

Japanese Students in Fraternities and Sororities: A way to reduce cognitive dissonance and enrich the study abroad experience

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Abstract

The issue of whether fraternities and sororities have a positive impact on language learning and the study abroad experience of Japanese students is explored using qualitative data. Six students who were active fraternity or sorority members at an American university were interviewed individually. They were asked to elaborate on their motivation for joining Greek letter organizations, their thoughts about improvement in language learning, adjustments issues, and other advantages and disadvantages of being part of fraternity or sorority. Interview results indicate that Greek life had a positive impact on the participants' overall study abroad experience and certain aspects of their English skills. In addition to English skills, Greek experiences seem to have improved their communicative confidence, which enabled some respondents to hold various leadership positions. Furthermore, contrary to popular perception, often negatively viewed elements of Greek organizations such as costs and hazing did not hinder the respondents from enjoying a unique American campus experience. Studying abroad can be a very dissonant and stressful experience, yet the respondents actively sought to reduce stress and adjust to the new environment by joining Greek letter organizations. Fraternity and Sorority, in turn, provided the respondents with sufficient support system needed to help them to take full advantage of cross-cultural college experience.

Key terms: study abroad, Japanese, fraternity, sorority, language learning, communicative confidence, cognition

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

For many college educators and administrators in the field of international education, study abroad is one of the primary points of focus, as it helps students develop not only their basic linguistic skills but also pragmatic competence to convey their intention appropriately and to interpret another's intention, explicitly or implicitly stated, in a communicative situation (Thomas, 1995, Taguchi, 2008). As a former student affairs officer and currently an academic English instructor, this author, having studied abroad himself, is concerned about how best to assist students in gaining successful academic college experiences abroad.

In order to maximize students' language acquisition and cognitive development, the notion of holistic education is significant in that it is a product of not only what a student learns in the classroom, but also from every aspect of college experiences outside the classroom (Love & Love, 1995). The importance of extracurricular activities cannot be overemphasized in student development in that students learn most practical language and life skills through experiences outside classrooms that will prove useful in their life in and after college. Such life skills as communication, time management, teamwork, and taking responsibilities, to name just a few, are what the students take with them after college in addition to their knowledge in specific academic fields. These skills, in turn, help students improve their language proficiency.

1.2 Impact of Greek Organization

One of the common trends in selecting extracurricular activities among undergraduate students in the United States is joining fraternities or sororities of various traditions, sizes, and purposes, whether they be social, academic-oriented, or professionally-focused. However, some argue that Greek experiences have significant impact on student development. Because of their unique organizational structure and therefore strong bonding experience or simply of increased opportunities for face-to-face interaction, fraternities and sororities appear to represent important sub-communities within the college campus for fostering psychological sense of community (Lounsbury & Deneui, 1993).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In light of this author's service mostly to the Japanese student population, particularly those wishing to study abroad, this current study attempts to examine whether the Greek life experience may contribute to enriching these students' study abroad experience and their achievement of academic goals. Qualitative interviews are used to explore these questions. This study supports the notion that joining fraternity or sorority has strong, positive impact on students' language and cognitive abilities during their study abroad experience.

2. Literature Review

Clark and Trow (1966) examined as to what effect students' college experience have on them. In pursuing their research, they focused their analysis on the intellectual and cultural development of the adolescent and young adults. Their basic assumption is based on the notion that college experience is a reflection of the larger society and that there are subcultures within. Relationships among peers, they note, affect attitudes and behavior in a variety of ways, and "...from this perspective we shall view the college peer groups as the locus for a set of processes which intervene between the larger social systems and the outcomes of college education" (1966, p.18). Among many subcultures which can be recognized on American college campuses, Clark and Trow named *collegiate culture*, such as "football, fraternities and sororities, dates, cars, drinking and campus fun," as the most widely accepted one (1966, p.20).

Coleman (1966) further explored the kinds of effects a student subculture has upon its members. Like Clark and Trow, Coleman, too, agrees that the college experience is a reflection of the larger society. He notes:

...a student subculture is, at its strongest, nearly a society in itself. Its members are turned inward, looking to one another for their social rewards; their associations are almost completely with one another; and they have many of the accoutrements of a society, including a host of voluntary organizations and a highly developed stratification system (1966, p.245).

