

afa ORACLE
THE RESEARCH JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FRATERNITY | SORORITY ADVISORS

VOLUME 12 ISSUE 1, SUMMER 2017

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This qualitative research study utilized a phenomenological approach to explore the relationship between sorority ritual and self-efficacy. Guided by Social Cognitive Theory, data were collected through focus groups and one-on-one interviews. This study provided new insights into the role of ritual participation on perceived increases in self-efficacy in college women. Implications for future research and practice also are discussed.

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ROGER WESSEL, PH.D., BALL STATE UNIVERSITY AND MOLLY SALISBURY, MA, CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY

College students find a sense of belonging at institutions in multiple ways. For college women, the relationships they form through their campus involvements are important. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the social integration experiences of sorority women living in residence halls. The researchers found sorority women had positive community experiences and enriched relationship opportunities through their involvement in sororities and residence halls. The women felt more connected to people through the relationships they formed because of sorority membership, whereas they felt more connected to campus as a whole because they lived in the halls.

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SARAH COHEN, M.ED., INDIANA UNIVERSITY, GENTRY MCCREARY, PH.D., DYAD STRATEGIES, LLC, JOSHUA SCHUTTS, PH.D., UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

The term "sisterhood" is one that has been used in a variety of ways to describe relationships among and between groups of women. Scholars have devoted little to no attention to the manner in which modern sorority members define and conceptualize their sisterhood experience. This study seeks to understand the various ways that collegiate sorority members define and experience the concept of sisterhood. The present study closely mirrors and extends the methodology and focus of the research on brotherhood conducted by McCreary and Schutts (2015).

49 SORORITY WOMEN, DRINKING, AND CONTEXT: THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENT ON COLLEGE STUDENT DRINKING

JILL RUSSETT, PH.D., CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY

The purpose of this study was to explore college drinking from the perspective of sorority women, including delving further into situational or contextual conditions related to the environment where drinking occurs, and examining the extent to which gender influences associated behaviors and choices related to drinking. Data collection occurred through three focus groups; in all 25 undergraduate sorority women participated. In addition, six focus group participants volunteered to take part in individual follow up interviews. Findings illustrate the prevalence and influence of a male dominated drinking environment, specifically identified within fraternities, and highlight sorority women's awareness of gender differences and subsequent choices. Implications for college administrators and health educators responsible for campus programming and prevention efforts are provided.

62 LIVING MEMORY: WHAT IT PORTENDS WHEN THE FOUNDERS STILL LIVE

ARI STILLMAN, FUEL CYCLE

What informs an organization's identity? Older organizations have annals that record the history as its intended for posterity, but what of newer organizations? Their history has yet to be made and much of it is as open to negotiation as their future. To explore this contingency, I delve into one organization, a young fraternity, during an occasion in which memories are exchanged and organizational identity is expanded. What I discovered elucidates the power of living memory and the fecundity of an occasion such as a national convention for keeping it alive.

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Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors advances the study of college fraternities and sororities through a peer reviewed academic journal promoting scholarly discourse among partners invested in the college fraternal movement. The vision of *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors* is to serve as the premier forum for academic discourse and scholarly inquiry regarding the college fraternity and sorority movement.

Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors is published biannually. Past issues of *Oracle* are available on the AFA website.

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SUBMISSIONS:

Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors accepts submissions focused on articulating research involving fraternity and sorority members at the collegiate, alumni, inter/national organization, and volunteer advisory levels. Manuscripts should be written for the student affairs generalist who has broad responsibility for educational leadership, policy, staff development, and management. Articles on specialized topics should provide the generalist with an understanding of the importance of the program to student affairs overall and fraternity/sorority advising specifically.

Research articles for *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors* should stress the underlying issues or problems that stimulated the research; treat the methodology concisely; and, most importantly, offer a full discussion of results, implications, and conclusions. In the belief that AFA readers have much to learn from one another, we also encourage the submission of thoughtful, documented essays or historical perspectives.

Visit www.afa1976.org for more detailed submission guidelines.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
GEORGIANNA L. MARTIN, PH.D., ORACLE EDITOR

The Summer 2017 Issue has been on its way for some time now, and finally it is here! We just passed Banned Books Week in the United States. I always find this to be an interesting event as we mark periods within our nation's history where free exchange of ideas and the individuals who wrote those ideas were censored. I'd like to think we've come a long way from burning banned books in the town square. However, challenges to the stifling of innovation, new knowledge, a need for academic freedom, and controversy are in part what led to our modern day peer review system for research publications.

