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# A Character Campaign: Exploring a Common Morality in Fraternity Life at a Post-Secondary Institution

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A CHARACTER CAMPAIGN: EXPLORING A COMMON  
MORALITY IN FRATERNITY LIFE AT A POST SECONDARY INSTITUTION

By

Christopher Louis Devlin

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of  
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Under the Supervision of Professor James V. Griesen

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A CHARACTER CAMPAIGN: EXPLORING A COMMON  
MORALITY IN FRATERNITY LIFE AT A POST SECONDARY INSTITUTION

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University of Nebraska, 2012

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The purpose of this study is to explore the potential impact on Greek life of the “Show Your Red Character Campaign,” a campus-wide character development program, on the moral development of fraternity members. This study also hopes to explore how to ensure the productivity of the Campaign and how the outcomes decided upon by the Campaign student leadership can be met. Chickering (1969) said college students moved through seven "vectors" which contribute to the formation of identity. One of these vectors, labeled developing integrity, concerned moral development. The college experience forces students to shift from a literal belief in the absoluteness of rules and norms to a more personal, relative view. Questioning the way things are and how they should be, students see the world as very complex and that context is important when judging or explaining events (Astin, 1993; Perry, 1970). Principles are developed about what students see as not only right-wrong and good-bad, but also as fair, just, responsible, compassionate, and caring.

The literature for this research study included Alexander Astin’s research on student outcomes and how they are affected by college environments, Arthur Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development, specifically focusing on his seventh vector, developing integrity, W.G. Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical

Development, and C. Early's research on examining how Greek students and organizations influence ethical and moral development.

After analyzing the data from fifteen face-to-face interviews of undergraduate participants who are members of a traditional fraternity five major themes emerged, including integrating Campaign, communicating Campaign, developing good/ethical behavior is always good, qualities of good/ethical behavior, and fraternity member education.

The results from this qualitative study revealed that the most efficient and productive way of implementing the Campaign into traditional fraternities is to integrate the Campaign into an already existing system within the fraternity. In order to increase the involvement and transparency of the Campaign, positive incentives should reinforce what the Campaign is trying to accomplish.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Attending to the moral development of all college students has been a difficult and complex issue for most colleges and universities. Even more daunting has been addressing this in traditionally closed student living groups such as fraternities and sororities. Greek-letter organizations constitute a visible and powerful part of student culture. At most fraternity initiation ceremonies, new members are challenged to be of good character and to be loyal to the other members of society (Owen, 1998). This case study research sought to explore how the Show Your Red Character Campaign can positively affect the moral development of Greek organizations by providing resources to a student leader who intentionally acknowledges good behavior in each fraternity/sorority house.

Greek organizations are under greater scrutiny than ever before, by both higher education leaders and the general public (Rhoads, 1995; Rhule, 1999; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). There has been significant negative publicity about these organizations. Reports of incidents involving hazing, alcohol and substance abuse, sexual assault, discrimination, ethnic/cultural insensitivity, and poor scholarship have often overshadowed the Greek organizations' positive efforts in campus involvement, community service, charitable fund-raising, and philanthropy (Earley, 1998; Nuwer, 1999).

The researcher used Chickering's Seven Vectors of Student Development to ground his research, especially focusing on the seventh vector. Two sources of data collection were used: a gathering of current examples of acknowledgement of good

behavior of Greek students and interviews of students appointed to serve as their Greek house Show Your Red Character Campaign representative. The Campaign student leaders are developing programming that supports the five objectives outlined below (see Purpose Statement). For the program to fully meet the objectives set out by the student leadership, the students also should possess a level of Chickering's vectors that resemble these five objectives.

The student participants are leaders who were identified by UNL administration because they were chosen by their peers as effective leaders in their Greek chapter. The Show Your Red Character Campaign is in its beginning stages, so the study looked at how these students can affect the campaign in its initial stages. The five objectives will be looked at in relation to the unique perspective of the student leaders and how they can foster an effective program in the Campaign. The results of this study may be helpful to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to improve the social norm of moral judgment on this campus through programs in the Show Your Red Character Campaign.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the potential impact of the "Show Your Red Character Campaign," a campus-wide character development program, on the moral development of fraternity members. This study also hopes to explore how to ensure the productivity of the Campaign and how the outcomes decided upon by the Campaign student leadership can be met. Chickering (1969) said college students moved through seven "vectors" which contribute to the formation of identity. One of these vectors, labeled developing integrity, concerned moral development. The college experience forces students to shift from a literal belief in the absoluteness of rules and

norms to a more personal, relative view. Questioning the way things are and how they should be, students see the world as very complex and that context is important when judging or explaining events (Astin, 1993; Perry, 1970). Principles are developed about what students see as not only right-wrong and good-bad, but also as fair, just, responsible, compassionate, and caring.

### **Research Questions**

Five qualities will be explored in the fraternity members sampled in this case study:

1. Having an impact on the moral and ethical development of fraternity members by promoting the values the Campaign set out to promote.
2. Living up to what is expected by people close to you or what people generally expect from people in your role as student, brother, friend, etc.
3. Being good is important to you and means having good motives
4. Being good is important to you and means showing concern about others
5. Being good also means you keep mutual relationships by developing and growing in trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following term have been utilized throughout the study:

*Character*—The construct of character has been defined variously in the literature, sometimes focusing on the components and structures of moral reasoning and functioning (for example, Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999; Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1969; Rest, 1979), sometimes measuring the character-related behavioral outcomes of various educational interventions (for example, Astin & Antonio, 2000), and other times

identifying those admirable traits and virtues marking persons of good repute (for example, Lickona, 1998; Seligman, 1998).

Another perspective on character comes from those who focus on the individual's behavior within a social context. Astin and Antonio (2000), for example, have defined character as “the values and behavior...reflected in the ways we interact with each other and in the moral choices we make on a daily basis” (p. 4). Similarly, Berkowitz and Fekula (1999) have discussed such development in terms of the “growth of an individual's capacity to function as an effective moral agent” (p. 18). Accordingly, they endorse the Character Education Partnership definition of character as “knowing, caring about and acting upon core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others” (p. 18).

A third perspective on this topic comes from a line of inquiry that attempts to identify, define, and measure the traits and qualities of human character. For example, from the “empirical study of flourishing individuals and thriving communities” (Seligman, 1998) has emerged an interest in “positive psychology.” According to Pawelsky (2003), one of the central missions of this rapidly expanding branch of psychology is the “development of an operationalized classification of the strengths and virtues that constitute character.” To this end, in recent literature—the Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Strengths Manual (Peterson & Seligman, 2003) and Positive Psychological Assessment: A Handbook of Models and Measures (Lopez & Snyder, 2003)—have pursued the challenge of identifying the “core virtues that are consistently valued across cultures and across time...wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance,

and transcendence” (Pawelski, 2003). For positive psychologists, good character is a function of these six virtues.

### **Delimitations**

This study had delimitations in that it was a qualitative face-to-face study that only had fifteen participants. The participants were required to be members of a traditional fraternity from a single, Midwestern public institution. Participants were also required to be an undergraduate student 19 years of age and older. Furthermore, in order to participate, individuals had to be a student leader serving on the leadership council for the Show Your Red Character Campaign representing their respective fraternity.

### **Limitations**

The study may have distorted results due to several reasons. This study intended to have 20 participants, but the investigator only had fifteen participants altogether, thus the study was limited by a small sample. Once the interviews took place, the investigator tried to make the participants as comfortable as possible, but an individual might not be willing to share every piece of confidential information requested during an initial meeting with someone else. Participants might have thought that the questions were irrelevant to their fraternity life experiences, or they may have misinterpreted the interview questions. Also, since the Show Your Red Character Campaign was recently launched in August 2011. The participants have a biased perspective because they serve on the Campaign’s leadership council in determining the best way to implement the Campaign into the fraternity system. The researcher has an unbiased perspective to the success of the Campaign. The researcher was charged to develop a research project that fulfilled requirements for graduation from an Educational Administration master’s

program. The researcher was not involved in the development or implementation of the Campaign but saw a need to explore how to best implement the Campaign's objectives into the fraternity system. The investigator wanted to focus on fraternity life as opposed to sorority life, and all fifteen participants who fit the design of the study were men.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

The following theories of character development, building character in college and influencing ethical development in the Greek system influenced the investigator's interview questions, based on the likelihood that such theories would help explain the respondents' answers in their interviews. In the following paragraphs the investigator explores foundational theoretical topics and researched-based ideals in depth.

