discussed reasons for its investigation. In chapter two, I presented the relevant background literature. This covered minorities in higher education, Latinos in higher education, Greek Life, and student development. In this chapter, I will explain the methods by which I investigate the research question. It is organized into six different sections. In the first section, I introduce the topic and lay the outline for the chapter. In section two, I explain the theoretical foundations of this study—Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory. Section three covers the research design. I discuss how I designed the research study by using a qualitative approach. Section four discusses where the challenges of limited geography. Section five discusses the bias that I bring to the study. Section 6 discusses how I ensured the protection of each participant in the study.

Theoretical Approach

I wanted to understand the experiences of students in Latino Greek Letter Organizations. Because I wanted to have a methodology that honored the voices and experiences of the participants, this is a qualitative research study. Critical Race Theory and Rendón's Sentipensante pedagogy informed my approach to this study.

Sentipensante. Rendón's Sentipensante Pedagogy (2009) aims to change
the pedagogical approach and take a holistic look at individuals and their
experiences. Sentipensante is roughly translated to sensing/thinking. The word
is used as a way of describing her research. She takes the approach that
reflection is a dual act of both thinking about oneself and trying to make sense of
it at the same time. Through her research she notes that a western ideology fails
to take into account the fullness of an experience. Her research is used as a base
because of the nature of the study being conducted. Because the research
involves students from disenfranchised backgrounds traditional methods may
not always work in order to receive a full picture. She goes on to mention in her
research the importance of listening and understanding from the person as a
whole. Her writing indicates one must be able to listen in order to gain a full
understanding and awareness of one’s experiences. She writes that true
learning is done when one can effectively listen. Rendón (2009) also emphasizes
the importance of reflexivity. It is important that student have the opportunity to
reflect on their experiences in order to truly connect and share their thoughts
and ideas. Interviewing allows each student to reflect on their own experiences
thus creating a deep and fulfilling response that recreates the feelings and
thoughts of their knowledge. Again, this is all done in the effort to truly
understand the experiences that many of these students go through.

**Critical Race Theory.** Villalpando (2004) writes extensively on the use of
Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a tool in understanding students of color. Using
CRT allows for a deeper investigation of the needs and concerns that students of
color are facing. Instead of simply attributing something as a racist, CRT allows
one to examine why and how it is racist and what can be done to help fix the problem. CRT essentially helps us understand issues related to social justice, inequality, and racism.

Yosso (2005) uses CRT for her research. In it she describes five different tenets of CRT that guide her research. They are important to note in order to fully understand the concept of CRT.

The Intercentricity of Race and Racism – Race and racism are endemic and prevalent in U.S. society. Racism is a social construct that disadvantages people of color while at the same time privileging whites. CRT focuses on racism and its intersections between other methods of oppression based on gender, class, sex, language, culture, immigrant status, phenotype, accent, and surname.

The Challenge of Dominant Ideology – CRT challenges the idea of race neutral or non-racial approaches in education that decentralize race as a factor while privileging whites. It challenges the concept of color-blind society in an effort to reveal white privilege.

The Commitment to Social Justice – CRT looks to advocate social justice through practice and policies. CRT views educations as a tool to break down oppression.

The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge – CRT utilizes that direct story of the oppressed as a legitimate source of data. It validates the use of non-traditional oral and written traditions as a legitimate source.

The Interdisciplinary Perspective – CRT uses multiple methods to fully understand the historical perspective and oppressed peoples. CRT can use direct stories, journals, and songs, etc. in order to create a fully story. CRT does not
limit itself to one school of research to obtain data.

These tenets (Yosso, 2005) help form the guiding principle of CRT. Grounding the study in CRT allows us hear a full story from traditionally oppressed groups. Because this study aims to understand the experiences of students, CRT is an ideal theoretical grounding for this research methodology.

**Latino Critical Theory.** Villapando (2004) also advocates for the use of Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit). This is a branch of CRT that focuses particular on the issues and concerns of Latinos and the Latino community. Again, it allows one to challenge institutional policies and practices that contribute to discrimination and prejudice (Villapando, 2004). “LatCrit is a more valid and reliable lens through which to analyze Latinos’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersecting issues of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and other forms of oppression” (Villapando, 2004 p.43). In order to truly understand the experiences of students involved with Latino organizations Critical Race Theory and LatCrit theory, combined with a qualitative case study approach, offered me a rich insight into the students’ experiences in LGLOs.

**Importance of voice.** All of the participants came from marginalized backgrounds. Because the participants of this study identified as students of color, specifically Latino, I really wanted to hear their experiences through their voices. This necessitated the need to hear real stories or hear the “non-majoritarian” story (Yosso, 2005). The stories of minorities are often not told or told from the side of the majoritarian (Yosso, 2005).

There are several volumes of work and publications that take this same
approach. One of most widely known scholars to use such a technique was Howard Zinn (1995). His approach of using real voices from those that were disenfranchised created a different lens to view the history of the United States. Ronald Takaki (2008) also utilized the same technique in his work painting a multicultural history of the United States. Both of these scholars have been able to use direct source stories to create a picture that is effective and powerful.

While both Zinn and Takaki have used direct sources for history other scholars have used the approach to create theory or research. Vasti Torres (2003) has used direct interviewing and direct stories to compile research that identifies that Latino experiences. She directly interviewed Latinos in order to hear their direct experiences. This helps create true representation of the issues and barriers that many Latinos face. She utilized the same technique to create her Bi-Cultural Orientation model (Torres, 1999) that helps identify the development process for Latinos. Juan Guardia (2008) also utilizes the interview extensively in order to create his model for identity development in Latino Greek-Lettered fraternities, thus again illustrating the importance of the interview and direct story telling to create theory and research.

**Research Design**

The research was done using a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach allows for “exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Qualitative research allows for the personal and professional experiences for individuals to be heard (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The goal of the research was to hear the
experiences of students. The hope was to identify common themes across the student’ experiences in a LGLO. Themes and analysis also arise when one uses qualitative research thus necessitating its use (Creswell, 2009).

**Case Study.** A case study approach was used in order to fully explore the depth of one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009). A case study is a study or collection of data that is done about a particular subject or group of people. It draws its research from a participant pool and makes its conclusions based on the group or data analyzed. It is a qualitative study that looks in-depth at a particular subject (Creswell, 2009). I used this particular form of research because of the type of investigation. I aim to understand the experiences of a particular group of students. Therefore, a case study provided the best option to intensely examine the experiences of a particular set of students. By looking at the experiences of student in LGLOs I was merely looking at a microcosm of a more encompassing experience taking place in many different campuses and institutions. This study will look at select individuals at one institution to draw conclusions and gain perspective on this specific group of students.

In this study, I used one-on-one semi-structured interviews to fully capture each individual's experience. This was done to get a much more individualized and full experience (Creswell, 2009). Each individual story told was important for the study in order to paint a full picture of the experiences for these students. The semi-structured interview approach allowed for a flexible free flow of information where the student’s narrative was not interrupted. This approach also allowed me to ask clarifying questions to better understand the
student’s experiences (Fontana & Fey, 2005). By allowing the participants to move the story, they were effectively adding to the richness of the interview. Furthermore, recordings and notes were taken during the interview to ensure that the entire story was being captured. Notes also helped in terms of pointing out the key points of the interview and being able to emphasize turning points in the interview.

**Research Site**

I conducted this study at Valley State University (VSU), a large public university in the Northwest United States with an enrollment close to 24,000 students. The university is predominantly white in a predominantly white state. Approximately 5% of the student population self-identifies as Latino/Hispanic.

All the interviews were conducted at VSU. Students were able to choose between various interview sites including, but not limited to the library and the Student Union. Students were able to choose an additional site if neither of those locations met their comfort level.

**Participants**

**Criteria for Participation in Study.** Currently VSU has two active sororities, and two active fraternities that are Latino based or Latino founded. Participants for the study had to be a member of one of these LGLOs for a minimum for a minimum of one year in order to qualify. Participants also had to be students at VSU and had to be over the age of 18.