What better time than Banned Books Week for a refresher on the peer review process and what it means to scholars who regularly conduct research, write, and publish their work in peer reviewed outlets. First, a key hallmark of a true peer review process is that it is a masked process (this has historically been referred to as blind [sic] review) where neither the author nor the reviewers know the identity of one another. This masked process is intended to give authors a fair hand at having their work reviewed by a seemingly impartial slate of reviewers. The intent is to keep the focus on the writing and the research rather than the popularity, status, shortcomings, or even moral turpitude of the author(s). Masked peer review also serves to protect the reviewers from retribution for what might be perceived as offering a negative review to a colleague. It's not a perfect process, but it's one that those within academia tend to respect and hold in high esteem. Another key aspect of the publication process that goes hand in hand with peer review is the concept of journalistic autonomy. This idea refers to the position that the Editorial Board of a journal, including the Editor in Chief, Associate Editors, and Review Board Members, have the autonomy to decide on the content of a research journal. The process by which journalistic autonomy is played out in a research journal is through the peer review process. In other words, regardless of research content, regardless of tensions with authors or reviewers, regardless of an author's status or prestige, when a manuscript makes it through the masked peer review process it has been vetted and determined to be of quality fit for publication. Interference from entities outside of those individuals intimately involved in the peer review process constitutes censorship. These are processes that seem simple at face value, but can become complex. Luckily, there will be no burning of banned books in our town square this week!

I'm happy to report we have a full issue with five original research articles. Readers may notice four of the five articles deal with women's issues. First, we have Sylvia Mendez, Patty Witkowsky, Amanda Allee, Bryan Christensen, and Colleen Stiles's article titled *Sorority Ritual Participation and Self Efficacy*. The authors used phenomenology to explore the relationships between sorority rituals and self-efficacy of the women who participated in rituals. Next, we have Roger Wessel and Molly Salisbury's article titled *Social Integration of Sorority Women Living in Residence Halls*. In their research they found that sorority women had positive community experiences and relationships through their involvement in both sororities and residing on campus, acknowledging the important impact of both of these college experiences. The third article in this issue is Sarah Cohen, Gentry McCreary, and Joshua Schutts's article titled *Conceptualization of Sisterhood within the Collegiate Sorority: An Exploration*. Their study extends previous research on brotherhood by delving into how sorority women conceptualize and experience sisterhood. Next, Jill Russett's article titled *Sorority Women, Drinking, and Context: The Influence of Environment on College Student Drinking*, adds to the literature on alcohol use among Greek-letter organization members by considering situational and contextual environmental

conditions related to drinking behaviors and the extent to which gender plays a role. The final article in this issue is titled *Living Memory: What it Portends When the Founders Still Live* and was written by Ari Stillman. Stillman's work contributes to the literature by investigating the "living history" of a young fraternal organization. His research explores organizational identity through the lens of living organization founders. Overall, this issue includes five original articles that offer new light on our collective understanding of sisterhood, brotherhood, and the college experiences that can shape student's outcomes.

SORORITY RITUAL PARTICIPATION AND SELF-EFFICACY

SYLVIA L. MENDEZ, PH.D., PATTY WITKOWSKY, PH.D., AMANDA ALLEE, PH.D.,
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This qualitative research study utilized a phenomenological approach to explore the relationship between sorority ritual and self-efficacy. Guided by Social Cognitive Theory, data were collected through focus groups and one-on-one interviews. This study provided new insights into the role of ritual participation on perceived increases in self-efficacy in college women. Implications for future research and practice also are discussed.

Keywords: ritual, self-efficacy, sorority, student involvement, education hazing in fraternities.

Student involvement is a broad term referring to the “amount of physical and psychological energy that students devote to the academic experience” (Astin, 1999, p. 518), including coursework, living on campus, working on campus, faculty/student interaction, student organization involvement, athletic and student government participation, involvement in service learning projects, ROTC memberships, and campus event attendance (Astin, 1999; Kinzie, Gonyea, Kuh, Umbach, Blaich, & Korkmaz, 2007; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, & Bridges, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Research has repeatedly demonstrated the positive benefits of student involvement on student learning and development, as involvement in co-curricular programs has been linked to higher student satisfaction ratings, increased retention, higher levels of well-being, and enhanced leadership development (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2009; Lijana & Singh-Siddiqui, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). However, while most studies on student involvement have focused on traditional outcomes such as persistence, grades, or identity development (Bensimon, 2007; Foubert & Urbanski, 2006; Hernandez, Hogan, Hathaway, & Lovell, 1999; Kuh et al., 2006), exploration is needed into additional outcomes related to the emerging importance of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2005), such as self-efficacy, which is the belief that one can change the outcome of a situation (Bandura, 1982). Specifically how involvement contributes to positive

outcomes continues to be an area of exploration.