According to Coleman, there are two kinds of impact the subculture has on its members: 1) immediate impact on the distribution of energies of its members, and 2) residual effect which its members take with them when they graduate. Fraternities and sororities, according to Coleman, are the agents of change for the students, for "such groups often are exclusive, and mere admission into the group is an important reward that channels energy" (1966, p.249).

Taking part in such exclusive organizations entails the notion of what Festinger (1957) referred to as the reduction of dissonance. Existence of dissonance, according to Festinger, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance, and when dissonance is present, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance. In other words, from the perspectives of international students, living and studying in another country is such a dissonant and stressful experience that some of them venture to take a drastic approach to reducing the stress by joining a particular student subculture, in this case a fraternity or sorority. Festinger argues that "...the greater the dissonance, the greater will be the intensity of the action to reduce the dissonance and the greater the avoidance of situations that would increase the dissonance" (1957, p.18). He suggests three fundamental ways to eliminate dissonances; by changing a *behavioral* cognitive element, by changing an *environmental* cognitive element, and by *adding* new cognitive elements. Most new students want to find a niche to fit in by seeking others who hold the same or similar values. Where such gaining of social support is necessary, "...the presence of dissonance and the consequent pressures to change some cognitive element will lead to a variety of social processes" (1957, p.21).

Pace (1980) examined the relationships between diversity existing on college campuses and level of student satisfaction with college experience by assessing environmental measurement and differentiating sub-environments within colleges and universities. He agrees with the notion that students are influenced by their peer groups, such as fraternities, in that peer groups attract students selectively and exert an influence upon them in the general direction of the group norm. In addition, Pace

emphasizes the importance of learning about the influence of environment on students, stating that the college "...is accountable for providing the events and the environmental context designed to stimulate student learning and development" (1980, p.112). Considering Festinger's perspective, Pace agrees that not only the change in cognitive element but also change in environmental element is required to bring about successful dissonance reduction to ensure quality student development.

Lounsbury and Deneui (1993) examined the concept of the psychological sense of community (PSC) in the college campus settings, based on the earlier framework of Sarason (1974). PSC is defined as the feelings of belongingness, interactions of members in shared events and activities, mutual concerns and values, and beliefs that community members matter to one another (Lounsbury & Deneui, 1993, Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, & Wandersman, 1986). Lounsbury and Deneui agree that in the campus context, one of the most pervasive social institutions which function to provide such feelings of belongingness and sense of cohesion is the fraternity and sorority. They argued:

...a primary goal of fraternities and sororities is to foster a student's sense of community. In this vein, we hypothesized that PSC would be higher among students who were members of a fraternity or sorority than students who were not members (1993, p.271).

Their empirical study concluded that those who were in Greek letter organizations reported higher levels of PSC than non-members. This result is consistent with the notion that Greek membership encourages higher levels of social participation, interaction, and school spirit.

Demakis and McAdams (1993) assessed the impact of social support on the relationship between stress and well-being. Based on a previous study, they identified various types of social support available for college students as well as personality variables. Their empirical study showed that those college students who are satisfied with their supportive network reported higher levels of satisfaction with life, thus concluding that social support had a direct, beneficial effect on the psychological well-beings of students. Their study also demonstrated positive correlations between personal traits, particularly higher degree of extraversion, and perceived availability of support among the college students.

Barratt and Huba (1995), in attempting to answer the question of how fraternities and sororities help international students, examined the factors related to international students' adjustment issues at undergraduate level in an American community. They explored several variables including (1) international students' motivation for coming to the US, (2) reported self-esteem before and after coming to the US, (3) reported interest and success in developing relationships with Americans, (4) their adjustment, (5) their use of campus and community programs and amenities the school offers, and (6) their perception of written and oral English language skills. It was concluded that those international students with good oral communication skills are more comfortable in communicating with Americans, and thus capable of better coping with adjustment problems associated with starting a new life in the US. Additionally, students who are successful in forming relationships with Americans exhibit more positive attitudes toward the people of the community in which the university is located. Barratt and Huba also made a suggestion that "...educators should encourage international student participation by ensuring that they receive appropriate and adequate information about the programs and amenities available to them on campus and in the community" (1995, p.434). Therefore, international students on one hand should demonstrate adequate communication skills in order to build successful relationships with Americans and to maintain positive outlook in American college life, while the college community on the other should provide a supportive environment conducive to higher level of interests and participation among international students in what the school has to offer.