**Recruitment.** I recruited participants by disseminating an email with the support of the Office of Greek Life through the Multicultural Greek Council
listserv, which houses Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations. Another email was also disseminated through various minority student listservs. This was done because many students in Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations may identify more strongly with their minority/racial identity than they do with their Greek affiliations. Another way participants were recruited was by emailing the presidents of each organization directly. Faculty also forwarded the email to students that could fit the criteria. The recruitment email asked participants if they would be interested in being part of a research study based on the qualifying criteria. My intention was to interview up to ten students, to keep the study and data analysis process manageable.

**Interview Process.** Originally six students qualified for this study. Of the six students, five students participated in the study. Due to scheduling conflicts, I was not able to schedule an interview with the sixth student. These students identified from four different organizations. There is one fraternity and three sororities represented. I scheduled interviews over email, and conducted interviews in person. I offered participants the opportunity to be interviewed in a private rooms where confidentiality could be ensured, however some waived this opportunity and preferred public spaces. Interview sites varied from rooms in the library and the student union.

**Researcher Bias**

Researchers bring their own bias into the research project (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As an alumnus of a Latino founded Greek organization and highly involved member during my undergraduate time, I bring a distinct view to the
As the researcher, I fully acknowledge my insider outsider status as an internal member of the community yet external researcher. I also realize this status can be both a strength and a weakness. As the researcher, I must take measures to be analytical and stay away from assumptions and personal beliefs (Corbin & Strauss, 2009). I also understood that my current position as a Regional Director for one of the organizations being interviewed caused a potential risk of bias. I understood that my position as the Regional Director might have a perceived impact with some of the students I interviewed. However, as Regional Director I deal primarily with only one representative from the group on a regular basis. I chose not to interview this representative, because I was keenly aware of the potential power dynamic because of our relationship.

**Ensuring Protection of the Researched**

In order to ensure that the participants were being protected several measures were taken. All names and organizations were given pseudonyms. The same pseudonym was assigned to each individual throughout the entirety of the research to ensure that participants’ information was being kept confidential. All materials, including notes were kept private. I secured any digital information via a password that was only accessible to me. The only information that was revealed about the interviews was the information that was relevant to the research being done. Any identifying markers such as place of birth or city was censored or given alternative names.

Before I began the interview process, participants were required to sign a
consent form ensuring that their participation in the research was completely voluntary and that they had the opportunity to leave the study whenever they wished. Interviews were done in multiple locations, however, participants had the opportunity to decide a different location if they wished.

Lastly, because all members in the study came from a historically marginalized racial/ethnic community, I paid close attention to feelings of comfort for the subjects. It was important that their identity be protected to not subject any of the participants to unnecessary hardship or duress from either their Latino or Greek communities.

Results

In chapter four, I will profile each of the participants, include summaries of the students’ interviews, and share the themes that emerged from the interviews. In chapter five, I will discuss the findings and recommend the best practices based on the results of this study.
Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

In the previous three chapters, I introduced the research question, provided a review of the relevant academic literature, and outlined the methodology I used to conduct this study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of students in Latino Greek Lettered Organizations. In this chapter I discuss the findings from this study. The chapter is organized into five sections. In this first section I offer a personal profile of each student. In the second section, I will provide a summary of each interview along with notable details from each interview. In the third section, I explain the coding process I used to analyze the interviews and develop themes. In the fourth section I share the themes that emerged from this study. This section lays out what the common experiences are in an effort to answer the research question. The final section summarizes this chapter and leads into the final chapter of this thesis.

Student Profiles

In this section, I have provided a personal profile of each of the participants. These profiles are brief, simply to provide background on the student.

Cristian. Cristian identified as a Latino male. He is a Junior at Valley State University. He is a member of ABC Fraternity, Incorporated. He was from the Northwest and came to VSU with no intention to join a Greek Lettered organization. In fact, Cristian did not have any intention to be a part of any college university organization and intended to simply focus on his studies. He
enjoyed how his organization made him involved on campus and how it created a strong support network for him to succeed.

**Evani.** Evani is third year student and identified as Latino. Evani was born in Mexico but has lived in the United States for the majority of his life. Evani is a member of ABC Fraternity, Incorporated. He also had no real intention to join a Greek Lettered Organization but came to be a part of ABC. The strong connection and support network is what led him to join ABC.

**Yenni.** Yenni is a graduate student at VSU that had come from a state in the Southwest. Yenni identified herself as a “young Latina pursuing higher education.” She is a member of CBA Sorority, Incorporated. She felt very strong about her organization and would often talk about it when introducing herself to new people. The strong cultural ties she had with the other members is what led her to become a part of her organization.

**Lucero.** Lucero is a graduate student originally from the Midwest. She identified as either Mexican or Latina depending on who she was talking to. She was a member of XYZ Sorority, Incorporated. She had no intention of joining a sorority when she first came to her campus.

**Monica.** Monica identifies as a Mexican-American Latina from a small town. She was a part of ZXY Sorority, Incorporated. She also had no intention of joining a Greek Lettered Organization. She was completely unfamiliar with Greek Life including LGLOs. She was a senior at the time of the interview. She compared her organization as her family and identified strongly with the organization.

**Interview Summaries**
**Cristian.** Cristian identified himself as a Latino male. He was a part of organization ABC. Cristian revealed that he did not intend to join a Greek Lettered organization when he came to campus. In fact, he was not looking to get involved with any extracurricular activities at all. He came to school with a focus on graduation and sticking to his academics. However, his outlook began to change as he began to meet members of ABC organization and build bonds with the members. He eventually made it a goal to become a part of the organization and become a brother of the ABC.

Cristian spoke about the various events and activities that his organization holds and how it is one of the reasons he enjoys being a member. His organization holds on-campus events such as dances and participates in various community service projects such as highway cleanup, food banks, and helping the local church. He went on to say how every event is held with a purpose in mind and that events aren’t held just for the sake of holding them. It was also evident that his organization was support system for him. He mentioned that his brothers are the first people he goes to when he has a problem or an issue he has to deal with.

Although it was evident that he enjoys being part of his organization he did admit that it kept him very busy and it made it difficult to be a part of other organizations. He also mentioned that keeping up with schoolwork was a challenge at times but he was capable of balancing the different aspects of his student life. While the organization did not present many challenges he admitted that being part of his organization did present difficult challenges from the
external community. For example, he was extremely dismayed that his organization was not as well known as other organizations. He went on to mention that many IFC and Panhellenic councils tend to be completely unfamiliar with his organization. He found it to particularly frustrating and attributed it to the fact that his organization is un-housed and, as he says, “non-traditional.” However, he went on to mention that the organization has very good relationships with other un-housed organization or “non-traditional” Greeks and that they frequently hold socials or community service projects together. However, there are very few, if any, socials let alone communication between the “traditional” groups and “non-traditional” groups.

He went on to mention how his organization received support from various administrators. People helped the organization however, he was unaware who they were, but was only aware of them because of other members that would frequently talk about them.

He hopes that his organization will continue to grow and expand its influence and it membership and grow to about 35 members with diverse backgrounds and heritages. He also hopes that administration can be more open minded about organization such as his. He hopes that other campuses around the nation would be open minded about having “non-traditional” Greeks and believes that they can make a positive impact on their communities

One particular interesting aspect of the interview was the way he identified his organization. He frequently corrected me and mentioned that his organization was multicultural and not just strictly Latino. However, Cristian did
mention that the majority of the membership is Latino and founded by Latinos, but he wanted to emphasize that his organization was multicultural.

