Entering the Brotherhood: Men of Color’s Experience in Historically White Fraternities

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Entering the Brotherhood: Men of Color’s Experience in Historically White Fraternities

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Advisor: Dr. Graham Hunter

**Research Questions:**

- What is the membership experience of men of color in historically white fraternities?
- How do men of color describe their experience in the historical context of their membership in their organization?
- To what extent do men of color in these organizations feel a sense of being a “tokenized” member?

**Data Collection Methods:**

- Individual interviews through Skype/Zoom
- Participants spanned various institutions from across the US
- Interviews lasted between 25-50 minutes

**Findings and Conclusions:**

**Common Themes:**

- Positive experiences associated with surrounding themselves with shared identities (i.e., John, Chief).
- Separating participants experiences on the local chapter level versus the national level (i.e. John, Chief).
- Able to connect with the historical context of their organization both on the local and national level (i.e. John, Chief, Matthew).
- Experienced microaggressions between themselves and white members centered on race (i.e. Matthew, James, Ezekiel).
- Overall had a positive experience through membership, tension with individual interactions

**Future Research**

- More research on the building of culture within organization and how that culture impacts the experiences of members of color.
- Participants were able to connect with the historical context of their organization and further research should explore how this connection is made.

**Future Practice**

- Needs for added education and intervention with fraternity men on how to have conversations around race and create environments that are conducive to the development of men of color.
- Responsibility needs to fall on the national organization as well as campuses to foster diverse communities for students.

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**Participant Testimonials:**

- “And the only time I've ever felt anything about my race was during the person of color, real talk. And there was like, six of us that were there because everyone else was white … (the) six got up to leave, I could just feel like everyone watching me and looking at me and being like, oh, okay, I guess their person of color…” - John

- “… pledgeship I think pushed me the most into like, I’m about to beat this white boy’s ass. Because … the day Trump got elected… one of them came up to me, they're like, Ezekiel, I'm so sorry. And I'm like, for what, he's like because you're going to get deported, I'm going to miss you. And I'm just like, Did my pledge brother three months into pledgeship, just say this to me.” – Ezekiel

- “So when I joined I was part of my specific chapters move to try to show the diversification efforts on campus…. So they didn't realize that they were tokenizing me but that's literally what they were doing… I got bids to all the five fraternities and I learn quickly why after I joined it was because I was brown not even because (i’m) Guatemalan I assume most them thought I was Mexican. And that led to just a very interesting pledging process where I was really disappointed with the decision that I made was joining the fraternity.” - James

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<th>Pseudonym</th>
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<th>Institution</th>
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<td>Latino</td>
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