

Effects of Fraternity Life on First-Year Students

AYURG | Social Sciences, Journalism (SSJ) | Tags: Survey; Qualitative Data Analysis

*This cover page is meant to focus your reading of the sample proposal, summarizing important aspects of proposal writing that the author did well or could have improved. **Review the following sections before reading the sample.** The proposal is also annotated throughout to highlight key elements of the proposal's structure and content.*



| Proposal Strengths | Areas for Improvement |
|---|--|
| The researcher justifies the topic, the method, and the location/place of the study proposed by reviewing what is known about each component and identifying gaps in knowledge within the background section. | While a budget is included in the appendix as is required for any AYURG, there is no mention in the proposal itself why the money is needed. This problem would be remedied by adding a few words about participant compensation when discussing the survey methods. |
| The researcher describes how the data collected will be analyzed in detail and shows how the output of that analysis will help to answer their research question. | This project handles material that the researcher has a personal connection to, but it is not addressed how that may impact the research aside from providing access to a population. |



| Other Key Features to Take Note Of |
|--|
| AYURG proposals require IRB submission at time of application; you will need to enter the IRB number during the application process. Please see the Human Subjects Research section of our website for additional details. |
| All Academic Year URGs require a budget. There is no required format; however, we do provide a template on our website. The scope of the proposal should focus on what the funding covers. |
| Any survey or interview methods should have the surveys and interview questions attached as an appendix as this proposal does. |

Intro moves from broad topic to specific issue

Greek Life has faced increased scrutiny over the past several years, both nation-wide, and here at Northwestern. Most recently, date-rape accusations brought against Northwestern's Sigma Alpha Epsilon chapter shook our campus to its core and caused many students to question whether the Greek system still has a place in modern society (McCoppin & Briscoe, 2017). It is possible that such horrific incidents are linked to Greek Life due to the kind of people it attracts, the culture bred by the institutional structure, the socialization that occurs upon joining, or a combination of all three of these factors and more. Despite (or because of) all the negative press, many Greek systems, including Northwestern's, mandate certain programming designed to encourage healthy community behavior. In the proposed study, I would seek to directly assess how Northwestern 1st-year fraternity students' attitudes in respect to social orientation, seeking mental health help, and intervening in sexual violence change throughout the pledge process, and whether such change is mediated by organizational identification. Altogether, this research would contribute to the larger discussion as to the effects of joining fraternities, as well as test how effective at fostering community wellbeing the interventions currently required by Northwestern University's Interfraternity Council (IFC) are. As an undergraduate who has both been active in psychology research as well as the incoming IFC Vice President for Membership Development, I believe I am uniquely driven and qualified to undertake this project

Clear research/project statement occurs in 1st paragraph

Identifies gap in knowledge

Should justify why gap should be filled

Despite constant controversy, some scholars believe that the effects of fraternity life are actually underrepresented in academic research, and the research which does exist is too narrow in focus (Broughton & Molasso 2006). That being said, there are previous studies that have sought to examine the different psycho-social outcomes among students who choose to go Greek. Surprisingly, past research has shown that first-year Greek students do not differ from their non-Greek counterparts across the domains of reasoning & problem solving, moral reasoning, inclination to inquire, intercultural effectiveness, and psychological well-being (Martin, Asel, Pascarella 2011). One domain this study will seek to examine which, to the researchers' best knowledge, has not been previously studied in a fraternal setting, is Social Value Orientation (SVO). This construct measures prosocial attitude, reflected by the demonstrated allocation of resources between a decision-maker and an anonymous stranger. SVO can influence propensity to cooperate, as well as engage in other prosocial behaviors (Murphy, Ackermann, Handgraaf 2011).

Identifies gap in knowledge

Should justify why gap should be filled beyond saying it hasn't been done

In an effort to prevent sexual assault on college campuses, certain interventions have been created and administered to student groups. The idea that harm against women exists on a spectrum, with the highest level being rape, and the lowest level being slurs against women or other misogynist attitudes has been used in educating men about how they can put an end to sexual violence (Kelly 1988). Previous research has shown that designed interventions can be effective, but call for more research as to continually evaluate these programs in order to drive improvement (Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2011). In the domain of mental health, previous research has shown that certain factors such as social support or self-stigma can impact propensity to seek professional help (Nam, Choi, Lee, Lee, Kim, Lee 2013). However, little research exists as to the effectiveness of interventions designed to destigmatize mental health, and to the best of the researchers' knowledge, no such research has been conducted in fraternity settings.

Justifies location of the study

Identifies gap in knowledge

In an effort to foster community wellbeing, Northwestern's IFC currently mandates several interventions seeking, among other things, to destigmatize mental health and encourage bystander intervention along the spectrum of sexual violence. Recent research has shown that such bystander sexual violence prevention interventions can be effective at changing attitudes in the desired direction, though less so for men already high at risk of engaging in sexually coercive behavior (Elias-Lambert, Black 2016). Greek systems vary tremendously across the country, so results from

Justifies why gap in knowledge should be filled

other studies may not generalize to Northwestern – likewise, the results obtained through this research may not generalize to all fraternities across the country, but it will provide an interesting case study of our own campus environment. The results of this research would shine light as to whether these interventions are succeeding in making fraternity men at Northwestern more prone to intervene in the face of sexual violence, as well as seek help for mental health issues if needed.