**Evani.** Evani identified himself as a Latino, adding that it was a big part of who he was. He was also a part of ABC organization, same as Cristian. Evani described the support network that his organization gives him. He felt that the organization pushed him to graduate and succeed academically. It was one of the core values of the organization and is what really attracted him to the organization in the first place. He recalled that he had little to no interest in joining a fraternity. He perceived fraternities as being loud, obnoxious, and prone to partying. He felt that organizations like that were not for him. However, his mind began to change when he met the recruitment chair for his organization. The recruitment chair introduced him to the idea of “Multicultural Greeks.” He was reluctant to join the organization but began to hang out with some of the members of the organization and eventually decided to become a part of the organization.

As mentioned before, he cited the support of the organization as a big reason he enjoyed being a part of it. The “Brotherhood” of the organization is a huge factor that he attributed to his success as a student. While he still goes to his family for advice, he also goes to his brothers for help as well. He also enjoyed the community service that organization provides to the local community. He mentioned the work the organization does for its national philanthropic partner as well as other hands on work such as highway and farm cleanups.
Evani also spoke about some the challenges he faces being part of his organization. Occasionally there might be some issues that come up between members and that can affect some aspects of the organization. However, he did not go to in-depth in that regard. He also mentioned that at times members in the organization have a difficult time in following through with the task that they are assigned to complete. However, the biggest challenge was the lack of recognition by the general VSU community. He seemed frustrated with the fact that other Greek organizations were unfamiliar with his organization and had a difficult time understanding the dynamics of his organization as an un-housed organization. This seemed to be a recurring theme as he mentioned that very little relations occur between his organization and historically house Greek Organizations such as those found in IFC or Panhellenic. Evani felt as though Greeks were divided in two branches; housed and non-housed Greeks. He felt that there was a very clear distinction between the two and wished to see more integration of the two. He mentioned that multicultural Greeks often feel left out and used Greek Week as an example. Only housed Greeks are featured through Greek Week with activities that are specifically catered towards them. However, he went on to mention that the relationship his organization has with other “multicultural” Greeks is healthy and that they frequently support one another. Yet Evani did mention that there can be conflicts that arise between different multicultural organizations but he amounts the conflicts to simple friendly rivalry and not much else. However, he lamented the fact that his organization was not more involved with the general campus and that “they keep to
multicultural Greeks for the most part.”

Evani also spoke about the support his organization received. While he did not mention specific offices he felt as though his organization receives support from various administrators when it came to questions or advice.

Lastly, Evani hoped to see his organization continue to grow. He wants to see the GPA of his organization to rise as well as continue to participate in more community service. He would also like to see their membership increase, but felt that it was not the important aspect for their growth. He felt that having too many members would take away from the close bonds that their members have as brothers.

**Yenni.** Yenni identified herself as a “young Latina pursuing higher education”. She is a member of ABC Sorority, Incorporated and is currently a graduate student. Yenni joined her organization for the ability to relate to its members. She said that going to school, as a Latina was difficult. However, the organization featured many other women that were similar to her, i.e. minority women seeking higher education. She felt a sense of familiarity with them and shared sense of goals and aspirations. Yenni enjoyed the commitment to academic success shared by members of her sorority. The combination of an academic focus and having other members with similar life experience is what she really enjoyed about her organization. Yenni mentioned, “I know that I’m surrounding myself with a positive environment that are just like me.” She also mentioned that her sorority sisters were her first line of support. She would go to them first when it came to help and advice. At times instead, of going to her
academic advisers she would seek out her sisters.

Yenni’s membership in her organization was also a large part of her identity. When she introduces herself she would often include her organization as a part of who she was. She understood that to many people this would come off as strange, but she identifies so strongly with her organization that she includes it as a part of her identity.

She described her Greek experience as being very different than the traditional Greek Life experience. Because organizations like hers are relatively new compared to more traditional house organizations she felt that her organization and organization like hers were different than those found in IFC or Panhellenic Councils. She also felt that the intake process was also very distinct. An intake process is the steps that a person takes to become part of a Greek organization. The overall values and practices were very different according to her. Lastly, she touched on the racial differences. As an organization predominantly of Latinas she felt that IFC or Panhellenic organizations were probably uncomfortable with being around her sorority. She also felt that members in her own organization did not feel fully comfortable around predominantly white Greek organizations as well.

Conversely, she spoke about the close relationships her organization had with other multicultural Greeks. She mentioned that they would often hold socials, as well as fundraisers and community service projects. She mentioned study sessions that she would hold with other members in different organizations. She attributed this close association with their similar ethnic
backgrounds. As people of color she just felt more comfortable around her community of Greeks. Lastly, the Greek council also contributed to the close associations as all of the multicultural Greeks were in the same Greek council.

Some of the challenges she faced as a member of her organization were dealing with all of her responsibilities that were involved in being a part of organization. Because her organization did not feature 20 or more members, sisters had to frequently hold multiple leadership positions. This responsibility compiled with her schoolwork made time management an important priority. Dedication from other members was also a challenge. There were times when not all members were as dedicated as Yenni and she found this to be frustrating at times. She also encountered issues from the Latino community. The challenges were in the form of unfamiliarity with the concept of a sorority. According to Yenni, Greek Life is not fully understood in the Latino community and it is often a challenge to explain the concept. She also had difficulty explaining the concept to her father. Her father was overprotective and did not initially approve of the sorority.

Yenni spent a substantial time speaking about the community service projects that her organization holds. She felt very passionate about the type of service that they hold. For example, her organization holds an annual soccer tournament for the Latino kids in the area. They also take the opportunity to educate Latino/a parents about ways to encourage their children to attend college.

Yenni described her relationship with VSU as a positive one. Her
organization received support from student fees for events and had advisers that were very helpful. While the greater university was unfamiliar with her organization, many faculty and staff of color were always willing to lend or offer support. She felt a stronger connection from faculty of color in support of her and her organization than her own professors. However, she did find some resistance from faculty and advisers in her college. They advised her not to join a sorority and suggested that her time would be better suited to her studies instead of extracurricular activities.

She hoped to see her organization grow in membership in the future. She also hoped to see the academics and community service continue to excel in the coming years. She also hoped that her chapter would participate in more strolling and stepping competitions as well. Yenni also hoped for better relations between multicultural Greeks and IFC/ Panhellenic Greeks. She felt that building those bridges was important if they want to grow as an LGLO. She also felt that new faculty and staff should educate themselves about LGLOs and offer support and guidance when possible.

**Monica.** She identified with a ZYX Sorority. She expressed pride in pointing out that her sorority was the first in the state. Monica felt that “she gained a family” the day that she became a part of the organization. Being far from home was difficult and she was very happy about having a support system that would help her out when she was in need. However, she was not quick to be a part of the organization. During her first year she was completely unfamiliar with the concept of Latino/a Greek Lettered Organizations. She didn’t know that
they existed and she did not have any real familiarity with Greek Life. She was approached by members to consider the sorority her first year but was hesitant to join the organization. Her initial goal was to go through her first year and become acclimated to being a college student. She was not looking to be involved with any student organizations and was more concerned in becoming a successful college student. It was not until her second year that she decided that she wanted to become a part of the organization.

She attributes much of her success to her organization. She listed leadership development as a major outcome of being a member. As a first year, she was a bit shy and hesitant to speak up. However, as she gained experience in the organization she become much more confident as not just a leader but a person as well. However, she also mentioned this as one of the largest challenges for her. Because her organization was smaller in numbers she would often have to do multiple tasks. She felt that she did not always have enough time in the day for everything.

As a member of her organization, Monica enjoyed the way the organization kept her motivated as a student. The organization would put pressure on her to get tasks done that were set before her. With multiple responsibilities she had to learn how to manage her time affectively. She attributed this pressure of tasks in developing her leadership skills and the ability to manage the stresses of college life. She also spoke about the strong mentorship she received from older members in the organization. The older members would often help her out and provide advice and help her navigate the
challenges of being a student.

Monica also spoke about the various community services that her organization was involved with. Her organization often mentors teenage girls and emphasizes work with youth. The organization also holds events to promote the health issues in the Latino community such as AIDS and HIV.