#### Theoretical Framework

**Astin's measures of the college environment.** Colleges and universities have observed over the past two decades that their students attach less and less importance to helping others and place more importance on gaining financial security. Astin's 1993 publication *What Matters in College? Four Critical Years Revisited*, focused primarily on student outcomes and how they are affected by college environments. The environment, as indicated by Astin, included

type of educational program and faculty to which the student was exposed as well as many other aspects of the undergraduate experience, such as the peer group. However, we also needed input data on these students at the time they entered college, not only to be able to measure student change over time, but also to control for the fact that different types of students are exposed to different types of environments. (p. 1)

Under "personal development" outcomes, Astin included a measure called "cultural awareness" (p. 2). This reflected the students' self-estimates of how much their undergraduate experience had "contributed to their cultural awareness and acceptance of different races or cultures" (p. 2). Leadership, is another frequently mentioned goal of general education programs. Astin's leadership measurements determined the extent to which students gave themselves high self-ratings on traits such as "leadership ability,



popularity, social self-confidence, and public speaking ability” (p. 2). Social activism reflected how much students “valued such things as participation in community action programs, helping others, and influencing the political structure” (p. 2). Both leadership and social activism were measured longitudinally, first at the time of freshman entry and again four years later.

**Chickering’s theory of identity development.** Chickering’s seven vectors present a comprehensive picture of psychosocial development during the college years. Chickering (1969) used the term vectors of development “because each seems to have direction and magnitude—even though the direction may be expressed more appropriately by a spiral or by steps than by a straight line (p. 8). Chickering noted that

students move through these vectors at different rates, that students may deal with issues from more than one vector at the same time, that vectors can interact with each other, and that students often find themselves reexamining issues associated with vectors they had previously work through in a process of recycling. (p. 8)

Developing integrity is the seventh of the seven vectors, and this vector includes “three sequential but overlapping stages:” humanizing values, personalizing values, and developing congruence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 51). The students, first, progress from rigid, moralistic thinking to the development of a more humanized value system in which the interests of others are balanced with their own interests. Next, a personalized value system is established in which core values are consciously affirmed, and the beliefs of others are acknowledged and respected. Over the course of the development of congruence, “values and actions become congruent and authentic as self-interest is balanced by a sense of social responsibility” (p. 51).

Lasting personality changes may not occur in a blinding flash. As Dylan Thomas (1939) said, “Light breaks where no sun shines...Dawn breaks behind the eyes...Light breaks on secret lots...On tips of thought...” (p. 29-30). While some epiphanies are dramatic and sudden, most occur gradually and incrementally. We may not know for years that a single lecture or conversation or experience started a chain reaction that transformed some aspect of ourselves. We cannot easily discern what subtle mix of people, books, settings, or events promotes this growth nor can we easily name changes in ways of thinking, feeling, or interpreting the world. However, we can observe behavior and record words, both of which can reveal shifts from hunch to analysis, from simple to complex perceptions, from divisive bias to compassionate understanding. Theory can give us the lenses to see these changes and help them along. Because of how the seventh vector defines developing integrity, this vector has become the foundation for the Show Your Red Character Campaign.

Developing integrity is closely related to establishing identity and clarifying purposes (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 69). Our core values and beliefs provide the foundation for interpreting experience, guiding behavior, and maintaining self-respect (p. 69). Developing integrity involves three sequential but overlapping stages: (1) humanizing values-shifting away from automatic application of uncompromising beliefs and using principled thinking in balancing one’s own self-interest with the interests of one’s fellow human beings, (2) personalizing values-consciously affirming core values and beliefs while respecting other points of view, and (3) developing congruence-matching personal values with socially responsible behavior (p. 69).

Humanizing values involves a shift from a literal belief in the absoluteness of rules to a more relative view, where connections are made between rules and the purposes they are meant to serve. Thus, the rules for a ball game can change to accommodate limited numbers of players or other unusual conditions; rules concerning situations, while overriding principles (such as the Golden Rule) become more important. This change has also been called “liberalization of the superego” or “enlightenment of conscience”—the process by which the rigid rules received unquestioned from parents are reformulated in the light of wider experience and made relevant to new conditions (Sanford, 1962, p. 278).

Students bring to college an array of assumptions about what is right and wrong, true and false, good and bad, important and unimportant. Younger students may have acquired these assumptions from parents, church, school, media, or other sources. When others’ values are internalized, most behavior conforms even when the judge is absent. Disobedience produces either diffuse anxiety or specific fear of discovery and punishment. Most of the values are implicit and unconsciously held; therefore, they are hard to identify or explain. With humanizing of values, much of this baggage comes to light and the contents are examined. Many items are discarded on brief inspection, sometimes with later regret. Some items are tried and found unsuitable. A few are set aside because they still fit and can be incorporated into a new wardrobe.

Personalizing of values occurs as the new wardrobe is assembled. Ultimately, the items selected are those required by the characteristics of the wearer, by the work expected to be done, by the situations to be encountered, and by the persons who are seen as important. In short, individuals select guidelines to suit themselves and to suit the

conditions of their lives. In time, the components of this wardrobe are actively embraced as part of the self and become standards by which to flexibly assess personal actions.

Personalizing of values leads to the development of congruence—the achievement of behavior consistent with the personalized values held. With this final stage, internal debate is minimized (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 69). Once the implications of a situation are understood and the consequences of alternatives seem clear, the response is highly determined; it is made with conviction, without debate or equivocation.

The researcher designed the current study using Chickering’s theory of identity development, to identify whether the values of the participants, the values of their respective Greek chapters, and how they demonstrate those values have at some point cycled through the seventh vector of identity development.

**Perry’s theory of intellectual and ethical development.** Perry has provided one of the most common developmental theories used to describe cognitive development. Evans, Forney, and Guido-DeBrito (1998) have summarized how students make meaning of information over a period of time (p. 130). They describe how Perry defined nine positions that students go through in their developmental process. Evans et al. examined these nine positions, and found that they were broken into three major categories: *dualism*, *multiplicity*, and *relativism*. They explain Perry’s dualism as representing “a mode of meaning making that tends to view the world dichotomously: good-bad, right-wrong, black-white” (p. 131). Multiplicity was defined “as honoring diverse views when the right answers are not known” (p. 131). In other words, all viewpoints are valid, but students shift from the dualistic viewpoint to a more independent thought process.

Relativism is defined by “the recognition of the need to support opinions” (p. 132). For students in the relativistic position there are suddenly subtle differences between opinions, and students begin to understand that not all ideas are valid. Disagreement on subjects is acceptable for the relativistic student. Randall and Grady (1998) argued that “undergraduate experiences contribute to critical thinking skills” (p. 31). Critical thinking skills are one of the most important components of cognitive development, and as students progress through Perry’s theory, critical thinking “develops as a result of various college experiences (Randall & Grady, p. 31).

**Kohlberg’s six stages of moral reasoning.** An aspect of Greek member cognitive development that recently has been addressed by researchers is moral development. Based on Kohlberg’s work in the area of “how people make moral judgments” (Evans et al., 1998, p. 173), moral development is how students determine what is right and wrong in a situation. Kohlberg felt that the major principle for this development was one of *justice*:

Kohlberg identified six stages of moral reasoning grouped into three major levels. Each development level represented a fundamental shift in the social-moral perspective of the individual. Kohlberg’s theory of moral development is based on a justice perspective, that (a) focuses on individual rights: (b) stresses separation, detachment, and autonomy: and (c) emphasizes impartial analysis using rules and principles of fairness. (Jones & Watt, 1999, p. 126)

Evans et al. (1998) claimed that “Kohlberg’s theory is a helpful framework for understanding how moral development takes place and provides direction for fostering the development of moral judgment” (p. 185).

### **Relevant Research Findings**

Early (1998) examined how Greek students and Greek-letter organizations influence ethical and moral development. She argued that “Greek letter organizations can be ideal settings for examining the moral implications of behavior” (p. 40). Research on the academically ethical behavior of Greek students has been rather remarkable, as McCabe and Bowers (1996) found that fraternity and sorority members admitted to cheating on tests more than non-Greek students by a large margin. Of the Greek males surveyed, 86% admitted to cheating, compared to 67% of independent men. The researchers also found that 82% of sorority members admitted to academic dishonesty, compared to 67% of non-affiliated females. Early argued that the implementation of service projects for Greek members had a positive effect on their moral development, as Greek students stated they learned to appreciate how their actions affect others. With incidents of hazing and community displeasure, Greek letter organizations must react to their moral dilemma, and Greek students should gain experience in discussing ethical and moral behavior, as Early argued that “students must understand how to behave in ways consistent with principles of truth, justice, honor, respect, integrity, and community” (p. 44), all cornerstones of Greek letter creeds and mottos.