Involvement in sororities has been linked to increased self-efficacy (Saville & Johnson, 2007; Thompson, Oberle, & Lilley, 2011; Wilder, Hoyt, Surbeck, Wilder, & Carney, 1986), but the way in which sorority membership and involvement have contributed to students’ development of increased self-efficacy is unknown. Because self-efficacy in college has been connected to the outcomes of persistence (Friedman & Mandel, 2009) and student success (Krumrei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, & Wilcox, 2013; Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010; Wright, Jenkins-Guarnieri, & Murdock, 2013), exploring how sorority involvement specifically contributes to this important psychosocial factor can support the need for sorority opportunities in higher education.

Sorority membership is comprised of numerous aspects of the experience, including the development of sisterhood and community, philanthropy, leadership development, and ritual. Ritual is a unique aspect of the sorority experience, which involves participation in formalized ceremonies that communicate the values of the organization to new members, and integrates members into the group (Gusfield & Michalowicz, 1984; Hermanowicz & Morgan, 1999; Merelman, 1988; Rothenbuhler, 1998; Van Genep, 2004). Because ritual is not typically a component of other types of student involvement experiences, this study sought to explore the influence of ritual on collegiate sorority women in

order to further understand the possible link between that experience and self-efficacy concepts.

As the connections between ritual and self-efficacy have not yet been examined, this study was intentionally limited to members of sororities to explore the unique lived experience of women in these Greek-letter organizations. Sororities are a prominent outlet for, and driver of, student involvement on college campuses; members tend to be heavily influenced by their shared culture, which is explicitly communicated through ritual. This study endeavored to contribute to the literature to advance understanding on how participation in sorority rituals, as the sense of community, the support structure, and the internalization of shared values, appears to increase self-efficacy among members.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of sorority membership and ritual participation on the development of self-efficacy in collegiate women. Ritual is a significant aspect of sorority life, one that has not been studied in relation to the construct of self-efficacy. This study attempted to answer the following research question: How does the sorority ritual experience contribute to the development of self-efficacy in women? Using a qualitative, phenomenological approach to the research design, data collection, and data analysis, this study explored self-efficacy development in women who participated in sorority rituals through the administration of focus groups and one-on-one interviews.

Theoretical Framework: Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was initiated by Dr. Albert Bandura (1991) and originated out of his earlier work on Social Learning Theory. This was a complex theory, which asserted that learning occurred through observing the behavior of others (Bandura & Barab, 1971). However, Bandura believed that learning involved more

than behaviorism. He theorized that personal beliefs about a situation were as important as the actual behaviors (Bandura, 2010). Those beliefs could be shaped by a variety of factors including the individuals' observations of events occurring around them.

SCT was founded in the agentic perspective (Bandura, 1986), which stated that individuals can be proactive in controlling their environment, rather than the environment controlling them. They are agents of change who can act accordingly. "They are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them" (Bandura, 1986, p. 9). The four key components of SCT are self-observation, self-evaluation, self-reaction, and self-efficacy. Self-observation involves the ability to accurately assess one's thoughts and behavior. It can both inform and motivate progress, resulting in behavioral changes. Self-evaluation occurs when individuals compare their performance to their standards and goals. Self-reaction is motivation garnered through one's reaction to events and is closely related to emotion. Self-efficacy, a focus of this study, is the expectation that one can master a situation and produce a positive outcome. The interaction of these four components promotes an agentic perspective, which enhances motivation and goal attainment (Redmond, 2010).

As SCT is broad, with self-efficacy as a central component, SCT often is mislabeled as Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 2010). Self-efficacy can be broken into the three subcomponents of behavior, environment, and person factors, although these components are unequal (Bandura, 1997). Behavior is a product of the environment, as well as the individual's personal beliefs. Those with high self-efficacy believe in their ability to change their environment, or to at least find ways to work within their environment to achieve a desired outcome. This belief generally exists independent of the actual results. While environmental factors cannot be ignored, individuals believe they are not obligated to them. Therefore, self-efficacy, involves individuals' thoughts that their ability is paramount, but not

necessarily that which they actually achieve.

Self-Efficacy, Ritual, and Social Cognitive Theory

Ritual fits into this framework due to its ability to move individuals from one social sphere to another, and its unifying effect on groups who share this common experience. Ritual also can be expressed through the use of symbols and ceremonies intended to convey meaning, some overt and others secret (Gusfield & Michalowicz, 1984; Merelman, 1988). These help to differentiate a group from the greater whole by establishing a unique identity to which all members assent (Van Gennep, 2004).