Monica identified her organization as Latina but also as a multicultural. She explained that her organization does not limit itself to Latinas and does its best to attract members from different culture and ethnicities. Furthermore, she felt that as a LGLO was very distinct and unique. Because of the strong presence of people of color they often had to educate non-Latinos about their organizations but also connect and support the Latino community. She also distinguished her organization from IFC or Panhellenic organizations. Her organization was un-housed and consisted of a much smaller membership. Their intake numbers were also much lower than those in IFC and Panhellenic organizations. Lastly, she mentioned the large disconnect between LGLOs and IFC/Panhellenic organizations. They rarely if ever interact with one another. However, she was trying to change that by reaching out to them. Her organization had held a workshop that was specifically targeted to the IFC and Panhellenic community in collaboration with the Office of Greek Life.

Monica hoped that her organization would continue to grow and become involved on campus. She hoped that administration on campus would come to recognize that they existed and they were part of the university.

Lucero. Lucero identified as a Mexican or Latina depending on whom she
was speaking with. She is a member of XYZ Sorority. She felt that her organization was different than what most people think of when they hear about Greek organizations. Her organization had very distinct colors, as well hand signs, and calls. She did not intend to join a Greek organization when she first came to campus. Her first exposure to Greek life dealt with Panhellenic sororities. She did not feel any real connection with them and felt that the cultural and racial barrier was too strong to overcome. She was on scholarship and felt that any real Greek organization was going to be a distraction from her academic goals. Her intentions were to join other organizations such as MEChA. However, she eventually encountered members of her organization and began to interact with them and go to their events. She was hesitant to join because of stereotypes that she had heard but eventually decided to become a member.

She was very passionate about her organization. It was very evident in the way she spoke about her interactions with her sisters. She described it as, "something magical." She talked about the chills she would get when her organization would chant or stroll together. She also loved to go to their national conference and meet other sisters from different parts of the country. She also loved that the organization also identified as multicultural and would have multiple ethnicities and not just Latina members.

Lucero felt very attached to her organization and the members. When asked to describe what a Latino/a Greek lettered organization was she said "family." For her the organization was a real support system with everyone helping one another.
The organization was heavily involved in promoting breast cancer awareness specifically in the Latino community. They would often distribute bilingual information and help shuttle the Latino community to free breast examinations.

While she enjoyed her organization and the various activities she would often get negative reactions from the campus. She often felt that her organization was misunderstood or out of place because they did not have a house or other commonalities with Panhellenic sororities. Furthermore, her organization encountered issues with the Greek Life coordinator. The coordinator would often draft rules and procedures that would single her organization out. She felt that the Greek Life coordinator had no understanding of LGLOs and made no attempt to understand their customs or traditions. However, faculty of color would often support the organization and help whenever the organization needed it.

They would not interact with IFC or Panhellenic organizations, but they had strong relationships with other LGLOs and would hold socials and other events together.

Lastly, she hoped that her organization would continue to grow. She also hoped that administration would recognize them as legitimate organizations that could use help and support like any other organization on campus.

**Coding**

I applied a coding process recommended by Corbin and Strauss (2009) to make meaning of the interview data. I used microanalysis as the initial process of
analyzing information. I read through the transcript of each interview very closely to get an idea of what the participants were trying to convey. I organized relevant quotes into sections based on their shared thematic connections. I eventually was able to identify many of the categories. This ability to identify the categories is what led me to find the specific theme. I applied this process to each of the interviews, and then searched for common overlapping themes across all of the interviews. Through this process, I was able to identify five major themes that consistently emerged for all of the participants in the study.

**Common Themes**

In this section, I will present the themes that emerged as a result of my analysis of the data gathered through the interviews. The first theme, Support System, explores the way many of the student saw their organization as a support system. The second theme, Going Greek, speaks about each student’s hesitation in joining a LGLO. The third theme, Challenges, covers the various challenges that each one of the participants encountered. The fourth theme, We’re Different, identifies the students’ perceptions of their organizations as different from other Greek Letter groups. Finally, the fifth theme, Latino vs. Multicultural explores the way that different LGLO’s self identify.

**Support System.** Each one of the students that was interviewed talked about the strong support system that their organization offers. Every student in their interview spoke about the way their organization encouraged them to succeed and do well academically. Some liken their organizations to families indicating a strong level of camaraderie. Students often spoke about going to
their brothers or sisters when they were in need of advice or support. The interviews from each student seem to indicate a level of support that they do not seem to be getting from other organizations. The interviews themselves were also indicative of a strong sense of fellowship between the student and their organization. The members often spoke about doing activities and events as a group or with other members. The strong sense of connection to their organization was obvious in the ways the students spoke about their organizations. One student used the work “magical” to describe her experience indicating a unique bond with her organization. The two graduate students that were interviewed also spoke about the encouragement they received academically and contributed it to their success in obtaining their Bachelor’s degree. Yenni’s story about going to her sisters for academic advice instead of her academic advisors illustrates the strong trust and push for success. It’s clear that the organizations help with retention. Some students used the phrase “support system” when defining a LGLO. Overall, the organizations are providing a support system that pushes its members to succeed academically and provide each member a place to feel welcomed.

**Going Greek.** With the exception of Yenni, none of the participants had any inclination of the joining a Greek-Lettered organization. Both Monica and Lucero had both indicated a complete lack of knowledge when it came to Greek Life. While Cristian and Evani knew about Greek Lettered organizations, they never had an inclination join a Greek organization. The following quotes illustrate the complete lack of motivation to join a Greek Lettered Organization.
Monica mentioned, “at first, I’m not gonna lie, I didn’t (want to join)... I had no idea what they were, like nothing.” Lucero also said, “No not at all, no I didn’t, I wanted to join MEChA.”

Some of the students indicated that some of the stereotypes associated with Greeks were reasons that they did not want to join. Evani was clear on not becoming a Greek member because of what he heard about Greek organizations. He felt that Greek organizations were simply about partying and getting drunk. He was recruited by an IFC Fraternity but refused membership because of his initial feelings towards Greek Life. Lucero also was approached about joining a Panhellenic sorority. However, she felt no connection to any of the women in the sorority and felt that there was a racial and cultural barrier that she could not overcome. Lucero, had this response, “there was no one that looked like me and no one I could relate with... I didn’t feel like I connected with anyone in those house so you know I didn’t pursue it.”

The students’ interviews reveal that that the students lacked information about Greek Life, or had no intention to join an organization because of the stereotypes, along with the cultural and racial barriers associated with Greek Life. However, each member did end up joining an LGLO for similar reasons. Each student became a part of their organization because of the strong connection they felt to the other members. Yenni talked about seeing other women that were similar to her and had similar experiences:

“it was a group I could identify with I felt as a young Latina person in higher education you’re already seen differently.... you don’t see a lot of
people that look like you in your class. I kind of used CBA as a group that I could identify with it. I knew that a lot of people in there would probably have a lot of the interests as me. I also knew that it would bring a comfort level to my college experience.”

Both Cristian and Evani talked about being able to feel comfortable around the other members of the organization. Once Evani became introduced to the idea of “Multicultural Greeks” he began to associate with the other members much more and eventually decided to join the organization.

In their interviews, students share that they had no initial intention to join a Greek organization. The cultural barriers as well as the stereotypes associated with Greek Life kept many members from seriously considering Greek Life. However, once the participants were introduced to LGLOs they began to find a common connection and bond between the members. The common the goals and background helped the participants feel comfortable enough to get to know members and eventually make the decision to join their organization.

Challenges. Students indicated various challenges that they encountered once they became a part of their organization. While each student talked about their own unique challenges their organization faced, there were commonalities among the participants. Participants spoke about the need for more recognition for their groups on their campus. They felt that both the university and students commonly knew IFC and Panhellenic Greeks. For many participants it was a constant struggle to assert themselves on their campus. Participants had to frequently explain their organization to other students including other IFC and
Panhellenic Greek organizations. For example, Cristian reflected, "I wish we were known a little bit more, I wish our letter were known like traditional fraternities." They also felt as though events such as Greek Week completely ignored their organization. Cristian went on to say,

“Sometime I feel like that people look the other way because we’re, I guess quote un quote non-traditional, and we don’t have a house and we’re multicultural, so that bothers me that we’re not known as much and people seem to look the other way.”