With the vast amount of negative perceptions of Greek-letter organizations, the research presented indicated that Greeks may not be all that different from their independent classmates. While their drinking behavior is alarming, Greek members seem to be similar in academic performance and sexual behavior. So, this begs the question: Why do students join Greek-letter organizations? Byer (1997) determined that pre-collegiate backgrounds may provide the best predictor of Greek-letter membership. He

found that Greek members had socio-economic backgrounds that were much different than their independent peers. Greek members had families with larger incomes, higher parental educational achievements, and higher memberships in local social clubs. Furthermore, O'Connor, Cooper, and Thiel (1996) found that high school students who reported high alcohol use were more likely to join fraternities. Their research suggested that "the relationship between fraternity membership and drinking is not solely a result of belonging to the fraternity" (p. 674). The majority of Greek members appear to have different backgrounds than independent students, and college administrators should be cognizant of student characteristics to determine proper educational efforts. If new members to Greek organizations are predisposed to drinking more alcohol and come from specific socioeconomic backgrounds, the negative aspects of Greek membership may not be attributable to the Greek-letter organizations, as they may be larger, societal issues. Administrators should practice caution if negative stereotypes surround their Greek-letter organizations, as the issue may be deeper than the organizations themselves.

Obviously, Greek members are both similar and different, but the popularity of Greek-letter organizations among a segment of college-going youth remains. One would assume that there is some benefit to membership. Over the years, researchers have concluded that there is some positive benefit:

Fraternities and sororities provide their members with numerous opportunities for leadership development and volunteerism (Astin, 1993, Kuh 1982). Being Greek also is positively correlated with persistence (Astin, 1977, 1984) as well as with higher levels of alumni giving (Nelson, 1984). (Hayek, Carini, O'Day, & Kuh, 2002, p. 643)

Hayek, Carini, O'Day and Kuh (2002) found promising results in the more recent research. "Greek members appeared to be equally and sometimes more engaged in academically challenging tasks, active learning, student faculty interaction, community service, diversity, satisfaction, and on learning and personal development gains" (p. 643). They suggest that the research of the past and the "various programs and activities being implemented at local chapters by national organizations and campus-based personnel to enhance the quality of Greek life are having the desired impact" (p. 658). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found that Greek membership had a positive effect on the development of career-related skills, as well as small, positive effects on interpersonal skills, community orientation, and civic engagement. Table 1 summarizes the major findings regarding the positive effects of Greek membership on students. Updated research on the current generation of college students may be needed to fully understand the ever-changing landscape of Greek-letter membership.

Students who belong to Greek-letter organizations are generally as or more engaged than other students in educationally effective practices (Hayek et al., 2002, p. 650). This includes the amount of effort they put forth inside and outside the classroom (including experiences and exposure to diversity), self-reported gains in various educational and personal growth areas, and perceptions of the campus environment (Pike, 2002, p. 284). These findings run counter in some ways to the research showing mixed or negative relationships between membership in Greek-letter organizations and desired student learning and personal development outcomes (Astin, 1993).



Table 1

*Major Findings from Selected Studies on the Impact of Greek Membership on Student Engagement*

Author	Type of Study	Positive Greek Effect
Astin (1977, 1984)	Longitudinal study of college dropouts	More likely to persist
Pike & Askew (1990)	Single institution study of 6000+ seniors	More interaction with peers and function in groups more effectively
Astin (1993)	Longitudinal study of college dropouts	Self-reported gains in leadership ability
Pascarella et al. (1996)	National Sample of first-year students	Modest positive effect on cognitive development for men of color
Pike (2000)	Single institution	Higher levels of general gains in cognitive development
Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt (2001)	18 institutions, sophomores and juniors	Positive cognitive growth for sororities

Source: Hayek, Carini, O'Day, & Kuh, 2002.

The overall favorable Greek effect on engagement extends to all segments of Greek membership—men and women, first-year and senior students, and to a lesser extent those who lived in the fraternity or sorority house or elsewhere, either on or off campus. Though living in Greek housing did not generate large negative effects on student engagement, the results do not necessarily refute the assertion that Greek housing might be linked to lower educational outcomes for some students (Hayek, Carini, O'Day, & Kuh, 2002, p. 652). Much of the commentary about the potential ill effects of living in Greek housing focuses on the well-being and educational experience of first-year students and newly initiated sophomores, not seniors (p. 652). First-year students living in Greek housing spent more time in extracurricular activities with no appreciable

diminution of time in other activities. Although participating in these activities may aid social integration and positively influence persistence, it also suggests that the time commitments of first-year Greek members may well be stretched beyond those of their nonmember counterparts, making it difficult to balance their studies with responsibilities to their new organization including new member activities (Hayek et al., 2002, p. 653).

Through the literature review the researcher identified several cases where research supports the development of character: the positive benefits of pursuing character and the negative effects of neglecting or failing to pursue character. Much research has also been done on the importance of understanding the climate of character development within Greek life. Literature, however, failed to identify specific programs implemented on campuses of higher learning where successful development of a character program was conducted in a way that first sought to understand how fraternity members would receive it being effective, as well as actualizing it within their respective chapters. The researcher wanted to understand if the fraternity members could not only actualize the campaign in their fraternity chapter but also understand to what degree the fraternity members could conceptualize character. Some fraternity members appear to see character as some actions simply practiced within their chapter, such as shoveling snow for their neighbors or cleaning their fraternity house's kitchen, while others apparently see character affecting the entire Greek community as a whole, the way they choose to live their lives affects the common good. The campaign seeks to accomplish a conceptualization of character beyond simply action into conceptualizing character interiorly and exteriorly—in intentional thinking in the mind about character to

intentionally practicing character through right action to eventual embodiment of character as something second-nature.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

Although character and integrity are difficult to measure, the Show Your Red Character Campaign seeks to endorse character as “knowing, caring about and acting upon core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others” (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999, p. 18). The investigator decided that qualitative interviews rather than quantitative research would be the best measure the potential effectiveness of the Campaign in traditional fraternities. “Qualitative research uses methods that are interactive and humanistic, (and)...is emergent rather than tightly prefigured” (Creswell, 2003, p. 181), and therefore, the study conducted was a qualitative research design utilizing face-to-face audio-recorded interviews.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore the potential impact of the “Show Your Red Character Campaign,” a campus-wide character development program, on the moral development of fraternity members. This study also hopes to explore how to ensure the productivity of the Campaign and how the outcomes decided upon by the Campaign student leadership can be met. Chickering (1969) said college students moved through seven "vectors" which contribute to the formation of identity. One of these vectors, labeled developing integrity, concerned moral development. The college experience forces students to shift from a literal belief in the absoluteness of rules and norms to a more personal, relative view. Questioning the way things are and how they should be, students see the world as very complex and that context is important when judging or

explaining events (Astin, 1993; Perry, 1970). Principles are developed about what students see as not only right-wrong and good-bad, but also as fair, just, responsible, compassionate, and caring.

### **Research Questions**

Five qualities will be assessed in the fraternity members sampled in this case study:

1. Having an impact on the moral and ethical development of fraternity members by promoting the values the Campaign set out to promote.
2. Living up to what is expected by people close to you or what people generally expect from people in your role as student, brother, friend, etc.
3. Being good is important to you and means having good motives
4. Being good is important to you and means showing concern about others
5. Being good also means you keep mutual relationships by developing and growing in trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude.

### **IRB Procedures**

Prior to the commencement of this study, the investigator completed an extensive mandated training by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in the ethics of conducting research on human subjects. The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) is a Web-based instructional programmed exam focused on the protection of human subjects. It is designed to assure that the researcher will look out for the best interests of their participants. After passing the CITI exam, the investigator moved forward with the study.

Once the study was designed, the forms required for IRB approval were filled out electronically and submitted. The IRB later filed a letter of approval (Appendix A) for the investigator's study, and the sample was then obtained.

### **Participant Selection and Gaining Access**

The investigator worked with the Show Your Red Character Campaign Leadership Council at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to select participants for this study. The investigator was invited by the Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs to assist in developing the Campaign, and this research project was approved by the Campaign's director.

### **Reduction of Participants**

The Campaign's leadership council consists of resident hall assistants, traditional sorority members, and traditional fraternity members. The investigator wanted to focus the study on the traditional fraternity members serving on the Campaign's Council in order to narrow the focus of the study to successfully implement the Campaign's objectives in traditional fraternities. Because there are twenty-four traditional fraternities at this Midwestern institution, there are also twenty-four members who represent their traditional fraternity chapter on the Campaign's leadership council. These individuals were first contacted by the investigator at one of the Campaign's initial monthly meetings, and contact information was given to the investigator by the Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs office. The traditional fraternity members of the Campaign leadership council were contacted by the investigator via email and asked to participate in the interview. A date, time, and place for the face-to-face interview was then set. Of the

twenty-four traditional fraternity member Leadership Council members, only fifteen replied to the investigator's initial interview request.

### **Research Site**

The face-to-face interview was conducted in a private conference room in the Office of Greek Affairs at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This conference room provided adequate privacy in order to audio record the interview without distraction. All fifteen interviews were conducted in a five-day span.