Should justify number of participants

In order to examine my research questions, I will seek to survey 80 undergraduates total (40 of whom are first-year fraternity members, 40 of whom are unaffiliated freshmen men) at two separate intervals, once in winter quarter prior to the start of the IFC mandated interventions, and once in spring quarter following their cessation. Given my position on the IFC executive board, I will be able to directly recruit fraternity men through individual fraternity educators, and the unaffiliated sample will be recruited through posters across campus and posts in the class of 2021 Facebook group. The survey, which should take no more than eight minutes, will be administered online via Qualtrics, and will measure 3 domains for the unaffiliated sample, and 4 for those pledging fraternities. I will seek to measure social value orientation (Murphy et al. 2011), propensity to seek professional help (Fischer & Farina 1995), willingness to intervene as a bystander along the spectrum of harm to women (McMahon, Postmus, Koenick 2011), and for fraternity men, strength of organizational identification (Mael & Ashforth 1992), all using previously validated scales that have been used in other relevant studies.

Describes recruitment strategy

Should address how personal connection to topic might affect study

Ideally, each of these measures should be justified in terms of how they help to answer the research question

After collecting responses from both survey waves, data will be analyzed using several types of statistical techniques, including zero-order correlations, linear regressions, ANOVAs, ANCOVAs, and structural equation models. Specifically, I will examine how membership identification with that fraternity predicts social value orientation, propensity to seek professional help, and willingness to intervene as a bystander along the spectrum of harm to women. In addition, I will compare the mean differences on each of these measures between fraternity members and non-fraternity members. Altogether, these analyses will answer my two research questions: for fraternity members, how does identification with the fraternity predict positive attitude change and how effective are the IFC-mandated interventions at fostering community wellness.

Researcher shows both how the data will be analyzed, and how the result of that analysis will help to answer the research question

GPA unnecessary

I believe I am qualified to conduct this project, given my previous coursework and lab experience. I am currently volunteering in Dr. Mesmin Destin's lab for the second quarter in a row, as such I have been exposed to both the inner workings of the lab itself as well as multiple stages of similar research designs. I previously earned Psych 399 credit designing a project alongside Dr. Ginger Pennington where I proposed an idea for novel research in the realm of consumer psychology, helped develop research prompts, and assisted Dr. Pennington in preparing an IRB proposal. I have a 4.0 psychology GPA, encompassing relevant classes such as Psychology 201: Statistical Methods in Psychology, Psychology 205: Research Methods, and Psychology 204: Social Psychology. I am working on this project to earn a Psych 397-1 credit with Dr. Destin. I hope that successfully completing this research will prepare me to conduct another project this summer, as well as prepare me for my ultimate goal of completing a Ph.D. in industrial/organizational psychology. Furthermore, as VP of Membership Development on the IFC executive board, not only does this research have the potential to contribute to the academic conversation surrounding Greek Life, I can assure that its results will be directly considered in formulating the IFC education curriculum for generations of future freshmen.

References

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Appendix

Survey

code_1 Please generate your special code by listing your initials (capitalized), month of birth, and year of birth (last two digits). For example, if your name was Joe Miller and your birthday was August 25, 1991, your special code would be JM0891.

Q2 Are you a member of a fraternity?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Q3 Please mark your current year in college

☐ 1st year (1)

☐ 2nd year (2)

☐ 3rd year (3)

☐ 4th year (4)

☐ 4+ (5)

Q4 Are you a first generation college student? (A first-generation college student is a college student for whom neither parent has earned a four-year degree)

☐ Yes (5)

☐ No (6)

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Q5 What is your current college GPA?

Q6 How proficient are you in English? From 1 (not at all proficient) to 5 (very proficient)

☐ 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

Q7 Please mark the highest level of education your mother (or guardian) received:

☐ Grade School (1)

☐ High School (2)

☐ Technical College (3)

☐ Some College (4)

☐ Bachelor's Degree (5)

☐ Graduate Degree (6)

☐ Not Applicable (7)

Q8 Please mark the highest level of education your father (or guardian) received:

- ☐ Grade School (1)
 - ☐ High School (8)
 - ☐ Technical College (9)
 - ☐ Some College (10)
 - ☐ Bachelor's Degree (11)
 - ☐ Graduate Degree (12)
 - ☐ × Not Applicable (13)
-

Q43 What is your email address? (We will only email you once, with the link to a follow-up survey spring quarter)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Org Identification

Display This Question:

If Are you a member of a fraternity? = Yes

(Organizational Identification Scale)

Q9 Select which option most accurately reflects your level of agreement with the following statements.

| | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4) | Strongly agree (5) |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| When someone criticizes my fraternity, it feels like a personal insult. (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am very interested in what others think about my fraternity. (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| When I talk about my fraternity, I usually say "we" rather than "they". (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My fraternity's successes are my successes. (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| When someone praises my fraternity, it feels like a personal compliment. (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

End of Block: Org Identification

Start of Block: Social Orientation

(Social Value Orientation Scale)

Q10 In this task, imagine that you have been randomly paired with another person, whom we will refer to as **the other**. This other person is someone you do not know and will remain

mutually anonymous. All of your choices would be completely confidential. You will be making a series of decisions about allocating resources between you and this other person. For each of the following questions, please indicate the distribution you prefer most by **selecting the button below the payoff allocations**. You can only make one selection for each question. Your decisions will yield money for both yourself and the other person. In the example below, a person has chosen to distribute the payoff so that he/she receives 50 dollars, while the anonymous other person receives 40 dollars.