Studies confirm correlations between memberships in Greek letter organizations and positive college experiences. According to a study conducted at University of Missouri, Columbia, it was found that Greek students reported substantially higher levels of academic and social involvement than did independent students (Student Life Studies, 1997). Pike (2000) concluded that membership in Greek organizations do not necessarily have a negative effect on students' cognitive development in college. Rather,

Greek students achieved higher levels of social involvement and gains in general abilities.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Background Information of Respondents

In order to complete this research, six students, three males and three females, representing various Greek letter organizations at a particular private university in the US were selected for interview. They were selected based on the following criteria: 1) they were all undergraduate students of the same four-year private university; 2) they were all natives of Japan; 3) they all had been in the US as full-time students for more than two years at the time of the interview, and; 4) they all had been admitted as active members of social fraternities or sororities officially recognized on campus.

None of the respondents had any prior knowledge about the Greek system except for Student C, whose father was a member of a social fraternity when he studied at a US state university long ago. Watanabe was encouraged by his father to participate in Greek to enrich his experiences abroad and for future connections. Others had not had a clue as to what fraternities and sororities entailed prior to attending an American university, or what the process of becoming a fraternity or sorority member would be like.

Table 1. Respondents' basic data

Name	Gender	Year of Study	Length in fraternity/sorority	Major/GPA on 4.0 scale
Student A	M	senior	1 year and 1 month	general studies / 2.88
Student B	M	senior	4 years	business management / 3.06
Student C	M	senior	2 years	business administration / 3.12
Student D	F	senior	1 year	broadcasting communication / 3.1
Student E	F	junior	2 years	athletic training / 3.4
Student F	F	senior	3 years	general studies / 2.6

3.2 Interview Procedures

Before the interviews were conducted, interview protocols were produced and developed to ensure that each respondent would be exposed to the same questions. The protocols were reviewed under the Human Subject Policies of West Virginia University and were approved. Meanwhile, the permission to conduct interviews with the selected students was granted by the Dean of the Student Affairs of the university at which the interviews took place. Since the interviewer and all six interviewees are natives of Japan, the interview protocols were translated into Japanese without changing the context of questions.

The interview protocols contain thirty-one questions. These questions were categorized and the responses were divided accordingly into six subsections. They were (a) Background and Greek Membership, (b) Motivation for Participation, (c) Goals, (d) Social Support and Adjustment Issues, (e) English Improvement, and (f) Recruitment. (See Appendix for details on the questions.)

The interviews took place in one-on-one, in-person format, and the questions were verbally read from the interview protocols by the interviewer. The responses were then audio-recorded, with the permission given by each respondent prior to each interview. Interview time varied depending on respondents. Initially they were informed that it would take approximately forty-five to sixty minutes.

3.3 Institutional Characteristics

The university in which all six students interviewed were enrolled is a four-year private institution in the US, with a total enrollment

of approximately nine-hundred students. It is located in a small town, with a population of two thousand, in the Eastern part of the US. About forty percent of the student body consists of international students. Despite its small size, this university attracts students from various parts of the world, representing more than thirty nations.

There are nine Greek letter organizations represented on campus – three fraternities, three sororities, and three service and honor organizations. Of these, three are local chapters, whereas six have affiliations with national chapters. The total number of participants of the fraternities and sororities is estimated to be around one hundred and seventy. However, the number of international students who are in the Greek system is significantly low: only a dozen or so are recognized, active members.

3.4 Limitations of the Study

There are three limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed regarding the present study. The first limitation concerns the length of study abroad. Since the present study targets degree-seeking Japanese students in a US university, the length of their study abroad experience is at least four years, unlike those who study abroad in exchange programs whose duration of study is up to eight to twelve months. Therefore, some of the implications in this study may not apply to short-term students. The second limitation concerns the size and ethnic makeup of the university examined. As mentioned in section 3.3 Institutional Characteristics, it is a small college with many international students. Because of its close network and high visibility of international students, mostly Japanese students, on campus, the international students may have easier time getting involved in extracurricular activities and assuming leadership roles than those in a larger university with fewer international student populations. Third, this article describes a qualitative study designed to assess students' Greek life experiences based on their self-reported evaluation. It was not designed to test hypotheses and thus no empirical measurements are used in the evaluation. Hence, the findings in this study are the students' perceived results which cannot be substantiated with data and cannot show direct causality or correlation between their Greek memberships and their impact on their study abroad experience.