### **Interview Questions**

The interview questions utilized for the research study consisted of ten questions with appropriate probes (Appendix B), and was administered face-to-face by the investigator. The set of interview questions was developed by the investigator through knowledge gained in the literature review process and knowledge of the Campaign's objectives. The final set of interview questions evolved after several meetings with the investigator's thesis advisor and was approved along with other required documentation by the Institutional Review Board (Appendix A).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Each participant was given a paper copy of the informed consent form to read over and sign at the time of the interview. This document confirmed consent to audio-record the interview, and reaffirmed that all information would remain confidential and would only be reported in aggregate. After each participant signed the informed consent form, the investigator then audio-recorded each interview, which consisted of questions ranging from what their traditional fraternity chapter values to how to successfully implement the Campaign in their traditional fraternity chapter.

The interview tapes were then transcribed by the investigator. Once the tapes were transcribed, the investigator emailed each transcription back to each participant, and they were given the opportunity to make corrections as they saw fit. No individual emailed back corrections. The email to the participants for their perusal was stated in such a way that they did not need to email the investigator back if they did not see a need for corrections.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis began with the investigator reading through each interview transcription several times, as qualitative analysis "...is an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data..." (Creswell, 2003, p. 190). After the investigator gained a general sense about each participant's response to all interview questions, the investigator reflected on the overarching meaning of each conversation. The investigator then went back over the transcriptions to make notes in the margins, bringing forth code words the actual participant said *in vivo* (Creswell, 2003), or a similar code word the investigator assigned to the text. These code words emerged from phrases, sentences, or entire paragraphs. The investigator then placed the code words in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in order to group codes together. These codes were then reduced as some codes overlapped in meaning. Creswell (2003) notes that it is necessary to cluster similar topics to reduce the list of code words and avoid over-coding. From the coded data themes and subthemes were identified (Table 4.1).

### **Reliability and Validity**

Although the validity of the data could have been lessened due to the fact that the investigator created the interview questions, administered the interviews, transcribed the



interviews, and analyzed the data, the investigator made a conscious effort to remain unbiased toward the participants' answers to interview questions as well as the interpretation process.

Several steps were taken to enhance the reliability and validity of the study findings. First the research's advisor oversaw the design of the study and the data collection procedures. Then participants were able to make corrections to the transcriptions in order to capture the most accurate portrayal of their reflections, perceptions, and beliefs about the Show Your Red Character Campaign. Further, the investigator triangulated the results of the study by comparing the literature to the themes which surfaced through the analyzed data. This method of validating research findings includes using "...different data sources of information [that examine] evidence from the sources and [use] it to build a coherent justification for themes" (Creswell, 2003, p. 192).

Finally, the investigator also had the entire research study externally audited at the end of the study by an experienced qualitative researcher (Appendix C). Described by Lincoln and Gruba (1985), an external auditor's "...role is similar to that of a fiscal auditor, and specific questions exist that auditors might ask (Creswell, 2003, p. 197).

The following chapter discusses these finding in greater detail through documented quotations from the transcriptions.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore the potential impact of the “Show Your Red Character Campaign,” a campus-wide character development program, on the moral development of fraternity members. This study also hopes to explore how to ensure the productivity of the Campaign and how the outcomes decided upon by the Campaign student leadership can be met. Chickering (1969) said college students moved through seven “vectors” which contribute to the formation of identity. One of these vectors, labeled developing integrity, concerned moral development. The college experience forces students to shift from a literal belief in the absoluteness of rules and norms to a more personal, relative view. Questioning the way things are and how they should be, students see the world as very complex and that context is important when judging or explaining events (Astin, 1993; Perry, 1970). Principles are developed about what students see as not only right-wrong and good-bad, but also as fair, just, responsible, compassionate, and caring.

#### **Research Questions**

Five qualities will be assessed in the fraternity members sampled in this case study:

1. Having an impact on the moral and ethical development of fraternity members by promoting the values the Campaign set out to promote.
2. Living up to what is expected by people close to you or what people generally expect from people in your role as student, brother, friend, etc.

3. Being good is important to you and means having good motives
4. Being good is important to you and means showing concern about others
5. Being good also means you keep mutual relationships by developing and growing in trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude.

### **Summary Portrayal of Participants**

Although each participant shared commonalities because of the research design, the following participant summary will help the reader have a better understanding of the collective themes and subthemes that emerged from the data analysis.

All 15 participants who communicated their reflections, perceptions, and beliefs about the Show Your Red Character Campaign were male. All fifteen participants were undergraduate students attending a public institution of higher education, 19 years of age or older, and a member of a traditional fraternity chapter who are affiliated with the Interfraternity Council through the Office of Greek Affairs.

All participants were affiliated with the Campaign in the capacity of serving on the Campaign's leadership council, which comprises representatives from every traditional fraternity, traditional sorority, and residence hall. These students were chosen by their peers or supervisors as individuals who in some capacity embrace the characteristics of the Campaign and demonstrate them regularly throughout their daily lives. These participants also have the goal of successfully implementing the Campaign into their respective fraternity chapter.

### **Overview of the Interview Themes and Subthemes**

Table 2 outlines the subthemes and themes that emerged through the 15 face-to-face interviews. The summarized information is presented in 5 major themes and 12

Table 2

*Outline of Themes and Subthemes*

- 
1. Integrating Campaign
    - a. Brother of the Week
    - b. Positive incentives
    - c. Community-wide exposure
    - d. Alumni support
  2. Communicating Campaign
    - a. Collaborating with fraternities and residence halls
    - b. What qualifies as a good deed: focusing on the ideals of the campaign
    - c. Leadership council member is influential
  3. Developing good/ethical behavior is always good
    - a. College sets foundation for life
  4. Qualities of good/ethical behavior
    - a. Altruism
    - b. Respect
    - c. Family and brotherhood
  5. Member Education
    - a. Men of principle
- 

subthemes. The following chapter supports these findings through correlating quotes documented which were transcribed from the voice-recorded interviews.

**Integrating campaign.**

***Brother of the Week.*** From the sample, all participants except for one are members of a traditional fraternity chapter that has a Brother of the Week program. The overall consensus was that the Campaign could easily be integrated into this program. Participant Paul Stanley mentioned, “We already have a member of the week thing so I guess maybe relate that to this program, mix them together. I think it would give what we have more legitimacy.” Participant Spiderman said, “We already do a member of the

week, so it would be pretty easy to integrate.” Participant John also thought that the Campaign would only help their Brother of Week program be more influential.

We have a member of the week, so it’s kind of the same thing where we acknowledge something. But it’s kind of just a title they get for something nice they did, so it’s showing character in some way. So finding someone in each fraternity who can record this and let you know what they did, why they did it, which would help [the Campaign] out.

Participant John continued, “Every week we have member of the week. Where it’s told who’s done what and people share how people have exemplified those values.”

Participant Doug Williams reiterated Participant John’s remarks:

We could do more because sometimes people forget. You learn in your pledge semester, but then you can forget. We could do more because sometimes we forget what we stand by. Being more active in not only continuing the education with new members but active members as well. Incorporating the Campaign into member of the week could be huge.

Participant Paul Stanley also stated, “I guess we have the member of the week, which is given to a brother who goes above and beyond his responsibilities as a brother—taking another brother out to dinner, or giving a brother a ride.” These fraternity members all had mentioned that they have a typical Brother of the Week program, but that each program tends to lack true “legitimacy.” The Campaign would provide a more concrete system that would be easily adopted by each fraternity.

***Positive incentives.*** Many of the participants identified a positive incentive that encouraged their members to go out of their way to serve their fraternity brothers.

Participant Cleveland said,

I would say through my house most of the things that work really well are positive incentives. For example, if you participate in someone’s philanthropy this is what will happen for you. Positive incentives have been a really big thing in my house, specifically. So, like, if you give any alternative if you’re going to do this then you will give something that

would benefit us. I have seen how this works well with other chapters as well.

The fraternities who have a successful Brother of the Week program have identified various ways to reward their members. Participant Jim's fraternity "...reserves a parking spot for that person for the week, and then they get thrown into the name pool of each brother of the week for that semester, and whoever is drawn from that pool wins something—it could be a TV or something significant."

*Community-wide exposure.* The Brother of the Week program for many of the traditional fraternity chapters is a program that seems to be disorganized and inconsistent. Because positive accountability would be placed on the traditional fraternity from the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs office to recognize good behavior, chapters would have to be more intentional and thoughtful when considering their Brother of the Week each week. Brother of the Week is someone who is only noticed and recognized within each chapter, respectively. These particular students are not recognized beyond their local chapter. The Campaign would provide the opportunity for these students to not only be recognized in their respective chapters but also campus-wide. Participant Doug Williams noted:

I think it would help recognize those things because sometimes they go unnoticed, which is good because sometimes you should do those things out of the good of your heart. I think that people would notice them then and provide a good example and that would then be a good option of things you could do.