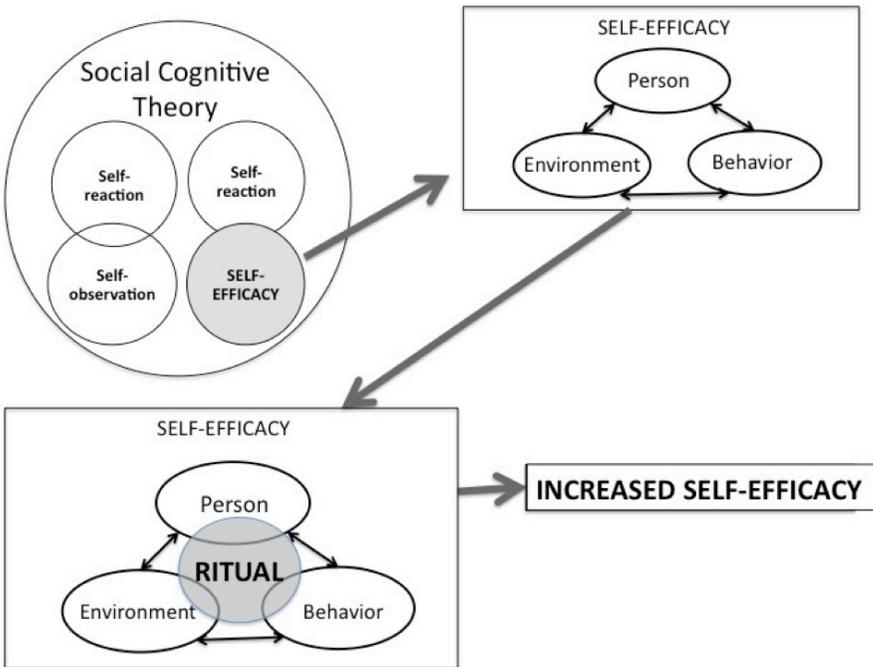
Ritual touches on each of the three subcomponents that make up the self-efficacy model. Symbols and ceremonies occur in the environment as tools for communicating shared val-

ues and norms to individual members. As participants understand and internalize the deeper meanings taught through rituals, they experience personal growth. As members adopt this new identity and as ritual is repeated, the effect of behavior, environment, and the individual on self-efficacy becomes self-reinforcing.

This motivation to act in a particular way, based on the adoption of new identities and values that are taught through rituals, aligns with SCT as a possible catalyst for developing self-efficacy. If rituals can engender feelings of empowerment and a greater self-worth, they likely can lead to greater self-efficacy due to increased self-confidence, as well as individual's belief in his or her ability to control and direct positive outcomes. Figure 1 illustrates the relation of self-efficacy to the larger field of SCT and depicts the role of ritual in increasing self-efficacy.

Figure 1

Study Theoretical Framework. The figure depicts SCT as the beginning point for the theoretical framework. Self-efficacy, a component of SCT, is comprised of three areas that interrelate: person, environment, and behavior. Ritual touches each of these areas. This study proposed that the introduction of ritual leads to an increase in self-efficacy.



Review of the Literature

Greek-Letter Organization Membership

With over four million women at 655 higher education institutions across the United States affiliated with the National Panhellenic Conference (National Panhellenic Council, 2015), understanding the experience of sorority women is necessary given the resources dedicated to membership. Membership in fraternities or sororities has been found to contribute to positive learning in college due to the peer effects of involvement (Astin, 1993). This outcome likely is in part due to the increased sense of community engendered by sorority membership, which is gained and reinforced through ritual (Astin, 1975). Beyond the reported increases in self-efficacy noted previously, many benefits of sorority membership have been cited, including leadership and personal development, campus and civic engagement, and social capital procurement (Asel, Seifert, & Pascarella, 2009; Bureau, Ryan, Ahen, Shoup, & Torres, 2011; DeBard & Sacks, 2010; Hayek, Carini, & Kuh, 2002; Witkowsky, 2010). However, results from the longitudinal Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNS) have revealed conflicting data as membership in Greek-letter organizations were found to have no effect of the constructs measured, critical thinking, moral reasoning, the development of intercultural competence, inclination to inquire and lifelong learning, and psychological well-being (Hevel & Bureau, 2014; Martin, Hevel, Asel, & Pascarella, 2011). Further analysis of the data revealed conditional effects on the WNS constructs based on “students’ entering academic abilities and their racial/ethnic identities” (Hevel, Martin, Weeden, & Pascarella, 2015, p. 456).

