Greek Life Membership and Career Development Outcomes
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The Study

Approximately 9 million college students participate in fraternities and sororities, yet minimal research has examined the career development of its members. In addition to exploring several gaps within the literature, the present research sought to move beyond common stereotypes (e.g., stuck up, cocky, party animal, slut, stupid) associated with Greek-letter organizations to examine potential advantages of being involved in sororities or fraternities (DeBard, Lake, & Binder, 2006).

The primary research question of the study explored how membership in a Greek-letter organization influenced career development outcomes across the following areas: vocational identity (Holland, 1997); career decision-making self-efficacy (Lent, 2005); and goal instability (Robbins and Patton, 1985). Grade point average served as a moderating variable. Participants included 436 senior students, 231 non-affiliated and 205 actively affiliated with a sorority or fraternity at a large public university. Results demonstrated that members of Greek-letter organizations reported higher levels of vocational identity, career decision-making self-efficacy, and goal directedness than non-Greek members. Men and women did not differ significantly on the career development variables tested. In other words, gender had no effect for either group. It should also be noted that non-Greek members (M = 3.43) reported a slightly higher GPA than Greek members (M = 3.38), although no statistically significant difference was found.

Key Benefits

1. *Vocational Identity:* Establishing a sense of self is related to involvement in student communities and social organizations (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Astin, 1996). Sororities and fraternities provide members opportunities to identify interests, learn about different cultures, and interact with others, whether during philanthropy events or recruitment/rush, or while mediating chapter disputes, competing in intramural sports, or voting on chapter policies and procedures.

2. *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy:* Social persuasion, vicarious learning, emotional arousal, and performance accomplishments are key factors that foster higher levels of self-efficacy. Greek life provides countless experiential learning opportunities and avenues to receive social support, all of which can foster positive self-efficacy beliefs. Similarly, members are often paired with a big brother or big sister for encouragement and have access to upperclassmen, often serving as academic tutors or mentors. Winning Greek week, raising money for philanthropy organizations, or building homecoming floats represents examples of potential performance accomplishments.

3. *Goal Instability:* Students who possess values, life goals, and overall goal directedness are more likely to be motivated and successful in the future (Oishi, 2000). A strong sense of self, which typically leads to higher levels of self-efficacy, is related to better motivation. On the other hand, confusion about the self is associated with more difficult college adjustment, disorientation, and goal instability (Castillas et al., 2006). Members of Greek-letter organizations demonstrate goal commitment when they pay financial dues, attend chapter meetings, or meet curfew requirements if living in a house. Likewise, due to numerous chapter obligations and events, members likely have to learn better time-management skills. Similarly, academic probation may be used to enforce better study habits.

Implications for Practice

- For students who lack self-knowledge, or are exploring possible interests, career counselors and academic advisors could encourage students to become involved with student organizations on-campus, such as sororities and fraternities. These groups seem to provide enhanced opportunities for acquiring self-knowledge, self-efficacy, and self-motivation, as well as other career development skills.

- Based on Holland's (1997) theory, individuals are more satisfied and successful when their personality is congruent with or fits within their environment. Career counselors could explore how the sorority or fraternity environment (e.g., Social) fits with personal values, interests, and skills (Reardon & Bertoch, 2011). Also, one may encourage students to take leadership roles, serve on committees, or volunteer at philanthropy events. Reality testing can also be used to help clients make career choices. For example, a student may become the social events chair to clarify and/or confirm if becoming a professional event coordinator is an appropriate career fit. Likewise clients could evaluate whether they enjoy or dislike serving on a committee, and how that fits with career options associated with the 'Enterprising' type.

- Another practical implication centers on outreach and programming services. More efforts and attention should be directed towards this population to support members' career development. Likewise, career service interventions could include the discussion of transferrable skills and encouraging the use of a portfolio as a tool for documenting experiences and skills that can be applied following graduation.

- Hosting a career networking event or contacting alumni to be included in career center databases would further promote opportunities for students seeking internships or jobs. Similarly, students could benefit from informational interviews or mock interviews with alumni who shared similar experiences or positions.

Take Home Message: Research suggests that membership in Greek communities can provide an enriched environment that not only builds a sense of connection and friendships, but also a deeper vocational identity, higher self-efficacy, and more goal directedness. Leadership, academic support, and alumni networking represent other key benefits of participating in sororities and fraternities.

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