Participant Nay-sayer said that the Campaign would be "another tool that the philanthropy chair would have in getting members civically engaged in the community and on campus, among other things." Many good deeds go unrecognized and the

Campaign would provide that extra nudging so that people would intentionally observe and recognize good behavior.

All participants understood the fact that people should conduct themselves in a manner that is always respectful, always looking to serve those around them. The participants demonstrated a level of maturity and development in that they have noticed that helping those around them not only improves their ethical/moral behavior as they practice it, but it also improves the environment and those around them. Good deeds, however, should be acknowledged more than they are. Participant Joe confirmed this by stating,

A lot of things go unrecognized so that might help because people do things and a lot of times we just pass it off because they always do those things so that this could be a tool to recognize above and beyond behavior. I think highlighting those things that do extraordinary things is important.

The Campaign would provide a consistent system where the individual serving as their chapter representative on the Council Leadership team would be always aware of others practicing good behavior. Having this as a specific job responsibility for someone in each fraternity would lessen the amount of fraternity members who are doing good deeds and not being recognized for them. Participant Nick stated,

Yeah, I think that being involved in the Greek system those are the people you are around the most, so you don't necessarily always see things or notice good things. But if you have a couple of people actually taking notice and give people credit for things people actually do cause they're looking out for it.

***Alumni support.*** Participants also recognized the importance of the Campaign being fully integrated into their chapter by ensuring alumni and executive support. The active members in the chapter uphold the ideals of the chapter, and their actions reflect upon those members who have long graduated.

“We hold up our alumni traditions through personal development plans. We strive to achieve our very best every day whether it’s GPA, intramurals, or helping people who walk by our house,” stated Participant Prescott Cook. He continued,

it would come down to the president and them wanting to implement [the Campaign] and continue it. And a lot of it has to do with alumni because I know our fraternity is big on what our alumni thinks of us. So, making sure that it is something that alumni of the college would agree with and wouldn’t think of it as simply a joke.

**Communicating campaign.** The success of the Campaign is very dependent on how well its objectives are communicated to every traditional fraternity chapter through the Campaign Council. The first step that must be taken, according the Participant Ben, is to “... get the name, the image out there so that people know what you’re doing.” Obviously, this must be done among the traditional fraternity chapters so that all are aware and publicizing and marketing should also take place on a campus-wide scale. Participant Jim agreed with this when he stated, “I think, first of all, publicizing it, making it known. There might be a few people who know about it, but there is probably a very small percentage of our house that knows about it.” Once the Campaign is known campus-wide, the recognition will have greater meaning. Participant John had similar thoughts:

Maybe just materials so that people know what it is, so just publicity so that people know what it is. It’s one thing to be like “oh, he was the winner of that award” but if people don’t know what that is then it’s not a big deal. So if it was more well-known then I think that people would actually be striving to win it.

A strong system must be in place in order for the Campaign to be effective in being implemented into each fraternity. Identifying a reporting system is crucial in



communicating who is recognized and why that individual was recognized. Participant Texas stated that having "...more details on how the entire process will actually work...[and] how do we recognize these people and how often?" Participant Sunshine also had similar sentiments:

For me, I would need a good outline of what the program is about, what are the requirements, what are we looking for, all the detail. We have an academic person of the week that we nominate, so we can integrate this into that as character-ship.

Word of mouth will be a powerful tool to effectively communicate the Campaign.

Participant Ben stated,

As far as me personally, I don't know. Just things like this, obviously, but word of mouth in my opinion is the most powerful thing. If there is a specific person then get in contact with that person and establish some rapport and kind of make them your friend, your buddy so that they can help you out and then it spreads by word of mouth. Just a quick word of mouth.

After being asked how the Campaign could identify someone who would be effective in implementing the Campaign into his fraternity, Participant Ben said,

Find those guys who are the 5 or 10 percent who really just want to step ahead, someone who isn't quite on exec yet and jump on him and really build him up. Give them a job and more likely than not they'll go with it. I don't know how you find that guy, but there are always those younger guys who are looking for jobs like that who would just run with it. So, once you get that individual who gets a sense of responsibility for a cause he will do it on his own.

Spreading the Campaign through word of mouth will be crucial and can be done at chapter meetings, which happen every Monday evening. "Even saying a little bit at a Monday night meeting wouldn't hurt. I think it wouldn't be that hard to incorporate the Campaign into what we already do on a weekly basis to acknowledge outstanding members," stated Participant Levi. Participant Jude stated,

I suppose making sure that there's easy access to the communication with whoever is heading up this Campaign in the VSCA office. If there are set guidelines to submitting reports which indicate who did a good work, I would need to know that formality.

***Collaboration with fraternities and residence halls.*** In order to provide a comprehensive best-practices list of examples of implementing the Campaign and examples of what constitutes a good deed, having positive communication with other traditional fraternities and residence halls that are being successful in the Campaign will be an important component. Participant Doug Williams said, "Informing me of what other houses/organizations are doing so that we can all collaborate on our ideas." Participant Spiderman also said similar: "Giving examples of other things that have been done—like what to look out for. Then, encouraging them to watch for those things."

***What qualifies as a good deed: focusing on ideals of campaign.*** The Campaign is comprised of building blocks of integrity that were identified by undergraduate students. The character traits of integrity are defined as: caring, citizenship, commitment, dependability, open-mindedness and respect. This list of characteristics is not all-inclusive because good behavior utilizes numerous and incalculable good ethical/moral behavior. With this in mind, it is necessary to provide examples of good behavior in order to see what constitutes good behavior. Focusing on the initial list of characteristics would be a starting point for the Campaign. Participant Paul Stanley said,

I think to best equip the person to carry it back would just be to really focus on the ideals of the Campaign. To have something to present to their fraternity. That leader needs to buy into the Campaign and to know more about it.

These examples would neither limit nor put boundaries on the kinds of good behavior recognized by the Campaign. Participant Nay-sayer stressed having a firm understanding

of the Campaign and what is a good behavior: “[Fraternities] would need a good understanding of the project in order to give them more insight into implementing it and tell people how it’s going to be implemented, and what constitutes being rewarded and put up for the Campaign.” Participant Prescott Cook reiterated the importance of providing examples of ways to practice good behavior:

Layout ways that you could be a better person. For me, for instance, if someone told me things in the community that maybe needed more help then that would help me because I think of myself as a good person and I try to help people whenever I can. But sometimes you don’t hear about opportunities to help people before it’s too late. I mean, so, if [the Vice Chancellor] was out there telling a person from each house about a certain event. Maybe if there is a time when someone was telling everyone about everything that is going on. Having resources where they are shared so that we can volunteer.

***Leadership council member is influential.*** All Campaign leadership council members are chosen by their peers, co-workers, and/or supervisors as having demonstrated positive moral/ethical behavior. Because of the positive example they show to their peers and those whom they work with, they were chosen to be the liaison between the Campaign council leadership team and their respective fraternities.

Participant Cleveland noted that this member,

whoever the chapter appoints, this should be someone who is influential and can guide people, you know what I mean. Not someone who is kind of laid back and doesn’t have a voice. I have always been described as boisterous and not very shy to say what’s on my mind. So I think you need someone who is kind of like that who can convey what you’re trying to get across.

**Developing good/ethical behavior is always good.** All participants agreed that developing good/ethical behavior is important for them at this time in their life; furthermore, they all mentioned that it is always important, and most

even noted that it has been important for them their entire life. Participant Paul Stanley provided this thought:

Good, ethical behavior is very important. It goes back to what your reputation is and you're preparing to get a job and if you don't have those types of behaviors it's going to be that much harder. You want to be a well-respected member of your community and if you can start here a little bit smaller than it should carry over to a much bigger, broader community later on.

*College sets foundation for life.* Participant Nick stated, "...this is the time when we're getting out on our own and leaving our parents behind and getting the rest of our lives set up. This is a pretty impressionable time." Some participants stated that the college-years, specifically, are important for this development. Participant John said, "Yeah, I mean, this is when you decide the man you are going to be." Participant Ben also confirmed this:

In the past three years I have grown more in my character and my values than in any other time in my life. As a child I did what my parents did. In high school you are in such a peer group, and you have there here too in college, but you're just so easily influenced in high school that it's kinda like I'll stand up for what I believe instead of just becoming one of the pack and trying to "be cool." Now, I'll take time to step aside and say "I don't think this is right" or "this is important to me because..."

Some participants mentioned that cultivating good/ethical behavior can be a challenge during the college-years. Participant Spiderman stated, "...especially in college when people change and it's hard to follow your morals." College students have the freedom to make decisions without parental influence or guidance, which can make it easy to ignore the development of good/ethical behavior. Jim stated,

I think college is a time when it's easy not to. You have pretty little guidance, you could say, for most kids it's the first time they've been away from home. What you do with your day is really up to you—how you spend your day, even if you want to go to class. The people who do

spend the time and work towards good morals and a hard work ethic are definitely people who are more successful.