This quote reflects the way members in LGLOs feel ignored or brushed aside by other organizations. Yenni also touched on the how unfamiliar Greek Life is to the Latino community and the struggle to explain it to her family. “I kind of feel like there is not a word yet for sorority in the Latino community.”

Students in LGLOs are having difficulty explaining who they are to both their university communities and their personal families. It is clear that students in these organizations are flying below the radar of many universities despite the various activities and programming that many of these organizations are holding.

**We’re Different.** A common theme that resonated throughout all of the interviews was how LGLOs or the organizations they belonged to were different than IFC or Panhellenic Greeks. Students talked about the various community service projects that they would hold. Some of these included but were not limited to, food drives, breast cancer screening, highways cleanups, and youth conferences. They felt that their commitment to community service was one of
the sticking points that made them different from other IFC/Panhellenic organizations. LGLOs also had very distinct characteristics that made them different. The elaborate jackets, hand signs, and calls are all characteristics that made them different. The practice of strolling was also a defining characteristic. Strolling is a type of dance performed in a line practiced by different multicultural Greek organizations. Yenni had hoped that in the future her chapter would compete and win in stroll competitions illustrating her organization’s different practices. Yenni also mentioned that they had a much longer intake process than IFC/Panhellenic organizations’ rush process to bring in new members, as well. They also found that they did not associate with IFC/Panhellenic Greeks very often. They would mostly associate with other LGLOs. Yenni and Monica both touched on race being an issue that really separated LGLOs and IFC/Panhellenic groups. However, all the participants expressed interest in seeing more collaboration.

**Latino vs. Multicultural.** Each student had a clear opinion about how their organizations defined themselves. While all of their organizations were Latino based, meaning founded by Latinos, many participants emphasized the multicultural nature of their organizations. All acknowledged that their organizations were Latino but also mentioned how multicultural their membership or organizations strived to be. Cristian went so far to correct me every time I would call his organization Latino and insisted that is organization was multicultural. He mentions, “I don’t like being perceived as just a Latino fraternity because we have so much more to offer than that.”
All of the participants felt that their organizations were either multicultural or becoming more and more multicultural as time went on. Some pointed out that while their membership was primarily Latino they did not discriminate and made efforts to appeal to everyone. For example Monica pointed out, “although it is Latina, we say multicultural...we are a very rainbow sorority.” Yenni similarly comments, “We’re trying to become a multicultural sorority.” Lucero also mentions, “Latina based but has evolved turned into a multicultural sorority.”

The identity of many of these groups is in a dynamic place, where their composition and mission is changing to meet a modern perspective on race. They identify as Latino but also as multicultural. The fact that some of their organizations feature members from other races and ethnicities shows that they are not just appealing to Latino students. Their values and fraternal cultural has mass appeal by being able to attract various types of students. Their willingness to identify as multicultural shows a willingness to appeal to a larger audience.

**Overall Experience**

Through the interviews, some common themes emerged about the experiences of students in LGLOs at VSU in the Pacific Northwest. The participants feel passionately committed to their organizations because the LGLO provides a primary support structure for them. They are able to excel academically and pursue leadership opportunities because of the constant support they receive from their organization. They are being pushed to succeed. While their lack of Greek Life experiences and familiarity with stereotypes
spurned them from initially joining a Greek organization, the ability to make connections with other members in LGLOs is what prompted to join their organization.

Upon joining their organization, however, they are faced with some challenges. These challenges include having to validate themselves to their peers, other Greek organizations, and even family members. They struggle to gain full support from the university through the Greek Life office programming. This is compounded by fact that they view themselves as different than traditionally housed Greek organizations. Their unique customs and differences in race and culture make it difficult to connect with IFC/Panhellenic Greek organizations. Lastly, they identify themselves in various ways. They understand themselves to be both Latino and multicultural at the same time. They have a majority of Latino members but openly welcome students from different ethnicities and backgrounds.

In the next chapter I will discuss the implications of these findings and offer recommendations for ways to best support students in LGLOs and also how to support the success of LGLOs broadly.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

It is my hope that student affairs practitioners, educators, and researchers will be able to use the findings from this study to better support LGLO’s and consequently the success of Latino students on college campuses. The goal of this study is to understand the experiences of students in Latino/a fraternities and sororities. Members in these organizations find themselves in the borderlands of both their communities. They are members of a Greek community but also members of a Latino community, both of which know very little of one another.

As referenced in the methodology section, I used Critical Race Theory as the theoretical approach. Through the study I encountered the five different tenets that make up Critical Race Theory. Yosso (2005) identifies these as: intercentricity of race and racism, the challenge of dominant ideology, the commitment to social justice, the interdisciplinary perspective. In understanding the experiences of students in LGLOs we can also apply Critical Race Theory as a lens to authentically serve these groups. By acknowledging the importance of race and ethnicity to members in LGLOs we begin to see theory turn into practice. We also see LGLOs challenging the perception of Greeks in comparison to IFC/Panhellenic Greeks. LGLOs are challenging the dominant ideology of what makes up a Greek organization. In serving LGLOs, student affairs professionals should take care to understand the needs of marginalized communities and have a commitment to social justice if they are to serve these groups. Lastly, serving
LGLOs takes a multidisciplinary perspective. The convergence of race/ethnicity, Greek life, and multiculturalism requires a multi-faceted approach that is interdisciplinary in order to effectively serve these groups.

In the first chapter, I introduced the topic and laid out the research question. In chapter two, I reviewed the literature that existed pertaining to the topic. In chapter three, I discussed the methodological approach I took in conducting the research I discussed the use of a case study approach in the chapter. In chapter four, I examined the findings of the study and presented common themes that appeared. In this chapter I will discuss the findings and provide reflection and recommendations based on the themes that emerged from the interview data.

**Emerging Themes.** I identified five central themes through the coding and analysis of the interviews for this study. The first theme, Support, references the LGLO as an environment where the participants felt a strong sense of connection and encouragement. The second theme, Going Greek, references the process by which the participants decided to join an LGLO. All but one of the participants had either no inclination to be a part of a Greek Organization or had any familiarity with Greek Life. The third theme, Challenges, spoke to the common challenges that the participants encountered. The lack of recognition and knowledge of LGLO's by peers, administrators, and family members emerged as challenges for students in LGLOs. The fourth theme, We're Different, spoke to the way the participants viewed their organization in comparisons to IFC/Panhellenic organizations. The participants felt strongly that their
organizations are different than IFC/Panhellenic due to their traditions and customs. The participants mentioned that the focus on race and ethnicity is what differentiated them. The last theme, Latino vs. Multicultural, investigated the ever-evolving identities of these organizations.

**Understanding Brotherhood/Sisterhood**

The participants in this study expressed strong passion and drive for their organization. The way the students described their organization with such powerful words as “magical” illustrates the strong love they have for their organizations. Student affairs professionals may have difficulty understanding the pride that members have for their organization, yet it is not difficult to make the jump that this love comes from the strong support system that LGLOs offer. All of the participants named their organization as a strong support structure. Members are encouraged to excel academically and become leaders on their campus. As Evani described, “it keeps on me.” Students in these LGLOs surround themselves with other students who are pushing their fellow brother/sisters to succeed. Astin writes about the importance of being involved on campus and the support system that it can provide (1984; 1993). Students involved in LGLOs at Valley State University have meaningful involvement with their organizations. The participants spoke about the strong sense of community and belonging that they felt as a result of being involved in their LGLO. This sense of belonging in turns allows for student success.