4. Interview Results

This section discusses some of the interview findings, which are divided into six categories; 1) Need for Communication; 2) Frustration and Feeling of Despair as Motivation; 3) English Improvement and Communicative Confidence; 4) Leadership; 5) Social Support and Adjustment Issues; and, 6) Negative Aspects: Time, Money, and Hazing.

4.1 Need for Communication

All the interviewees shared common desires before joining a fraternity or sorority: to become a fluent speaker of English, make many American friends, and gain invaluable study-abroad experiences. They all admitted that they actively sought out the opportunities to fulfill such desires. Their first encounter with the Greek system usually was through friends, their roommates, floor mates, resident advisors, someone who helped them with their homework in the library, or even someone they met at a party. These individuals later became mentors who guided them into various Greek organizations. For instance, Student A wanted to improve his English and thus he regularly utilized the university tutor system. His tutor happened to be pledging for a fraternity at the time, and he found it amusing to associate with the tutor and his pledging buddies, gradually becoming interested in the Greek system (personal communication, December 2, 2005). For Student F, before joining her sorority the only opportunity for her to use English in her daily life was to casually greet her floor resident advisor. She was very dissatisfied with the level of interaction she had with the American students, which eventually caused her to seek increased opportunities for communication through the Greek system (personal communication, December 3, 2005).

4.2 Frustration and Feeling of Despair as Motivation

Some respondents considered frustration with life as a motivating factor to seek Greek memberships. Generally speaking, there is an alarming tendency among Japanese high school students to lose purpose in life once they fail university admission examinations and consequently feel hopeless to the point that they commit suicide (Iga, 1981). They force themselves all their lives to absorb as much knowledge for entrance exams as possible and prepare for the “big moment”, but once they fail to attend the university they, or their parents, most wanted, it feels to them as if the end of the world has come. They feel that they are no longer valuable members of the society and thus wish to escape to another country and find their niche. Student B said that it was his feeling of dissatisfaction with his life up to that point that led him to join a Greek organization. Before coming to the US, he claims he had not done anything successful. He had felt that he was not academically talented because he failed to go to the university he had wanted. “If I don’t do something to turn this around,” he said to himself, “I will be a loser for the rest of my life” (personal communication, December 2, 2005). He wanted something he could accomplish and found his way to the US.

But one may ask: why fraternities and sororities? Why not other ordinary student clubs and organizations? For this question, a sense of competition seems to play a role. Student A says:

I went to a prominent high school in Japan, where most of my friends went to prestigious universities. To keep up with the competition with my peers, I felt like I had to do something different to outdo them and get their recognition (personal communication, December 2, 2005).

Likewise, Student C did not want to choose the safe paths like his friends did, the paths often drawn for them by their parents. Instead he wanted to try something different and push himself to the limit by choosing to study abroad and join an exclusive organization (personal communication, December 2, 2005).

4.3 English Improvement and Communicative Confidence

All respondents reported that their English skills had improved largely due to, in their opinions, their participations in the Greek life. Their English learning process started when they first attended fraternity and sorority parties, then they were exposed to all the new commands of English they had not learned in school while going through rigorous pledging activities. Some of the respondents were able to enhance their English skills to the point that they were assigned leadership positions in their organization. “By listening to and talking with brothers,” Student C adds, “I learned to use practical words and phrases. That was something we did not learn in the classroom” (personal communication, December 2, 2005). It is hard to precisely evaluate the degree of their English improvements, since this study was not designed as such, and of course, it varies by individual. Student C reported an improvement in his TOEFL PBT (Test of English as a Foreign Language Paper-Based Testing) score by 100 points in the listening section, which, in his opinion, was largely due to his joining a fraternity. Others, though not as obvious as Student C’s improvement, also reported dramatic increase in their listening score. Student E explained:

That came naturally...when I was pledging, I really had to focus on listening to others. Otherwise, I would not understand the instructions of my pledging activities and I would be in trouble. So that’s why my listening skills got better (personal communication, December 3, 2005).

While all interviewees responded positively on the improvement of their listening abilities, they were uncertain as to whether similar improvement also occurred in other areas of their English skills, such as reading comprehension and grammar.

Interestingly, the sense of group harmony, often considered a virtue in Asian society, seems to play a role in improving the students’ language learning. Student D commented, “It does not matter if your English level is low...as long as you try hard to convey the message to others, they will understand and help you” (personal communication, December 3, 2005). Getting assistance from fellow pledge-mates made things easier for these Japanese students, since they do not have a good command of English when it comes to memorizing songs and words. “It was tough,” added Student F, “but it felt good that they did not give me any special treatment just because I am a foreigner. And, my pledge sisters helped me (with English) so we could all get through together”

(personal communication, December 3, 2005). Somehow that feeling of “oneness” might have appealed to these particular Japanese students and helped them improve their English skills in a way that normal classroom instructions could not.