College is the time when "...you decide the ethics you want and you surround yourself with the kind of people who will help you achieve that or break you down and make you worse than you could be," stated Participant John.

### **Qualities of good/ethical behavior.**

*Altruism.* The participants used altruism as a positive characteristic of good/ethical behavior. Participant Spiderman summarized this quality by stating, "I guess treating the whole as more important than yourself. Doing for others what you would want them to do for you. Just being a good example." "Just being nice to everyone, you know. Whether it's just saying hi or helping the old lady cross the street. Doing whatever you can to spend a little of your time and effort helping someone else," said Participant Jim. Participant Paul Stanley described that altruism should be practiced on a day-to-day basis:

Just day to day going to class, being respectful, reaching out to people who are in my class who look like they need help, or someone that I can get help from either through studying or friendship to make that family, as I said before. Just walking down the street with a smile on my face, which could change someone's day.

Altruism is surely an important component of this Campaign. All qualities rest upon the idea that doing good deeds should come from within, and recognition of good behavior should never be expected. Participant Doug Williams agreed, "I think it would help recognize those things because sometimes they go unnoticed, which is good because sometimes you should do those things out of the good of your heart."

*Respect.* The quality of showing respect was mentioned numerous times throughout the interviews and is also a quality that identifies closely with demonstrating

good/ethical behavior. Participant Paul Stanley said of respect, “We value respect, and respect of women, and dignity of all humans. Every person is a person that needs to be respected. We try to see ourselves in their shoes.” Participant Spiderman included respect in the list of qualities his fraternity abides in: honesty, integrity, responsibility, *respect*, and citizenship. Participant Jude gave a very honest example of showing respect to others outside of his fraternity/campus community.

I would say openness and caring for all people. What our big thing is helping people with special needs whether it be physical or mental disabilities. What we do is ensure that everyone is cared for and that these people should not be looked down on in society and that they have much to contribute to society. To lift up the values of Christian manhood, or the values of care and love for other people, specifically, within the fraternity, that you are only able to fully move forward if you’re also helping your fellow brother move forward with his life.

***Family and brotherhood.*** Developing brotherhood was an important component of the interviewees responses. The participants extended their definition of family to the fellow members in their chapter. Participant Doug Williams said of family and brotherhood:

I demonstrate family by going out of my way to continue to develop relationships with them, and even promoting brotherhood here. Not just in my family of four because that is pretty limited. But everywhere I go trying to make people feel included.

Participant Prescott Cook thought highly of family as a priority in his life and credits what he has accomplished to the sacrifices made and energy given by this family:

I care for my family. If they need something and they don’t necessarily ask for it, but I know they need it I will give it to them. I want to make sure that my family is better off than me. I know that without them I wouldn’t be as well off now. Make them feel better whether it’s giving them money, giving them a hug whenever they need it, or sending them that text saying I love you when they’re going through a tough time, it all helps.

For many of the participants, family and brotherhood was about respecting your brothers enough to challenge them to be upstanding men in their fraternity. Respect must be earned first in order to challenge your fellow brother. “Respect is a huge thing. I know that it is something you have to earn. If someone has my respect it goes a long way or if I have their respect that’s something I really value,” said Participant Paul Stanley. If a fellow fraternity brother was not living up to the expectations of their chapter, and respect for that individual has been earned, then it would be appropriate to listen to the opinions of your brother and heed the admonishment. This idea, to the participants, was supporting their fraternity brother no matter what the difference was between them. The participants used respect within the confines of brotherly friendship. Participant John gave this example:

So basically it’s like friendship—being a good brother, looking out for friends, and holding them accountable. That’s a big thing. Cause a lot of people think that when you’re friends with someone “that’s just who they are” but you can’t let them, if it’s a bad behavior, you can’t let them keep doing that. You have to step in and try to help them out.

Before actions can be taken to this degree with a fraternity, brotherhood must be fostered, which is the next quality of good/ethical behavior. Participant Nick mentioned that fraternity members

occasionally make a mistake, so we will approach them and talk to them about it and then we’d much rather them be honest and admit that they missed up. It’s easier to deal with it then them trying to hide it and having extra ramifications from that.

Participant Texas stated that he has “noticed upperclassman encouraging other members to make better decisions in order to better you as a man.” Participant Spiderman stated,

We are big on keeping each other accountable. If someone does something negative then usually they get called out for it. Usually the

people just approach them and tell them to stop. In extreme cases, they can be brought up during chapter meeting or in front of the judicial board.

### **Member education.**

*Men of principle.* Every traditional fraternity takes all new members through a new member education process, which teaches the members about being men of principle, according to their fraternity's standards. Doug Williams summarized this process:

When a member comes into the fraternity, during your pledge semester you learn about these core values and the men of principle initiative will take. So you learn from the start what this fraternity is and what it means to be in a fraternity, how to treat others. The biggest thing is off the get-go this is how you are supposed to act. Then we take tests on it too!

Traditional fraternities are founded on principles that directly affect the development of good/ethical behavior. Participant Jude stated,

I think there probably is [a value-based foundation] for every Greek organization. That value is when we're here in this place of learning to foster academic growth but it's always an opportunity to take advantage of growing much further as a man and so we strive to be men of class when we're talking about our leadership, service, academics, sportsmanship.

Participant John mentioned that being a man of principle is also contained within their chapter motto:

The mottos we have also—becoming the best version of ourselves. We try to keep values in the forefront of our minds, do prayers, and a judicial board in case something does go wrong. I'd really like to see the Campaign happen. Something like this will make this campus as a whole you get some kind of recognition for doing the right thing—gives a little more motivation to doing the right thing.

Participant Prescott Cook gave examples of practicing their fraternity's values by philanthropy work and community service, as well as upholding high academic standards and sportsmanship. Participant Jude also gives very good examples of demonstrating



being men of principle by ensuring that their fraternity's rituals are never degrading to members. He continued by stating, "...it's partaking in these opportunities that we set up through the chapter. What I've held more important recently is spreading what I've learned and what my fraternity has instilled in me and taking it to other organizations—even in my workplace." Participant Ben's example of practicing being men of principle within his fraternity:

We really try to do things or activities that bring us together as friends and then remind people in that environment; instead of just simply doing so at meetings. We use brotherhood events to be authentic with other men, so we can get people on an individual basis. Before I can confront anyone else about their faults, I have to be doing that first to myself. I'm going to be looking at myself in the mirror before I call anyone else out. I try to lead by example and hope the guys look at me and say "hopefully I can do something that he's doing; hopefully he can help me out."

Promoting these values and principles in fraternities is very important for these participants and they find various occasions within the events and meetings held by their fraternity to educate their members. Participant Cleveland stated,

We perpetuate it all the time whether it be in chapter meetings, even before philanthropy and intramurals. For example, sportsmanship, being that person, so you'll be known if you act out negatively or you act out positively. So, we've definitely tried to promote this. A lot of times between fraternity intramurals there are usually heated debates going on, so we usually try to say even if someone is trying to talk to you ignore it and tell them they had a nice game and shake their hand—just try to be a gentleman about it. Almost to the fact that it means more because when they're trying to get you angry, it doesn't affect you at all.

The participants all stated that their actions are not only a reflection of who they are as a man or a reflection of their chapter, but also that their actions are a reflection upon their national organization. Participant Paul Stanley stressed, "You are not only representing yourself, but something larger than yourself."

Table 3

*Summary of Themes and Subthemes*

Theme/Subtheme	Description
<b>Integrating Campaign</b>	
Brother of the Week	Existing program that acknowledges a brother who has gone above and beyond their regular duties
Positive Incentives	Encouragement for members to go out of their way to serve their fraternity brothers.
Community-wide Exposure	Campaign would provide positive accountability to the Brother of the Week and give recognition beyond their respective chapters.
Alumni Support	Active fraternity members' actions reflect their entire chapter, including alums of the fraternity.
<b>Communicating Campaign</b>	
Collaborating with Fraternities and Residence Halls	Learning best practices to implement Campaign and learning examples of what constitutes a good deed.
What Qualifies as a Good Deed: Focusing on the Ideals of the Campaign	The six building blocks of integrity is not an all-inclusive list but provide clarity to specific ways to identify someone upholding the ideals of the university.
Leadership Council Member is Influential	Those serving on the council are the best in showing to others the ideals of the Campaign because they have actively pursued good behavior outside of the Campaign.
<b>Developing Good/Ethical Behavior is Always Good</b>	
College Sets Foundation for Life	College is the time to develop good habits without parental guidance and support and to decide what is important to you.
<b>Qualities of Good/Ethical Behavior</b>	
Altruism	Treating the whole as more important than yourself.
Respect	Openness and caring for all people.
Family and Brotherhood	A support system that challenges and encourages one to succeed.
<b>Member Education</b>	
Men of principle	Becoming the very best version of ourselves.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

The overall discussion in the concluding chapter was based on the investigator's results from the analyzed data and the linkage between these finds and the literature review. The investigator re-examined the fundamental research questions, which guided the entire research study, against the five themes and twelve subthemes.