Studies on academic measures of achievement and success have been mixed; with some studies reporting higher grade point averages (DeBard & Sacks, 2010), and others reporting higher persistence, retention, and graduation rates despite lower grade point averages (Ahren, Bureau, Ryan, & Torres, 2014; Blimling, 1993;

DeBard, Lake, & Binder, 2006; Ethington & Smart, 1986; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Pike & Askew, 1990). In fact, students who exhibited the least commitment to their education, or to the school, derived the most benefit from fraternity and sorority membership (Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979). Yet, there are drawbacks that accompany participation in sorority life, which have been shown to include higher rates of alcohol use (Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 1996), increased participation in hazing events (Ellsworth, 2006), weak personal development (Wilder et al., 1986), and less exposure to student diversity, as well as campus diversity efforts and initiatives (Torbensohn & Parks, 2009).

While the positive and negative aspects of fraternity and sorority life have been substantiated in the literature, a study by Pike (2003) found that Greek-letter organization members achieved greater gains in academic and personal development than their peers who were not involved in a fraternity or sorority. While they may have reported lower levels of development, the increases made throughout their involvement were greater than their non-fraternity/sorority peers (Pike, 2003). With a focus on the positive aspects of sorority membership, this study sought to contribute to the literature related to the benefits of sorority involvement and to further understand the way in which participation in sorority rituals contributes to the development of self-efficacy.

Ritual

Rituals are formalized ceremonies that communicate the values of the organization to new members, and to integrate members into the group (Gusfield & Michalowicz, 1984; Hermanowicz & Morgan, 1999; Merelman, 1988; Rothenbuhler, 1998; Van Gennep, 2004). Components of rituals include the following. Ritual: (1) is performed, which implies it is pre-planned and scripted; (2) is a visible action and not reserved only as an exercise of the mind; (3) is a

conscious, voluntary act for participants that is not undertaken idly or merely as entertainment, it includes a deeper purpose and meaning behind it; (4) has a social component; (5) involves relationships to a larger group; (6) focuses on potential for being, and not necessarily on the status quo; (7) employs various symbols infused with meaning and are repetitive; it communicates something to the participants without explicitly stating what it is about; and (8) involves sacredness (Rothenbuhler, 1998).

Van Gennep (2004) was one of the earliest scholars to undertake a comprehensive review of ritual in its many forms and identified three basic stages in which to categorize them. The first is separation, whereby the initiates are symbolically removed from their prior life or community in preparation for joining a new one. The next stage is one of transition between worlds; this is followed by the third stage, incorporation. Tinto (1993) built upon this model to develop The Interactionist Theory. Fischer (2007) explained interactionist theory by stating that students must separate themselves from their former lives as a prerequisite to successfully integrating into campus life; otherwise, these former connections can interfere with their adjustment to their new life and subsequent success. Sorority rituals provide a tangible, explicit process of transition away from the former and toward a new community and sense of identity, which could impact self-efficacy by allowing sorority women to develop this new identity in a safe place that provides positive reinforcement.

Further evidence for a possible link between ritual and self-efficacy emerged from Chapple and Coon (1942), who explained the way that rituals help to put members back on an even keel after major life changes. It can bring individuals into balance within the new situation. For example, a death of someone close can cause severe disruptions in one's life and funeral rituals can help to bridge the gap between the individual's life as it was, and what is now must be. Sorority rituals can provide a similar re-framing for young

women transitioning from youth to adulthood, as they enter a new world separate apart from their families and home life. Some will struggle to adapt to their new role and surroundings; and rituals within the sorority can help to define and assume their new identity.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the extent to which an individual believes he or she can exercise control over actions, thinking, emotions, and events (Bandura, 1982). Individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy seek to resolve their own situations (Schwarzer & Renner, 2000). They are more likely to assume responsibility for the outcomes of their actions, as they believe they can influence these outcomes (Bandura, 1997). The ability to control or change thinking and feelings with regard to situations or dilemmas has been the topic of research for decades (Moore & Benbasat, 1991). Perceived self-efficacy was important in overcoming obstacles, defeats, and setbacks (Hawkins, 1992); and many journals featured meta-analysis research on self-efficacy across disciplines (Luszczynska, Scholz, & Schwarzer, 2005; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Again, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory has served as the theoretical framework for the majority of research on self-efficacy (Luszczynska et al., 2005), as well as for this study.

Researchers have identified a relationship between high perceived self-efficacy and innovation (Hulsheger, Anderson, & Salgado, 2009; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). One study of over 150 female collegiate leaders examined the ability for Social Cognitive Theory, in particular self-efficacy, to predict interest in leadership positions (Yeagley, Subich, & Tokar, 2010). The study found that self-efficacy and outcome expectations related positively to women seeking these positions. Student involvement studies abound, as do studies on sorority involvement. What is not published to date is a study design that attempts to identify and support the relationship between ritual participation and self-efficacy.