In addition to English skills, Greek experiences seem to have given them confidence in communication. Student D noted, “As you meet new people, you are in the situation where you HAVE to talk to them” (personal communication, December 3, 2005). This is such a drastic change from the Japanese culture, in which you do not have to do all the talking; rather, you can expect others to understand you. Direct expressions are to be avoided and indirect expressions, insinuating gestures, and sometimes silence are preferred. But these students had to adapt to American-style communication and learned to express themselves despite the language barrier. Through Greek experiences, all the respondents noted an increase in overall confidence in communication with other people as well. Having confidence in communication leads to better relationships. Student C commented:

Some Americans may not like all Japanese people, but I learned that once you can actually establish communication with them, they will like you, because they know that they can at least talk to you and say what they want to say. That was good for them as well as for me (personal communication, December 2, 2005).

Other self-reported effects on communicative confidence include:

- became more outgoing and assertive instead of spending time alone in the library (Student A)
- used to be apprehensive about Americans, now realize that socializing is actually fun (Student C)
- became more decisive and independent than before (Student E)
- gained more confidence in many matters (Student B)
- obtained adequate skills and confidence to communicate with any kind of people in any settings. (Student F)

(personal communications, December 2 & 3, 2005)

These accounts do not necessarily signify that Greek life exclusively helped them achieve their language and communication goals, but rather that it affected them in ways that they obtained such “by-products” in the process, helping them to mature mentally and bolster their self-worth.

4.4 Leadership

Such confidence in communicative abilities, combined with the length of membership, seemed to result in the significant roles the interviewees were assigned within the organizations. In other words, the longer they were members, the better their English skills became, and the more important duties they were assigned. Both Student B and Student F assumed leadership positions, and because of their abilities to communicate with others in English and Japanese, they seemed to be respected by fellow brothers and sisters. They were in the position to influence the operations and management of the organizations and their voices were certainly heard. They were also well known throughout campus, regardless of Greek membership. Similarly, Student C was promoted as education leader of his fraternity, and Student D assumed the position of treasurer in her sorority.

4.5 Social Support and Adjustment Issues

The respondents were asked to assess to what degree, if any, they received support from their Greek organizations in dealing with adjustment issues. For many college students, receiving emotional support from friends is instrumental in dealing with stresses, especially those caused in transitional periods in life, and for international students, culture shocks add another layer of stress and sometime may hinder them from having a successful academic experience. Indeed, these students interviewed experienced culture shock upon their arrival in the US, which caused them varying degrees of stress. The initial culture shocks varied from the stereotypical ideas about Americans (e.g., Americans do not admit their mistakes) to different customs (e.g. eat food in the grocery store before paying). Most of these, however, did not amount to be major adjustment problems for them to the degree that hindered them from leading a normal student life. It is uncertain whether the respondents were better prepared to adjust themselves because

of experience in the Greek organizations or because of their willingness to adapt on their own. They, however, all commented on how comfortable they felt confiding in fellow members with sensitive issues. An effective support system seemed to be instituted within these organizations that may have helped the Japanese students to better cope with cross-cultural college experience.

4.6 Negative Aspects: Time, Money, and Hazing

Greek life is not full of just positive aspects. All respondents expressed some dissatisfaction about the experience. One major problem appears to be time management, on which most of them commented. Due to their inadequate English skills, they usually require more time to complete reading assignments and papers than their American counterparts. On top of that, some respondents are involved with other activities than fraternities and sororities, such as sports and music. For instance, Student E sometimes got called to a party hosted by her sorority members, though she had other important tasks on campus to do and did not feel like partying. She nonetheless felt obligated to be there because that is what is required of each member. Such pressure and demands to take her time away from studying and other extracurricular activities have caused her to struggle juggling time (personal communication, December 3, 2005). Other negative comments centered mostly on mismanagement of the organizations, perceived disrespect for Japanese students, and relationship issues among members. In addition, most of them reported that their grades in classes other than English dropped after joining the Greek letter organizations.

