
10-21-2022

Book Review: Pietro A. Sasso, J. Patrick Biddix & Mónica Lee Miranda. (2020). Foundations, Research, and Assessment of Fraternities and Sororities: Retrospective and Future Considerations. Myers Education Press..

Jade Silva Tovar
Texas Tech University

Eduardo Díaz
Colorado State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/oracle>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Silva Tovar, Jade and Díaz, Eduardo (2022) "Book Review: Pietro A. Sasso, J. Patrick Biddix & Mónica Lee Miranda. (2020). Foundations, Research, and Assessment of Fraternities and Sororities: Retrospective and Future Considerations. Myers Education Press..," *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors*: Vol. 17: Iss. 2, Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/oracle/vol17/iss2/5>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors by an authorized editor of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.

Silva Tovar and Díaz: Book Review: Pietro A. Sasso, J. Patrick Biddix & Mónica Lee Mira
BOOK REVIEW: PIETRO A. SASSO, J. PATRICK BIDDIX & MÓNICA LEE
MIRANDA. (2020). FOUNDATIONS, RESEARCH, AND ASSESSMENT
OF FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES: RETROSPECTIVE AND FUTURE
CONSIDERATIONS. MYERS EDUCATION PRESS.

REVIEWED BY JADE SILVA TOVAR & EDUARDO DÍAZ

Higher education researchers and practitioners enter their respective areas with varied professional experience and understanding of the complexities of fraternity and sorority life (FSL). The authors of *Foundations, Research, and Assessment of Fraternities and Sororities: Retrospective and Future Considerations* offer a foundational text to understand historical, current, and future considerations for FSL researchers and practitioners. As the editors demonstrated, prior monolithic and/or heterogeneous classifications of fraternities/sororities created sweeping assumptions and a “lack of precision in the research” (p. x), which does not capture the complexities of the field. The editors weave diversity and inclusion within various book sections to compliment the fraternity/sorority literature. Doing so helps to increase varying perspectives of the field, yet, we found a lack of attention to gender constructs, sexual orientation, Indigenous organizations, and disrupting normative views of history. We will discuss these later in the review. The last part of the book highlights a significant nexus of the field whereby the editors asked: where is the field heading and how can research better inform decision making?

Sasso and colleagues organized the book into five parts: (1) historical foundations, (2) legal issues, (3) values and student development, (4) diversity and inclusion, and (5) research. Part one consists of four chapters and covers the more extensive history of fraternities/sororities. Chapter one provided a broader historical context that attempted to capture the essence of the interplay of higher education and the foundation of fraternity/sorority life through student movements. Following this chapter is a review

of the history of Asian American fraternities and sororities. This chapter interweaves global socio-political contextualization to forming the Asian American fraternities/sororities. Aligning with the book’s theme of “retrospection,” Miranda and colleagues discuss the founding of the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO) and future considerations for the umbrella organization. Finally, using two historic universities that shaped the foundation of the fraternal housing structure, the reader can understand the variety of influences and factors which led to how fraternal houses currently operate.

The second section on legal issues focuses on the first amendment. Specifically, how fraternal organizations incorrectly use free speech to defend their illegal behavior. The next chapter educates the reader on freedom of association, single-sex membership, zoning contingent on university recognition, and hazing. They provided the reader with legal examples to demonstrate the relevance to faculty and administrators. The last section provides a historical background of hazing within Greek organizations, athletics, college military organizations, and student organizations. Each author has the same message for higher education professionals: to continue to educate fraternities/sororities on these issues.

Starting the section on values and student development, the authors discussed Schwartz’s (2012) Theory of Basic Values (as cited in Tull et al., 2020). A detailed breakdown of the values of each subgroup of Greek organizations is provided and analyzed through Tull & Shaw’s (2017) study to bring attention to the importance of organizational values (as cited in Tull et

al., 2020). In the subsequent chapter, the authors provide an overview of the importance of the alignment of organizational value congruence within fraternity/sorority members and their respective educational institutions. The section concludes by exploring the centrality of spirituality among today's college students, calling attention to Christian influences in fraternal organizations' symbols and rituals. The authors recommend that FSL advocates challenge Greek organizations to acknowledge Christian privilege within fraternal policies and practices and equip students with the tools to engage respectfully with views that differ from their own.

Diversity and inclusion provide an emerging leadership development approach to creating a culture of inclusion within fraternity and sorority life that transcends from individual, group, and institutional contexts. Smith and McCoy provide a strong overview of Critical Race Theory (CRT). The authors focused on three tenets of CRT to highlight how National Panhellenic Council (NPHC) organizations are sites of validation and affirming spaces for Black students. Scholar-practitioners Garcia and Shirley provided a strong chapter that used a critical approach to examine race and privilege in FSL. The authors name whiteness, privilege, and address oppressive structures across councils and institutions. Further, they call on the field to hire FSL professionals with skills and knowledge in all Greek councils to advance efforts on college campuses.