Method

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of sorority membership and ritual participation on the development of self-efficacy. Given the outcomes of rituals in sororities and their connection to the concepts of self-efficacy, an exploration of the specific involvement experience of sorority life was chosen as the focus of the study. The specific research question was: How does the sorority ritual experience influence the development of self-efficacy in women?

Given the lack of empirical research on sorority ritual participation and self-efficacy, the qualitative methodology of phenomenology was chosen to explore this relationship with collegiate sorority women (Creswell, 2013). Interviews and focus groups (see Appendix A) allowed for a rich description in exploring the relationship between ritual and self-efficacy by providing depth and flexibility in inquiry when framing the self-efficacy benefits of sisterhood and sorority life and the practice of sorority advisement (Patton, 2015). In phenomenological research, participants' perspectives are described and interpreted in order to understand the essence and structure of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Hycner, 1999; Moustakas, 1994) – in this case, the value placed on sorority ritual in terms of one's increased self-efficacy.

Site

Participants were selected from a mid-size regional comprehensive research institution in Colorado. Fraternities and sororities are relatively new to this institution, with the oldest Greek-letter organization less than ten years. Total fraternity/sorority membership is less than 5% of the campus population, though it is increasing. Additionally, no common housing is provided for these groups, which is an important distinction of the site, given that ritual frequently occurs in the home of the organization. Fraternity and sorority life varies at campuses across the country, and the role of the community may

be an important influencing factor.

Data Collection

Both one-on-one interviews and focus groups were utilized to collect data. Focus groups were advantageous due to participant interaction to build off of one another's thoughts, and the ability of the group setting to put respondents at ease about sharing information (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, 60 to 75-minute focus groups allowed for efficient data collection. However, as the flow and direction of the discussion was influenced by the group, one-on-one interviews also were conducted to provide a tool with which to triangulate data findings from the focus groups.

Prior to focus groups and interviews, participants were provided with consent forms detailing the purpose of the study and the data collection processes and procedures. A semi-structured protocol was developed outlining the areas to be explored in exploring sorority ritual participation and self-efficacy. The interview protocol was developed through the SCT framework by choosing questions that would elicit responses regarding the participants' perceived ability to affect change, as well as the effect of ritual on the perception of self. Questions specifically targeted the self-efficacy construct, which is the influence of belief in one's ability to accomplish goals. Adherence to the interview protocol ensured that questions were asked in a specific order and were carefully worded, and probing questions were embedded to provide opportunities to seek clarification and meaning (Patton, 2015). Focus groups were conducted on campus in a location familiar to the participants. One-on-one interviews were conducted both on and off campus at quiet locations to contribute to the individuals' comfort. The focus groups and interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed to ensure data accuracy (Creswell, 2013).

Sampling Strategy and Participants

National Panhellenic Council sorority members were contacted for interview and focus

Table 1*Participant Information*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u> <u>Length</u> <u>(years)</u>	<u>Race/</u> <u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Major</u>	<u>Leadership</u> <u>Position(s)</u>	<u>Other</u> <u>Involvement</u>
Stacy	1.5	White	21	Sr	History	President	Intramural sports
Autumn	0.5	Black/ African- American	18	Fr	Psych & Leadership Comm	No formal role	Black Student Union, Swing Dance Club
Sally	1	White	21	Jr	Org & Strategic Comm	President	None
Rachel	2	White	20	Jr	Psych & Criminal Justice	Philanthropy Chair, Vice President Governing Board	Video Game Club
Beatrice	2.5	Multi- racial	21	Sr	History, Teaching	Philanthropy Chair	Teacher Program
Megan	2	White	19	Soph	Chemistry & Physics	President Governing Board	Justice Mission, Live Action Role Play Club
Shelby	0.5	Hispanic/ Latina	18	Fr	Innovation	Membership Chair	Business Club
Patty	1.5	White	19	Soph	Business	Comm. Chair	None
Susan	3.5	White	20	Jr	International Business	Social Chair, Treasurer Governing Board	Society of Leadership, Sign-Lang. Club
Maureen	4	White	23	Sr	English	Philanthropy Chair	Religious Club
Kathy	0.5	Hispanic/ Latina	20	Jr	Sociology	No formal role	Religious Club
Janet	40	White	N/A	N/A	N/A	National Volunteer	N/A

group participation upon approval from the Institutional Review Board. Intensity sampling was utilized to select participants; this method used cases that strongly demonstrated the area of interest (Patton, 2015). Individuals were invited to participate in interviews and focus groups based on their involvement in the sorority. All sorority officers were invited to participate in the study via email. Twelve women initially were contacted; from those, seven were included in the study.