#### Comparison of Literature

Colleges and universities have observed over the past two decades that their students attach less and less importance to helping others and place more importance on gaining financial security. Alexander Astin's *What Matters in College? Four Critical Years Revisited* was a study that focused primarily on student outcomes and how they are affected by college environments. Under "personal development" outcomes, Astin included a measure called "cultural awareness" (p. 2). This reflected the students' self-estimates of how much their undergraduate experience had "contributed to their cultural awareness and acceptance of different races or cultures" (p. 2).

All participants agreed that developing good/ethical behavior is important for them at this time in their life and that fostering an awareness of wanting to serve others was very important. This, in turn, means that students would need to know how to serve those in their environment who may be very different from themselves. Furthermore, the participants all mentioned that it is essential in their development as individuals to serve others, and most even noted that it has been important and will continue to be important throughout their lives. Some participants stated that the college-years, specifically, are

important for this development because they are separated from their guardians and must choose to do so on their own.

Chickering's seven vectors present a comprehensive picture of psychosocial development during the college years. In his seventh vector, developing integrity, this vector includes "three sequential but overlapping stages:" humanizing values, personalizing values, and developing congruence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 51). Over the course of the development of congruence, "values and actions become congruent and authentic as self-interest is balanced by a sense of social responsibility" (p. 51).

The participants demonstrated an authentic desire to serve their fraternity brothers, their campus, and the larger community. Through this they saw the importance of a sense of social responsibility. The participants used altruism and provided many examples of this characteristic to identify ways they have demonstrated good/ethical behavior. The participants understood the importance of treating others as they would like to be treated even to the extent of sacrificing some good for themselves for the good of another. Altruism is surely an important component of this Campaign. All qualities rest upon the idea that doing good deeds should come from within, and recognition of good behavior should never be expected. The Brother of the Week activity held by most of the fraternities only recognizes individuals on a fraternity-basis. Once these individuals and their good deeds are reported to the Campaign leadership council these individuals would be recognized campus-wide, sometimes even community-wide.

Early (1998) examined how Greek students and Greek-letter organizations influence ethical and moral development. She argued that "Greek letter organizations can

be ideal settings for examining the moral implications of behavior” (p. 40). Early argued that the implementation of service projects for Greek members had a positive effect on their moral development, as Greek students stated they learned to appreciate how their actions affect others. With incidents of hazing and community displeasure, Greek letter organizations must react to their moral dilemma, and Greek students should gain experience in discussing ethical and moral behavior, as Early argued that “students must understand how to behave in ways consistent with principles of truth, justice, honor, respect, integrity, and community” (p. 44), all cornerstones of Greek letter creeds and mottos.

The participants demonstrated their ability to examine what about their experience and involvement in the Greek community contributed to their moral/ethical development. Numerous examples were given that gave the participants direct experiences of this hands-on learning and shows how membership in the Greek community can positively affect moral/ethical development. Traditional fraternities are founded on principles that directly affect the development of good/ethical behavior.

### **Linking Themes to Purpose and Research Questions**

After careful examination of the literature and analysis of the data provided by participants’ face-to-face interviews, the investigator was able to either link the participants’ responses to an individual theory which answer the research purpose statement and the following four qualities being assessed in this research with subsequent relational themes.

1. Having an impact on the moral and ethical development of fraternity members by promoting the values the Campaign set out to promote.

Research question one was answered by themes one and two: Integrating Campaign and Communicating Campaign

2. Living up to what is expected by people close to you or what people generally expect from people in your role as student, brother, sister, friend, son, daughter, etc.

Research question 2 was answered by themes three, four, and five:

Developing good/ethical behavior is always good, Qualities of good/ethical behavior, and Member education.

3. Being good is important to you and means having good motives.

Research question 3 was answered by themes three, four, and five:

Developing good/ethical behavior is always good, Qualities of good/ethical behavior, and Member education.

4. Being good is important to you and means showing concern about others

Research question 4 was answered by themes three, four, and five:

Developing good/ethical behavior is always good, Qualities of good/ethical behavior, and Member education.

5. Being good also means you keep mutual relationships by developing and growing in trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude.

Research question 5 was answered by themes three, four, and five: Developing good/ethical behavior is always good, Qualities of good/ethical behavior, and Member education.

## Summary

The investigator came to the following conclusions for the purpose statement and four research questions posed in this research study.

The results for the purpose statement for this study were consistent among all of the participants. The themes suggested that the most efficient and productive way of implementing the Campaign into traditional fraternities is to integrate the Campaign into an already existing system within the fraternity. A system that exists in most fraternities is the Brother of the Week; no matter how organized or consistent this system is within each respective fraternity, the Campaign would provide that organization and consistency by giving the necessary tools to communicate the objectives of the Campaign and how to fulfill those objectives. In order to increase the involvement and transparency of the Campaign, positive incentives should reinforce what the Campaign is trying to accomplish. The positive incentives will recognize those individuals who do good deeds not only within each fraternity chapter but also campus-wide. In order for members of each fraternity to identify what constitutes a good deed, the Campaign should promote collaboration between each fraternity so that best practices may be shared, as well as examples of good behavior. Alongside this collaboration, the Campaign should provide additional resources to fraternities to practice good deeds and provide clear examples of good behavior so that fraternity members can easily identify when such deeds are done. Using the six initial building blocks of integrity, which were identified by the Campaign, will assist in focusing on specific deeds that fit the description of those qualities. Throughout the Campaign additional characteristics may be added or exchanged with the current characteristics. The members who serve on the Campaign Council should be

individuals who exhibit the behavior the Campaign is seeking to promote. This influence in itself will be an example for fraternities.

The results for the four research questions were consistent with the literature of Astin, Chickering, and Early. Astin (1993) identified components of social activism reflected how much students “valued such things as participation in community action programs, helping others, and influencing the political structure” (p. 2). Both leadership and social activism were measured longitudinally, first at the time of freshman entry and again four years later (p. 2). All participants agreed that developing good/ethical behavior is important for them at this time in their life and that fostering an awareness of wanting to serve others was very important; furthermore, they all mentioned that it is essential, and most even noted that it has been important for them their entire life. Developing integrity is the seventh of the seven vectors in Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development, and this vector includes “three sequential but overlapping stages:” humanizing values, personalizing values, and developing congruence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 51). Over the course of the development of congruence, “values and actions become congruent and authentic as self-interest is balanced by a sense of social responsibility” (p. 51).

The participants demonstrated an authentic desire to serve their fraternity brothers, their campus, and the larger community. Through this they saw the important of a sense of social responsibility. The participants used altruism and provided many examples of altruism to identify ways they have demonstrated good/ethical behavior. Participant Spiderman summarized this quality by stating, “I guess treating the whole the more important than yourself. Doing for others what you would want them to do for you.



Just being a good example.” “Just being nice to everyone, you know. Whether it’s just saying hi or helping the old lady cross the street. Doing whatever you can to spend a little of your time and effort helping someone else,” said Participant Jim. Early (1998) examined how Greek students and Greek-letter organizations influence ethical and moral development. She argued that “Greek letter organizations can be ideal settings for examining the moral implications of behavior” (p. 40). Early argued that the implementation of service projects for Greek members had a positive effect on their moral development, as Greek students stated they learned to appreciate how their actions affect others. With incidents of hazing and community displeasure, Greek letter organizations must react to their moral dilemma, and Greek students should gain experience in discussing ethical and moral behavior, as Early argued that “students must understand how to behave in ways consistent with principles of truth, justice, honor, respect, integrity, and community” (p. 44), all cornerstones of Greek letter creeds and mottos.

The participants demonstrated their ability to examine what about their experience and involvement in the Greek community contributed to their moral/ethical development. Numerous examples were given that gave them direct experiences of this hands-on learning and shows how membership in the Greek community can positively affect moral/ethical development. Traditional fraternities are founded on principles that directly affect the development of good/ethical behavior.

### **Recommendations**

Research of traditional Greek fraternities suggests that fraternity members must make an authentic examination of the principles set before them upon membership into

their respective chapter. The Campaign is a tool that will encourage traditional fraternity members to consistently evaluate members of their fraternity in terms of their moral and ethical development through the identification of practicing good behavior in their environment. Specific studies are described within the last section of chapter 5. As more research surfaces on this topic, the following implications may stay the same for higher education as well as the undergraduate traditional fraternity students it serves, or it may shape the suggestions into a completely new form.