Concluding the book are the chapters representing the current state of research in fraternity/sorority life. The first chapter focuses on the need to be critical and diligent in the research produced and examined. From research design through methods and analysis, Barber et al. demonstrate why the field must have an increased level of rigor and validity. Aligning the future of the research with higher education and student success metrics helps strengthen the field while advancing scholarly work. Following

this chapter is Cogswell and researchers' review and examination of the Fraternity and Sorority Experience Survey findings from 2016-2017. They call for the usage of data-informed decision-making and actionable plans to assess FSL culture to improve these communities. The last chapter's focus provided an overview of the eleven years of findings from the Wabash National Study (WNS). The researchers identified a gap in the study of not collecting data related to specific fraternity/sorority membership.

As a comprehensive text providing a call to action for more rigorous and expansive research in the field of fraternity/sorority life, this book addresses the complexity of the field. There are critical aspects in which the text could improve, which are: intentionally embedding justice and equity within historical foundations, seeking to understand nuances and research at different institutional types, incorporating gender, sexuality, and disability research to expand upon notions of diversity. In some historical recounting, white supremacy and oppressive structures are not named. Seeded within the historical analyses is an erasure of Black and Indigenous peoples in higher education institutions outside of the establishment of Black Colleges and Universities. Wilder (2013) reminds us that Black and Indigenous peoples were a part of the foundation of colonial higher education institutions, as enslaved labor, and objects, to build institutions and serve white faculty, staff, and students. These histories must not be forgotten, and fraternities/sororities are not void of addressing their oppressive structures today.

Overall, the editors provide an updated viewpoint of the state of fraternities/sororities in a current context. The authors were intentional in including emerging scholarship and calling on the field to advance research of fraternities/sororities. They further call on researchers to address monolithic and homogenous gaps in the field to better inform decision-making. Weaving retrospection and future considerations

were established within the book and provided a way to (re)frame future research.

Author Biographies

References

- Barber, J.P., Biddix, J.P., Hesp, G.A., Norman, E., & Bureau, D.A. (2020). The state of fraternity/sorority research. In P.A. Sasso, J.P. Biddix, & M.L. Miranda (Eds.), *Foundations, research, and assessment of fraternities and sororities: Retrospective and future considerations* (pp. 167-179). Myers Education Press.
- Cogswell, C.A., Fosnacht, K., Maynen, D.M., Veldkamp, S., & Pike, G.R. (2020). Development and use of the fraternity and sorority experience survey. In P.A. Sasso, J.P. Biddix, & M.L. Miranda (Eds.), *Foundations, research, and assessment of fraternities and sororities: Retrospective and future considerations* (pp. 181-191). Myers Education Press.
- Sasso, P.A., Biddix, J.P., Miranda, M.L. (2020). *Foundations, research, and assessment of fraternities and sororities: Retrospective and future considerations*. Myers Education Press.
- Smith, S.E. & McCoy, D.L. (2020). The divine nine in contemporary higher education: A critical race perspective. In P.A. Sasso, J.P. Biddix, & M.L. Miranda (Eds.), *Foundations, research, and assessment of fraternities and sororities: Retrospective and future considerations* (pp. 143-153). Myers Education Press.
- Tull, A., Grace, J., & Nelson-Pinkston, C. (2020). The position of fraternity and sorority values in college student development. In P.A. Sasso, J.P. Biddix, & M.L. Miranda (Eds.), *Foundations, research, and assessment of fraternities and sororities: Retrospective and future considerations* (pp. 101-109). Myers Education Press.
- Wilder, C. S. (2013). *Ebony and ivy: Race, slavery, and the troubled history of America's universities*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Jade Silva Tovar serves as the Assistant Vice President for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Texas Tech University leading over 13 student success programs, federal TRIO programs, cultural centers, and college access units. Simultaneously, she is pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education Leadership at Colorado State University. Her research interests include Latina identity development, specifically a Chingona identity, and experiences of minoritized students at Hispanic Serving Institutions. As a doctoral student, she serves on a research team applying critical race theory lens to emerging Hispanic Serving Institution practices. She completed her BA in Spanish at the University of Iowa and MEd in Higher Education Administration from Arizona State University. In addition, Jade has 15 years' professional experience leading the development of transformative and student-centric experiences in academic affairs, college outreach and recruitment, diversity, equity, inclusion, student success and retention, advising, co-curricular experiences, leadership development, international student engagement, undergraduate research, entrepreneurship and innovation, organizational development, cultural centers, and grant management. She is a proud member of Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority, Inc. having joined at the Alpha Chapter at the University of Iowa. She served as a student and professional headquarters staff member and as an Alumna Director for the National Board of Directors.

Eduardo Díaz currently is a doctoral student at Colorado State University (CSU) and serves as the Graduate Assistant for the CSU Higher Education Leadership Ph.D. Program. Eduardo has a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a master's degree in Higher Education Administration from Loyola University Chicago.

Professionally, he has worked in Higher Education for over 21 years in Residential Life, Student Conduct, Academic Integrity, University/Greek Housing, Greek Life, Dean of Students, Student Government, Study Abroad (Semester at Sea), Student Unions, and Student Programs/Activities, and Student Leadership Programs.

He is a proud Brother of Sigma Lambda Beta International Fraternity, Inc from the Kappa Chapter at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has served as an alumni volunteer on the local, regional, and national levels and as a past Assistant Executive Director at the Executive Office in Iowa.