A snowball sampling technique was utilized to increase variation by encouraging participants to suggest women they thought may be interested. This resulted in four additional participants; thus, the two focus groups were composed of a total of 11 women. All participants self-identified as female, ranged in age from 18 to 23 years, represented the campus racial/ethnic demographics, and varied in the length of affiliation with their sorority, from six months to four years. While

the involvement level varied, all held some sort of leadership role within their sorority with the exception of one individual, and most were involved in additional student activities.

Two one-on-one interviews were held, which served as a tool to triangulate data findings that surfaced in the focus groups. This process ensured that the group dynamic did not negatively influence participant responses. One focus group participant and one local alumna were invited to participate. The focus group participant had belonged to her sorority for less than a year and was rather quiet during the focus group. The alumna had been involved with her sorority for 40 years and was selected because she had been a leader at the national level of her sorority for many of those years. Due to her experience and convictions, she was considered a subject matter expert. These individuals were selected based on their experience in order to add variation to the sample. Table 1 summarizes key information of

the participants.

Data Analysis

A phenomenological approach was utilized for the data analysis of the interview and focus group transcriptions by focusing on the systematic application of this method for coding credibility and dependability (Creswell, 2013; Hycner, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas’ (1994) phenomenological reduction method was used to develop a synthesis of the meanings and essences in order to explore the relationship between sorority ritual participation and self-efficacy. To begin, the researchers engaged in reflexivity to foster dialogue on the preconceptions, beliefs, values, and assumptions each brought to the study to mitigate them in the analysis process. Open coding of significant statements was conducted by horizontalization, reviewing each statement with equal value. Approximately 50 unique codes were developed by each research-

Table 2
Code Mapping Process

Significant Statements from Transcriptions and Open Coding

<u>Sisterhood</u>	<u>Values</u>	<u>Impact</u>
Support	Responsibility	Public Contribution
Role-Models	Pride	Civic Attitude
Social Connection	Identity	Paradigm Shift
Networking Opportunities	Integrity	Empowering Action

<u>Ritual Effect</u>	<u>Self-Efficacy</u>
Pride	Self-Aware
Motivation	Self-Respect
Shared Experience	Personal Growth
Communal Meaning	Academic Development
	Inspired

Textural Descriptions from Significant Statements

The effect of ritual leads to influences on the person, their behavior, and ultimately their environment, these influences lead to greater self-efficacy.

<u>Person</u>	<u>Behavior</u>	<u>Environment</u>
Internalized Values	Sisterly Bonding	Impact and Innovate

er; through parsimony and refinement, 44 open codes were consensually established.

Researchers then collectively revisited the transcriptions and codes and identified five significant statements: (1) sisterhood, (2) values, (3) impact, (4) ritual effect, and (5) self-efficacy. From the five significant statements, textural descriptions of the relationship between sorority ritual and self-efficacy were identified based on the SCT theoretical framework: environment, person, and behavior. Thus, the essence of the data findings was: the effect of ritual leads to influences on the person, their behavior, and ultimately their environment, these influences lead to greater self-efficacy. See Table 2 for a code mapping of the data analysis.

Study Trustworthiness

In order to confirm accuracy of the perceptions and meanings shared by the interviewees regarding sorority ritual participation and self-efficacy, five of the Creswell and Miller (2000) validation strategies were employed in building study trustworthiness. As a means with which to engage in peer review and debriefing, Moustakas' (1994) data reduction method was utilized to ensure dependability in the coding process across researchers. Random member-checking also was employed for interpretive confirmation of the textual descriptions and essence of the findings through open-ended follow-up interviews, in which reactions and clarification were sought on the credibility of the findings from the participants (Creswell, 2013). The outcome of the member-checking confirmed the findings of the study. Rich, thick descriptions also were employed to provide transferability of the findings. Additionally, triangulation was achieved through verifying study findings of the focus groups with one-on-one interviews. Last, the potential biases of each researcher were acknowledged through the researcher reflexivity process, noting previous ritual participation which could factor into the research analysis of this study.

Limitations

Data collection was limited to one university and due to the limited sorority community at the institution, the number of eligible participants was small. While the participants' demographics (racial/ethnic background, age, year in school, and number of years in their organization) were representative of the campuses' sorority population, the sample may not be reflective of national NPC statistics. The context of the study should be considered by readers as sorority membership represented a small portion of the student population (5% of the population, including both fraternities and sororities) and there was limited historical grounding of Greek-letter organizations on the campus (less than ten years). Yet, the uniqueness of the sorority community made this an interesting phenomenological study to pursue. In the future, additional institutions could be included with a greater number of participants. Despite these limitations, the data trustworthiness section documents the robustness of the study.