Q11

EXAMPLE

| | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 |
|----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| You Receive | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 |
| Other Receives | 70 | 65 | 60 | 55 | 50 | 45 | 40 | 35 |

Q12 There are no right or wrong answers, this is all about personal preferences. After you have made your decision, **select the resulting distribution of money by clicking on button below your choice**. As you can see, your choices will influence both the amount of money you receive as well as the amount of money the other receives.

| | 85 | 76 | 68 | 59 | 50 | 41 | 33 | 24 | 15 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| You Receive Other Receives (1) | 85 (1) | 76 (2) | 68 (3) | 59 (4) | 50 (5) | 41 (6) | 33 (7) | 24 (8) | 15 (9) |

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Q13

[illegible]

Q14

[illegible]

Q15

[illegible]

Q16

[illegible]

Q17

[illegible]

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Q18

[illegible]

Q19

[illegible]

Q20

[illegible]

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Q23

[illegible]

Q24

| | 50 | 56 | 63 | 69 | 75 | 81 | 88 | 94 | 100 |
|---|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| You Receive Other Receives (1) | 100 (1) | 94 (2) | 88 (3) | 81 (4) | 75 (5) | 69 (6) | 63 (7) | 56 (8) | 50 (9) |

Q25

[illegible]

Q26

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 90 | 91 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 98 | 99 | 100 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | 100 (1) | 94 (2) | 88 (3) | 81 (4) | 75 (5) | 69 (6) | 63 (7) | 56 (8) | 50 (9) |
| You Receive Other Receives (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

End of Block: Social Orientation

Start of Block: Bystander Attitude

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(Bystander Intervention Attitude Scale)

Q27 Indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being most willing, how willing you would be to perform the following actions in future situations. Please be completely honest - your answers will remain anonymous and your responses will not in any way be linked to you or any student groups you are a part of.

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| | 1 (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Ask for verbal consent when I am intimate with my partner, even if we are in a long term relationship (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Stop sexual activity when asked to, even if I am already sexually aroused (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Check in with my friend who looks drunk when s/he goes to a room with someone else at a party (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Say something to my friend who is taking a drunk person back to his/her room at a party (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Challenge a friend who made a sexist joke (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Express my concern if a family member makes a sexist joke (6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Use the word "ho," "bitch," or "slut" to describe women when I was with my friends (7) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

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Challenge a friend who uses “ho,” “bitch,” or “slut” to describe girls (8)

☐☐☐☐☐

Confront a friend who plans to give someone alcohol to get sex (9)

☐☐☐☐☐

Refuse to participate in activities where women's appearances are ranked/rated (10)

☐☐☐☐☐

Confront a friend who is hooking up with someone who was passed out (11)

☐☐☐☐☐

Confront a friend if I hear rumors that s/he forced sex on someone (12)

☐☐☐☐☐

Report a friend that committed a rape (13)

☐☐☐☐☐

Stop having sex with a partner if s/he says to stop, even if it started consensually (14)

☐☐☐☐☐

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Decide not to
have sex with
a partner if
s/he is too
drunk (15)



End of Block: Bystander Attitude

Start of Block: Willingness to Seek Help

(Attitude Toward Seeking Professional Help Scale)

Q28

Read each statement carefully and indicate your degree of agreement using the scale below. In responding, please be completely candid.

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| | Disagree (1) | Partly Disagree (2) | Partly Agree (3) | Agree (4) |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| If I believed I was having a mental breakdown, my first inclination would be to get professional attention. (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The idea of talking about problems with a psychologist strikes me as a poor way to get rid of emotional conflicts. (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| If I were experiencing a serious emotional crisis at this point in my life, I would be confident that I could find relief in psychotherapy. (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| There is something admirable in the attitude of a person who is willing to cope with his or her conflicts and fears without resorting to professional help. (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I would want to get psychological help if I were worried or upset for a long period of time. (6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I might want to have psychological counseling in the future. (11)

☐☐☐☐

A person with an emotional problem is not likely to solve it alone; he or she is likely to solve it with professional help. (7)

☐☐☐☐

Considering the time and expense involved in psychotherapy, it would have doubtful value for a person like me. (8)

☐☐☐☐

A person should work out his or her own problems; getting psychological counseling would be a last resort. (9)

☐☐☐☐

Personal and emotional troubles, like many things, tend to work out by themselves. (10)

☐☐☐☐

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Budget

- Compensation for Participants – $80 \times \$10 = \800