### **Implications**

**Higher education.** The implications for higher education seemed to be simply expressed from the investigator's participants. Institutions are charged from the first contact with their students to ensure their success at their institution. This education each student receives, whether it is within or outside of the classroom, should be consistent with the mission of the institution. That is, preparing students to graduate and be successful in their respective field of study and being responsible, active citizens in society. All of the participants understood that time in college to learn how to be an upstanding moral and ethical individual is crucial to their success beyond their undergraduate experience; this is the opportunity to be challenged in deciding the type of man they will be for the rest of their life. Although participants specified higher education as an important time to accomplish this, they also understood that their moral and ethical development is a lifelong learning experience.

**Students.** The suggestions for students included taking advantage of the time they have as a member within their fraternity, as well as an undergraduate student, to

fully engage in their environment in order to develop the skills necessary to be a moral/ethical person.

### **Further Research**

To expand upon the investigator's research, the following changes to the research or new studies would be beneficial to continue to have better understanding of the current literature as well as specific programs intended to promote the moral and ethical development of college students, specifically traditional fraternity members.

- Sample individuals who are not in a traditional fraternity, such as students who live in a residence hall or are members of a traditional sorority.
- Sample individuals who have since graduated and been in the working environment for 2 – 5 years to see if they have been able to maintain an active and intentional development of their morals and ethics.
- Identify other programs that promote the moral and ethical development of college students, specifically traditional fraternity members, in order to learn best practices of implementing such a system.

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**Appendix A**

**IRB Documents**





March 7, 2012

Christopher Devlin  
Department of Educational Administration  
1448 Hilltop Rd Lincoln, NE 68521

James Griesen  
Department of Educational Administration  
125 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20120312238 EX

Project ID: 12238

Project Title: Character Campaign: Exploring a Common Morality at a Post-Secondary Institution

Dear Christopher:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 03/07/2012.

1. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (file with -Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use this form to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- \* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- \* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- \* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- \* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- \* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

<https://nugrant.unl.edu/nugrant/orr/irb/viewPrintedMessage.php?ID=134776>

4/19/2012

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP  
for the IRB





COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Student,

You have been randomly selected to participate in a research study to help the University of Nebraska-Lincoln better understand how to better programmatically approach the Show Your Red Character Campaign and how to make the program sustainable beyond its first year at the University. The results of this research are important because they will help the Campaign and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln learn how to better development a program that promotes good, ethical behavior on this campus.

Participation in this survey is voluntary. However, because we are only inviting a small, random sample of UNL students to complete this survey, your responses are critical to make the results for our campus as accurate and meaningful as possible. The interview takes approximately 45-60 minutes to complete.

Below is information outlining this study and information that you may be interested in regarding the research process being conducted.

***Identification of Project:***

Show Your Red Character Campaign: Exploring a Common Morality at a Post-Secondary Institution

***Purpose of the Research:***

The purpose of this study is to describe the potential impact on Greek life of the "Show Your Red Character Campaign," a campus-wide character development program, on the moral development of fraternity and sorority members. This study also hopes to ensure the productivity of the Campaign and that the outcomes decided upon by the Campaign student leadership are met. Chickering (1969) said college students moved through seven "vectors" which contribute to the formation of identity. One of these vectors, labeled developing integrity, concerned moral development. The college experience forces students to shift from a literal belief in the absoluteness of rules and norms to a more personal, relative view. Questioning the way things are and how they should be, students see the world as very complex and that context is important when judging or explaining events (Astin, 1993; Perry, 1970). Principles are developed about what students see as not only right-wrong and good-bad, but also as fair, just, responsible, compassionate, and caring.

**Procedures:**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The interview consists of 10 open-ended questions and will be audio-taped. The results of this survey will be used solely for my graduate thesis research project and all personal information will be kept confidential in a private, quiet room in the Canfield Director of Student Affairs' office.

**Known Risks or Discomforts:**

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research study.

**Benefits:**

The benefits of participating in this study are only to provide the researchers and institution with information about the sustainability of the Show Your Red Character Campaign. The participants will receive no tangible benefits or experience any risks.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The primary researcher will not have contact with personal student information. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in one of the primary researcher's offices. The data will only be seen by the primary researcher during the study and will be kept 18 months following the conclusion of the study.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:**

If you have any questions, you make contact with the investigator at 970-597-0614. If you wish to speak with someone else, you may contact the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965

**Freedom to Withdraw:**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the primary researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

**Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:**

By signing the form, you are indicating that you agree to participate in this research. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

**Name and Email of investigators:**

Chris L. Devlin, UNL Graduate Student, Primary Researcher Email: cdevlin2@unlnotes.unl.edu  
Dr. James V. Griesen, Professor of Educational Administration, Secondary Investigator Email: jgriesen1@unl.edu

I agree to participate in the research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Instructions and Questions**

## **Instructions**

Introductions will take place as well as a brief description of the study. “Hello, my name is Chris Devlin, a Master’s student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and I am pursuing a Master of Arts in Educational Administration with a specialization in Student Affairs. I am interested in evaluating the Show Your Red Character Campaign in order to make it sustainable beyond its first year, as well as understanding the importance your fraternity places on your moral and ethical development. The questions will be focused strictly on the Campaign and how to make it programmatically possible in your fraternity. This will be an audio-recorded interview lasting approximately 45 minutes, and whatever information you provide to me will remain strictly confidential. Do I have your permission to audio-tape our interview?” (also explained in informed consent for participant signed)

*Once permission is received begin interview questions.*

## **Interview Questions (with probes)**

1. In your perspective, what would you recommend to make this campaign more productive and effective in your fraternity?
2. How can the campaign equip you as a Show Your Red Character Campaign student leader to be effective in implementing the Campaign’s objectives in your fraternity?
3. Please review all the qualities that the Campaign is prescribing to promote. Can the Campaign help foster these qualities in your fraternity? Why or why not?
4. Do you feel that developing good, ethical behavior is important for you at this time in your life?
5. Do you understand what the Show Your Red Character Campaign is trying to accomplish?
6. What do you value?
7. How do you demonstrate these values?
8. What does your fraternity value in terms of ethical behavior?
9. How do you ensure that your members are aware of these things your fraternity values?
10. Is there an ethical/value-based foundation to your fraternity? Please give an example.

**Appendix C**

**Auditor's Statement**

### Audit Attestation

Chris Devlin requested that I complete a methodological audit of his qualitative thesis entitled “A Character Campaign: Exploring a Common Morality in Fraternity Life at a Post-secondary Institution.” The audit was conducted in April of 2012. The purpose of the audit was to determine the extent to which the results of the study are trustworthy.

The audit was based on materials that Chris provided for review. These materials provided evidence for the research process and were the basis for determining the extent to which the thesis findings were supported by the data. The following materials were provided primarily via email:

- IRB protocol submission
- Transcriptions of all fifteen participants, each labeled with the corresponding participant number
- Completed version of thesis chapters one through five, references and appendices

### Audit Procedure

The audit consisted of the following steps:

1. Receipt of requested files as noted above
2. Review of IRB protocol submission
3. Review of random sample of transcriptions
4. Read final version of complete thesis.
5. Write and submit the signed attestation to the researcher.

The below information details the auditor procedure and findings.

#### Review of proposal

The IRB protocol submission was reviewed to gain an understanding of the original intention of the study and to later compare against the actual methods used in the study. The research was conducted as described in the protocol submission.

#### Raw data

Transcriptions. The auditor reviewed files containing transcriptions from the recorded interviews of all six participants. The transcriptions noted the interactions between the researcher and the participants. The auditor randomly selected five of the fifteen transcriptions and independently noted codes and emerging themes on a separate document while reading each transcription.



### Identification of Themes

The researcher's identified themes were compared to the coding by the auditor. The themes were consistent.

### Thesis Manuscript

The thesis manuscript was reviewed to ensure that each chapter consistently noted the purpose of the study, that the methodology was consistent with the informed consent, and that the findings were supported by literature and participant statements. The manuscript was well supported by documentation and followed consistent processes.

### Conclusion

Having reviewed the materials outlined in this audit, I submit the following conclusions regarding the process that was used and the product that was produced:

**Process.** It is the auditor's opinion that the process of the study was consistent with accepted qualitative research practices. The researcher fully described his process, noted study limitations, and established a basis of understanding allowing others to replicate this study. The focus of the student remained consistent with the proposed focus. The stated purpose and major questions remained consistent.

**Product.** It is the auditor's assessment that the trustworthiness of the study can be established. The findings are supported by the data. The researcher carefully designed the study and employed several verification strategies (member checking, clarification of researcher bias, and external review). The researcher provided a background of each of the participants and a context as to their selection and involvement in this study. After recoding the transcript, I concluded there is support from the data for the themes presented.

Attested to by Carrie Petr this 20<sup>th</sup> day of April 2012

Carrie Petr, Ph.D.  
Director, Hansen Leadership Program, Doane College