Student involvement in LGLOs may also be a source of retention for Latino students enrolled in universities. As noted before in the literature review,
the climate for Latino success is not always positive (Hurtado, 1994; Longerbeam et al., 2004; Ortiz, 1994; Rodriguez et al., 2000). However, LGLOs may serve as a partial shelter from the negative climate that some students experience. In this study, all of the participants noted that their organizations were a space where they felt comfortable and supported. Having a support structure is important, particularly since students are questioning and developing their identities in college. This process can be challenging for all college students and is especially challenging for Latino students (Torres, 2003; Torres, 1999). Latino students are trying to navigate assimilating into mainstream communities on campus while maintaining a sense of their own background and culture. Guardia and Evans (2008) have noted that LGLOs can provide the space to develop one’s identity in a positive and healthy way.

“Membership in a Latino fraternity at an HSI enhances members’ ethnic identity development” according to Guardia and Evans (2008, p. 177).

Participants often talked about brotherhood/sisterhood as being part of the reason they joined or why they love being a part of their organization. This support they receive is a way of defining the concept of brotherhood/sisterhood. It is not surprising that the participants had a strong connection to the idea of brotherhood/sisterhood. Latino communities in general have strong ties to family (Ortiz, 2004). I make the argument that the organizations are attempting to recreate this sense of family.

Student affairs professionals need to realize that the strong connection that students in LGLOs have to their fellow brothers/sisters and their
organizations is directly related to the sense of family these organizations create, therefore becoming a strong support system. By understanding the depth of brotherhood/sisterhood within a Latino cultural context, student affairs professionals can better address the needs of LGLOs and their members. LGLOs provide the sense of security that students need in order to be successful. By approaching an LGLO with an acknowledgment and respect of their brotherhood/sisterhood, student affairs professionals can support the core infrastructure of an LGLO, which will ultimately support the success of the individual student members.

**Future Directions for Greek Life**

The themes noted in the previous chapter touched heavily on the distinct Greek Life experience felt by the participants. The participants felt as though they were different than IFC/Panhellenic Greeks. However, they also felt as though they lacked the recognition from both campus administration and student life. This sense of being different is what often leads to LGLO’s sense of unfamiliarity from the general campus and administration. Furthermore, student joining are almost completely unaware of the intricacies of Greek Life and the existence of LGLO’s. Essentially, LGLOs do not seem to have a space on campus where they feel fully understood or embraced. They do not feel connected to the Greek system because of the cultural components, nor do they feel connected to campus because of a general negative stereotype applied to all Greek letter organizations.
The different customs and traditions of LGLOs create a very different Greek experience than one sees with IFC/Panhellenic Greeks. The students interviewed all identified strongly with their ethnic/racial community. Like Lucero, who initially thought she would join MEChA, students who join LGLOs are often looking for a community where race and ethnicity are central to the organization. The shared ethnic and racial experience is something that is not being recreated in IFC/Panhellenic Greeks. The members in these organizations truly feel that their organizations are very distinct. While many of the students interviewed did express interest in reaching out to IFC/Panhellenic groups, they often felt that race and ethnicity was a barrier. They also conveyed that oftentimes IFC/Panhellenic do not make the effort to reach out to them, and leave them out of all Greek community programming.

Yosso’s (2005) writing on Critical Race Theory examines this concept of unfamiliarity with marginalized communities of color. Communities of color have to both understand the communities they live in and understand how to navigate mainstream society. White mainstream society does not have to worry how to navigate a Latino community or a Black community because they live in a white mainstream society that caters to them. This dynamic is being recreated in Greek Life. IFC/Panhellenic Greeks have no motivation to understand LGLOs because the majority of Greek Life caters to them. LGLOs must understand their communities and understand mainstream Greek Life. This is where the challenge of a unified and equitable Greek community arises.
In order to break these barriers it must be understood that there are distinct differences between LGLOs and IFC/Panhellenic Greeks. Greek Life offices have to understand that the founding histories, needs, and concerns of LGLOs are different and that rules or regulations that apply to IFC/Panhellenic Greek may not apply to them. Participants repeatedly noted that the campus community was generally unfamiliar with the existence of LGLOs. Greek life offices can be strong support systems for LGLOs. In order to accomplish this, administrators may consider inviting LGLOs as active participants in policy/regulation changes that are more inclusive in nature. It is recommended that they be invited to take part in the formations of Greek Week or other Greek Life activities. They must be there at the start and not simply be added as an afterthought. Greek life professionals can be educators, change agents, and a bridge for the rest of the campus community by rebranding Greek life to be inclusive of LGLOs. Furthermore, Student Tour or Orientation offices need to be educated on the diversity of Greek life, so that when they do discuss Greek life, LGLOs are included in the discussion. Finally, Greek Life offices must be able to integrate issues of race and ethnicity into their seminars and presentations to Greek chapters. These efforts will not only address the challenges that LGLOs face in terms of feeling unrecognized, they also acknowledge the unique nature of these groups in a positive way.

**Multicultural Greeks**

A common theme that emerged from the study was that many LGLOs also identify as multicultural. Initially this may seem counterintuitive. Why would an
organization that identifies itself as Latino also consider itself multicultural? However, when one comes to analyze and understand the diversity of the Latino community the addition of a multicultural identity makes sense. Latinos often get stereotyped narrowly as brown-skinned people only. However, Latino is a cultural group that includes many different races. Many LGLOs embrace this idea. The participants that were interviewed understand that the foundations and founding histories their organizations come from Latinos. They also identify with the idea of a dynamic organization that is inclusive of members from all backgrounds as long as they are committed to the values of the organization. The participants interviewed had expectations of growing larger and being much more diverse in their membership.

Noting this concept is important in approaching LGLOs. LGLOs cannot simply fit into one category. Because many organizations insist on attracting diverse members it is not a stretch to see some chapters having memberships that are not predominantly Latino. This begins to change the way that these organizations are categorized on campuses. The question becomes whether or not these organizations can still identify as Latino. This is a question that still needs much more research. While it was a common theme among all the participants, understanding what it means will require a concentrated approach in the topic itself.

**Final Recommendations and Further Research**

In order to fully serve students in LGLOs the experiences that they have must be understood. By understanding the experiences we can better identify
with the student and the organization. This begins with understanding the way they approach their own organization. Members see the organization as a strong support system which leads individual members having a strong connection to each other, and to the organization. Student affairs professionals who understand can take the first step in helping LGLOs. Furthermore, understanding this support can help professionals build trust among members of the group. The members in these organizations depend and trust one another. A student affairs professional will need to do the same to gain the trust and respect of LGLOs.

Greek Life needs to be restructured on college campuses. Greek Life offices need to make the conscious effort to promote LGLOs and include them in policy development processes. LGLOs will continue to grow on different campuses. Archaic rules and regulations that only apply to IFC/Panhellenic Greeks need to changed and updated to reflect a diversifying Greek community. Furthermore, adding staff that come from these groups will help add legitimacy and a new perspective to these offices. This approach is not limited to Greek Life offices alone. Multicultural affairs must also realize that LGLOs exist, and must be willing to be a source of support. Members in these organizations identify strongly with their ethnicity and race. Ideally, Greek Life offices and Multicultural affairs offices could build solid partnerships, and even consider having overlapping staff to meet the multicultural needs of students broadly. LGLOs are going to continue to change and grow. Their commitment to diverse membership means that student affairs professional will have to stay current with LGLOs on their campus. Making assumptions about membership status due
to race or ethnicity will not adequately address the needs of LGLOs. Educators must be prepared for the varied membership that could change from year to year.

More research needs to be conducted on this topic. There have been very few published research articles on the topic and only a handful of dissertations and masters’ theses written on the subject. This study attempts understand the impact of LGLO by examining the experiences of five students who are members of LGLOs. This is not adequate enough to cover the full range of stories and varied experiences from members of these organizations nationally. The experience of student from Texas could be vastly different from the experience of a student in Iowa. A more thorough examination of students from different regions would allow us to fully understand the gamut of experiences that could exist. A longitudinal study looking at students in LGLOs and their graduation rates, career choices, etc. would also offer more insight into these organizations and the role they play in student success for Latino students. Relationships between LGLOs can also be studied to understand the overall Greek community of LGLOs. Lastly, the barriers between IFC/Panhellenic Greek and LGLOs needs to be more investigated to fully understand ways of breaking down these barriers.