Surprisingly, no interviewees regarded money as a negative aspect of Greek life, contrary to this author's expectation. Traditionally, it is often the case that the costs necessary to maintain Greek memberships are said to be quite high. That did not seem to discourage the Japanese students, however, from seeking memberships and remaining active in their organizations. Another surprising factor was the fact that no respondents mentioned hazing as a negative experience. Usually hazing, which nowadays is referred to as *associating* to avoid negative stigma attached to it, is done to pledging members as part of initiations, which often results in violent acts and causes controversies across the nation. To be sure, these Japanese students went through the pledging process and received varying degrees of hazing. They, however, claimed to have felt a big relief, equal with Americans, a feeling of triumph and a sense of accomplishment without regards to race or color when the pledging period was over. Some of them even said that the pledging was the highlight of the Greek life.

5. Conclusions and Implications of the Study

The present study found that Greek experiences did help the Japanese students in some aspects of their American college life. Despite the negative aspects, the positives seemed to play significant roles in helping the students to have satisfactory campus experiences.

As evidenced in the interview results, the motivations to join fraternities or sororities varied by individuals. One of the common themes found among them was their dissatisfaction with their command of English and their desire for increased interpersonal interactions with Americans. Furthermore, Greek experiences helped them not only develop their language ability but also gain confidence in interpersonal communication, as evidenced by the fact that some of them went on to assume leadership roles such as resident assistant, student administration officers, and various positions in their Greek organizations. They all seem to have accomplished goals in terms of English skills, although it is hard to determine whether or not Greek experiences conclusively helped them achieve their academic or career goals. Further study needs to be conducted to examine the correlation between Greek experiences and academic achievement.

Returning to Festinger's concept of cognitive dissonance, these students successfully utilized Greek experience as a way to remove dissonance. When they were dissatisfied with the level of their English abilities and interactions with American friends (dissonant situation), they actively sought opportunities to reduce such dissonance by getting involved in the activities which could lead them to the satisfaction level they had expected (consonance). In a sense, they attempted to change the environmental element

in their lives by situating themselves in unfamiliar circumstances and by forcing themselves to adjust accordingly. This is not to say, however, that Greek experiences can be recommended for all international students. Since Greek experiences are one of the characteristics that make American higher education systems unique, both domestic and international students need to be educated more on the implications of the experiences in order to lead the most productive and satisfying college life possible.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

I. General Information

- 1-1. How long have you been in the United States?
- 1-2. How long have you studied at this university?
- 1-3. What is your class standing?

1-4. What is your academic major and minor?

1-5. What is your current GPA?

2. Greek Membership

2-1. Which fraternity or sorority do you belong to?

2-2. How long have you been with that fraternity/sorority?

2-3. How do you assess your Greek experience so far? Anything positive? Negative?

2-4. What had you know about Greek system before coming to the States?

2-5. Had you known about that particular fraternity/sorority before you joined? If yes, how?

3. Motivation for Joining

3-1. What was the major reason you joined that fraternity/sorority?

3-2. Did you have any friends or roommate who were in the Greek system?

3-3. Did your parents know about the Greek system?

3-4. Were there particular individuals who encouraged you to join?

3-5. What were some of your initial thoughts about the fraternity/sorority when you first joined?

4. Goals

4-1. Why did you want to come to study at an American university?

4-2. What were your initial academic as well as personal goals when you first came?

4-3. How do you think your life has changed since you came to the States?

4-4. How do you think your life has changed since you joined the fraternity/sorority?

4-5. Have you noticed any changes in your academic as well as personal goals since you joined the fraternity/sorority?

If so, how have they changed?

5. Social Support and Adjustment Issues

5-1. How did you cope with culture shock when you first came to the US?

5-2. What were some the of the problems you encountered?

5-3. Who did you talk to about such problems?

5-4. By joining your fraternity/sorority, in what ways do you think it has helped you?

5-5. Do you feel more accustomed to the college life in America than before joining your fraternity/sorority?

5-6. Can you say that you have close friends in your fraternity/sorority regardless of your membership? In other words, would you still have close friends in the organization even if you withdraw from it?

6. English Skills

6-1. How were your English skills when you first came to the US?

6-2. Did your English skills improve after joining your fraternity/sorority?

6-3. In what area do you think your English skills have improved the most: reading, listening, writing, or speaking?

6-4. In general, do you feel more comfortable interacting with American students than before?

7. Other

7-1. Have you recommended or would you recommend your friends to join fraternity/sorority? Why? Why not?