Concluding Thoughts

It is hard to predict where LGLOs will be in the future and the effect they will have on their campus communities. LGLOs have the potential of being a positive community of support for Latino students on college campuses.
Universities can embrace these organizations, especially as they begin to see a rise in Latino student enrollment. The ability to provide another avenue of support, community, and retention cannot be ignored. Universities must not be afraid to invite the organizations on their campus if they begin to see a rise in Latino enrollment. Furthermore, these groups can add to the diversity of leaders on their campus. Because LGLOs encourage their member to be involved, this can have a positive effect on the retention of Latino students. This again has positive effects for campuses and people of color. Kimbrough (2002) has written about the positive influences that Black Greek Lettered Organizations have had on the Black community over the last 100 years. Similarly, we may see an increase in Latino student success as a result of increased involvement in LGLOs.

I firmly believe that these groups provide a positive influence for Latino students and their campuses. It’s clear that these groups are providing positive effect for both Latinos and the Latino community.
References


APPENDICES
Appendix A: IRB Protocol

RESEARCH PROTOCOL
6/14/2011

1. Protocol Title: Understanding the experiences of students in Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations

**PERSONNEL**

2. Principal Investigator Mamta Accapadi
3. Student Researcher(s) Emanuel Magaña
4. Co-investigator(s) None
5. Study Staff None
6. Investigator Qualifications: Mamta Accapadi is a graduate faculty member for the College of Education in the Adult Education and Higher Education Leadership Department and is the major professor to the student researcher; Mamta also has a research background in studying experiences of students of color, as well as fraternities and sororities.

7.

8. Student Training and Oversight: Both the Student Researcher and the Principle Investigator have discuss the various aspects in conducting research that meets all IRB guidelines. The Primary Investigator will provide the main oversight throughout the year through regular meetings to ensure that all protocols are being followed and that none of the research subjects are in harm’s way.

**FUNDING**

9. Sources of Support for this project (unfunded, pending, or awarded): The research is not being funded in any way.

**DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH**

10. Description of Research: The purpose of this study will be to examine what the experiences of Latino Students in Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations on a prominently white institution. The research is intended for a Master Degree Thesis along with possible future publications, presentations, or conferences. Researchers will be able to use these findings to help understand how Latinos in college Fraternities and Sororities understand their college experiences and the ways they interact with each other and the rest of campus life.

11. Background Justification: The amount of Latino attending Universities is rising at a high rate (Torres, 1999). Latino students are joining various different
Campus groups including Greek-Lettered Organizations. However, these Greek-Lettered Organizations cater specifically to Latino Students by being specifically Latino in their approach and fraternal customs. Professionals must be able to understand these groups in order to serve them properly. This topic must be researched to understand how these groups are affecting their communities and how they manifest themselves on campuses. Furthermore, the integration of culture and Greek life raises a few questions. Which division of student affairs takes the role of advising these groups? Can Greek Life offices truly advise these groups without having an understanding in Latino Culture? Can Multicultural or Diversity offices address the concerns of these groups without understanding the issues and esoteric language of Greek organizations? It is the hope of this research to answer the questions as what these Greek organizations are doing on campuses and how they contribute to the growing Latino populations in schools.

12. Multi-center Study: This study will only be done at OSU and not at other institutions

13. External Research or Recruitment Site(s): There are no external sites

14. Subject Population:

I. Research will be limited to students who identify as members of a Latino Greek Lettered Organization. Participants have to at least been part of their organization for at least one year. The goal will be to interview 8 individuals with at least two students from one organization each.

II. Participants will be found by disseminating an email with the support of the Office of Greek through Unified Greek Council liserve, which houses Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations. Another email will also be disseminated shortly after through various minority or non-traditional student list servs. This will be done because many Latinos in Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations identify more strongly with their minority identity then they do with their Greek Affiliations. Another way to recruit participants will be to email the presidents of each organization directly. The email will ask participants if they would be interested in being part of a research study.

III. If more than 8 individuals respond to the subject the participants will be selected based on at least two coming from one organization each. This will be a first come first serve recruitment. Once 8 participants have been selected, recruitment will be closed and any other interest will be notified that the study does not need any more volunteers.

IV. Students that are interested in the study will be asked to reply to the email and schedule interviews either through email or phone.

V. The participants in the study are not from any vulnerable populations.

15. Consent Process: Consent will be obtained before any formal interview process begins. Part of recruiting participants though email will include attaching consent forms, background on the study, and criteria for selection. Any
students that reply to the recruitment email with interest in the study will be asked to fill out the consent forms and bring them to a scheduled interview. Before any interview is conducted the participant will have an opportunity to ask questions about the consent form and background on the study. Participants will also be asked if they have any objections to being audio recorded. Lastly, Participants will be given a copy of the consent form for their own records.

16. Assent Process: NA

17. Eligibility Screening: The nature of the study involves researching a specific population thus necessitating the need for an eligibility screening. This eligibility screening will be done before any consent or interview process has been executed.

- Must be over 18 years old
- Must be a currently enrolled college student at Oregon State University
- Must be a member of a Latino-Greek Lettered Organization for a minimum of one year

18. Methods and Procedures:

I. The research will use a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach allows for “exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Qualitative research allows for the personal and professional experiences for individuals to be heard. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The goal of this research study is to develop a deeper understanding of the Latino Greek experience. The hope is to identify the common themes that enrich these individuals and the organization that they are part of. Themes and analysis also arise when one uses qualitative research thus necessitating its use (Creswell, 2009). The goal to use qualitative research also has to do with the minority status of the participants of the group. The potential participants will come from marginalized backgrounds. This necessitates the need to hear real stories or hear the non “majoritarian” story (Yosso, 2005). The stories of minorities are often not told or told from the side of the majoritarian. Critical Race Theory will be used to fully analyze the interviews (Yosso, 2005).

II. A case study approach will be used in order to fully explore the depth of one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009). This makes the most sense, as the research will involve multiple people and their perspectives. In order to fully hear each individual’s experience one-on-one interviews will be conducted with all of the participants. This will be done to get a much more individualized and full experience (Creswell, 2009). Each individual story told is important for the study in order to paint a full picture of the experiences for these students.

III. Participants to this study will be found via three different methods. Via email through both the Office of Greek Life, Minority Listserves, and direct email of organizations’ presidents. This is further detailed in the Subject Population section.
These emails will contain a recruitment email that outlines the criteria for selection which is covered in the Subject Population section.

IV. At least 8 participants are sought for in the study. It will be a first come first serve selection. The first 8 to meet the selection criteria will be sent the consent form and an interview will be scheduled.

V. The interviews will be semi-structured. This will be done to create a free flow of information and get a narrative story from the individuals (Fontana & Fey, 2005). Fully structured interviews would not allow for the wholeness of the experiences. By allowing the participants to move the story, they were effectively adding the richness to the interview. Furthermore, recordings and notes will be taken during the interviews to ensure the entire story is being told. Notes also help in terms of pointing out the key points of the interview and being able to emphasize turning points in the interview. The interviews will use a recording device. Because of the importance of a narrative recording the participants’ responses will be necessary. They can opt out of the study if they refused to be recorded and a new participant will be found.

VI. 1 hour and half will is estimated amount time commitment for this study. This includes a verbal overview of the consent form and the interview itself.

VII. All interview information will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used for all participants. This is covered in the Anonymity or Confidentiality section.

VIII. Once all interviews have been competed and transcribed they will be used to help answer the thesis question.

19. Compensation: There is no compensation for participation in the study
20. Cost: There are not costs associated with the study
21. Drugs, Biologics, Supplements, or Devices: No drugs are being used for this study
22. Biological Sample: No laboratory or biological samples are being used
23. Anonymity or Confidentiality: In order to ensure that the participants are being protected several measures will be taken. All names and organizations will be given pseudonyms. The same pseudonym will be assigned to the same person throughout the entirety of the research to ensure that participants’ information is being kept confidential. The location for all materials, including notes will be kept in a private location under lock by the P.I. Any digital information will be secured via a password that is only accessible to the P.I. as well. The only information that will be revealed about the interviews is the information that is relevant to the research being conducted. Before any interview begins student will be required to sign a consent form ensuring that their participation in the research is completely voluntary and that participants have the opportunity to leave the study whenever they wish. Any interview done will be in a private area however, participants have the opportunity to decide a different location if they wish. Transcribing of recorded conversations will occur within two months of last interview conducted. Once the interviews have been transcribed all recorded audio will be deleted or disposed of. Lastly, because all members in the study will come from a historically marginalized community it is imperative that
the researcher pays close attention to feelings and comfort for the subjects. It is also important that their identity be protected to not subject any of the participants to unnecessary hard or duress from either their Latino or Greek Community. Any information will be kept for three years before it is discarded.

24. Risks: There is a risk of accidental disclosure of information that could identify a participant.
   
I. Due to the use of email as a recruitment tool the security and confidentiality of information sent by email cannot be guaranteed. Information set by email can be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or incomplete, or contain viruses. Only the student researcher will have access to the email correspondence to ensure that risk is minimized.
   
II. Potential discomfort or embarrassment related to answering questions. There is the risk that subject could be uncomfortable with the interview questions. Participants can skip any questions they would prefer not to answer or end the interview at any time.

25. Benefits: Participants will be allowed to explore and reflect on their own experiences as members of Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations. However, this study is not designed to benefit participants directly.

26. Assessment of Risk: Benefit ratio: The risks are extremely minimal and the benefits outweigh them significantly

27. Attached Documents:
   • Recruitment Materials
   • Interview Questions
   • Informed Consent
References


Appendix B: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Understanding the Experiences of Students in Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations
Principal Investigator: Mamta Accapadi
Student Researcher: Emanuel Magaña
Co-Investigator(s): NA
Sponsor: NA
Version Date: 6/20/2011

1.1.1 1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This form contains information you will need to help you decide whether to be in this study or not. Please read the form carefully and ask the study team member(s) questions about anything that is not clear.

2 2. WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this study will be to examine what the experiences of Latino Students in Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations on a prominently white institution. The research is intended for a Master Degree Thesis along with possible future publications, presentations, or conferences. Researchers will be able to use these findings to help understand how Latinos in college Fraternities and Sororities understand their college experiences and the ways they interact with each other and the rest of campus life.

Up to 8 students may be invited to take part in this study.

2.1.1 3. WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you meet the following requirements

- 18 years or older
- Currently enrolled student at Oregon State University
- Been part of a Latino Greek-Lettered Organization for at least one year

4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

Your participation in this study will be used as a basis for a Masters Thesis in College Student Services Administration.
The study activities include interviewing students that have been part of Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations for at least one year. This is done in order to investigate the experiences of students in these organizations. There will be multiple questions and response to each question is optional.

**Study duration:** Your interview process should not take more than an hour. If it takes longer you will be asked the option to continue with the interview.

**Recordings and photographs:** The study will require that you be audio recorded. If you not comfortable you may leave the study and not participate

____ I agree to be audio recorded  
Initials

____ I do not agree to be audio recorded  
Initials

**Storage and Future use of data or samples:** Your responses will be stored digitally via password and only accessible to the student researcher. Any notes will also be kept in storage under lock. Your responses will be kept for three years before they are disposed of.

**Study Results:** You will received the completed study once it has been compiled into a Masters Thesis

2.1.2 **5. WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND POSSIBLE DISCOMFORTS OF THIS STUDY?**

There is a risk of accidental disclosure of information that could identify you. Due to the use of email as a recruitment tool the security and confidentiality of information sent by email cannot be guaranteed. Information sent by email can be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or incomplete, or contain viruses.

Potential discomfort or embarrassment related to answering questions. There is the risk that you could be uncomfortable with the interview questions. You can skip any questions they would prefer not to answer or end the interview at any time.

2.1.3 **6. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?**

You will be allowed to explore and reflect on their own experiences as members of Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations, however we do not know if you will benefit from being in this study.
2.1.4 7. WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

2.1.5 9. WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Federal regulatory agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you.

If the results of this project are published your identity will not be made public.

To help ensure confidentiality, all names and organizations will be given pseudonyms. The same pseudonym will be assigned to the same person throughout the entirety of the research to ensure that participants’ information is being kept confidential. The location for all materials, including notes will be kept in a private location under lock. Any digital information will be secured via a password that is only accessible to the researcher. The only information that will be revealed about the interviews is the information that is relevant to the research being conducted. After three years all information will be discarded.

9. WHAT OTHER CHOICES DO I HAVE IF I DO NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports.

2.1.6 10. WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Mamta Accapadi
Email – mamta.accapadi@oregonstate.edu

If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

12. WHAT DOES MY SIGNATURE ON THIS CONSENT FORM MEAN?
Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________
_______________________________
(Signature of Participant) (Date)

____________________________________
_______________________________
(Signature of Person Obtaining Consent) (Date)
Appendix C: Recruitment Email

Greetings,

My name is Emanuel Magaña, and I am conducting research for my Master Degree Thesis in College Student Services Administration. The topic of my research is “Understanding the Experiences of Latino Students in Latino/a Greek-Lettered Organizations”. In order to conduct my research I will need to interview several students to more effectively understand experiences of Latino Students within these organizations.

I am sending this email in the hopes that students involved in Latino/a Greek-Lettered Organizations can volunteer for my research. This researched will be conducted via personal interviews. This is a great opportunity for students in these organizations to talk about their organization and become part of a study that will be useful for offering a much needed perspective on the Latino Greek experience. All interviews will be conducted in a way that maintains as much confidentiality as possible for the participants. If you are interested in being a participant in this study and meet the following criteria below please email me at your earliest convenience.

- Must be 18 or over
- Currently registered student
- Be a part of a Latino/a Greek-Lettered Organization
- Have at least one year experience with your organization

Attached is the consent form as well as short description of my study. If you are interested please contact me at the following email address or phone number.

maganae@onid.orst.edu
503-508-9540

Thank you
Emanuel Magaña
Appendix C: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1) Can you please introduce yourself?
   -Major?
   -Hometown?
   -Organization you are part of?

2) How do you identify?
   -Ethnicity?
   -Race?
   -Gender?
   -Sexual Orientation?

3) Tell me about your organization
   -Values
   -Goals
   -What is unique about your organization?

4) How did you first hear about Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations?

5) Why did you become a part of your organization?
   -What attracted you to it?
   -Why this organization?

6) Did you intend to join a Greek-Lettered Organization when you first came to campus?
   -Why or why not?

7) How would you define a Latino Greek-Lettered Organization?

8) What do you enjoy about being part of your organization?

9) How does your organization serve the community?

10) What challenges do you encounter being part of your organization?
    -Within your organization
    -From the campus?
    -From the Latino Community?

11) How do you think your organization is perceived?
    -Campus?
    -Latino Community?
    -Administration?
- Faculty members?
- Other Greek Organizations

12) How would you describe your relationship with other Greek Organizations?
   - Both Latino and non?

13) What kind of support do you get from campus resources/offices on campus?
   - Office of Greek Life?
   - Intercultural Student Services?

14) Who do you go for support/advice/help?

15) How does your organization integrate with the community?
   - General campus community?
   - Overall Greek community
   - Latino Community?

16) Where do you see your organization in 5 and 10 years both at OSU and nationally?

17) What do you think are ways that Latino Geek-Lettered Organizations can improve or strengthen?

18) What advice would you give to administrators about ways to support or help Latino Greek-Lettered Organizations?