Ethics

The examination of sorority ritual is a delicate matter for participants, as it is a private, sacred event. Further, two of the researchers are sorority members, which introduced the possibility of bias into the study. In order to protect against inadvertent disclosure of private information, the scope of the study was explained prior to each focus group and interview and it was made clear to the participants that they were not required to divulge any information that would make them uncomfortable. All data that was gathered was de-identified through the use of pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Also, as three of the researchers had no prior experience with sorority ritual, the inclusion of these individuals served as an effective check for potential bias. Additionally, fellow members were involved at each stage to check one another's research fidelity which provided an effective method to ensure ethical procedures were followed.

Findings

Through the code-mapping process, five significant statements emerged: sisterhood, values, impact, ritual effect, and self-efficacy. Table 3 describes each significant statement and illustrates the frequency within the transcripts. The frequency generally was consistent across the focus groups and interviews. Thus, the significant statements and textual descriptions were interconnected and organized by the strongest observed connection. The textual descriptions were a by-product of the theoretical framework which defined the study design.

The textural descriptions were interdependent with one another, as they originated from the effect of ritual and aligned with the self-efficacy components of person, behavior, and environment. Ritual effect was a significant statement that crossed categories—any outcomes directly attributed to ritual by the participants. Janet described the effect of ritual by stating, “The ritual helps to build self-esteem and walk your faith.” Additionally, ritual was described as a sacred act that bonded sisters across generations, as noted by Stacy:

Our ritual was adopted in 1867 and it’s never changed since 1867 and so, just to think our founders said the same ritual that we say every week. They said that every week too when they were starting and I think it’s

amazing that it’s been kept a secret for over [150] years and that women have said the same things that I’m saying and they’ve felt the same way that I feel.

The ritual effect category overlapped with all of the other significant statements, in that it served as the impetus for sisterhood, values, impact and ultimately, self-efficacy. Within ritual effect, participants discussed the ways in which rituals made them feel a sense of pride and motivation, as well as a shared experience that led to a communal meaning of sorority membership. Likewise, self-efficacy emerged throughout the data and was illustrated in comments relating to self-awareness, self-respect, personal growth, academic development, and inspiration. Rachel shared, “I would say the things I’ve gotten through ritual and my relationships [with my sisters] have directly impacted my self-efficacy . . . by being willing to try new things and take action.” Sally also noted, “This support system that you have to help you carry out whatever you are wanting to do makes you feel more confident.” Thus, participants related their internalized values (person) to their sisterly bonding (behavior), which directly influenced their ability to impact and to innovate in their surroundings (environment).

Person: Internalized Values

Internalized values encapsulated the tex-

Table 3
Significant Statement Details

Theme	Frequency	Description
Sisterhood	159	A bond, connection, or sense of community in the sisterhood
Values	122	Expressed values, standards, or ideals of the sorority are internalized and ownership takes place
Impact	38	Impact that results in the transformation of ideas into action
Ritual Effect	59	Any outcomes directly attributed to ritual
Self-Efficacy	90	Knowledge and belief regarding one’s abilities to master a situation and to produce a positive outcome

tural description category of person, the positive impact of the sorority/ritual experience, as evidenced by women transitioning from outsider to new member to one who had fully adopted the values of the sorority. Ritual affected participants' views of self and influenced their attitudes, actions, and interactions. Internalized values included feelings of pride in the sorority and fostered a sense of responsibility for upholding its principles. Shelby noted that her new found pride in being a member of her sorority led her to believe it was "the best decision she ever made," with others in the focus group echoing her sentiment through nods. Participants shared at length about the responsibility of living up to their values and ensuring their behavior was in alignment; one noted the importance of "walking with integrity." The president of one sorority discussed her feeling that it is inappropriate to party every weekend due to her leadership role in the sorority: "I want people to look at me and say she's a leader, she's involved on campus, and I'll take that with me once I'm done with college too." Hence, her position increased her awareness of her role as a representative of the sorority and the new identity she assumed as a result of it.

The importance of internalizing the values of the sorority were directly tied to ritual by all participants. Beatrice remarked, "If you didn't believe in what you're saying [during ritual], you should not be there," to which other participants vigorously agreed. All believed that the sorority values expressed and highlighted through ritual led to members assuming a new identity as described by Janet: "You take the ritual, you take an oath, and you obey the oath." This was not stated by way of explanation, but rather as an assertive statement by Janet to emphasize the importance of maintaining the commitments honored through ritual. Maureen shared: "The more you say it, the more you will learn it and take it to heart." Learning to internalize the values of the sorority resulted naturally in a change of behavior as participants began to relate to themselves and to others as sisters.

Behavior: Sisterly Bonding

The behavior textural description category of sisterly bonding referred to relationships as well as ritual symbols and artifacts of the sorority. Significant statements of sisterhood included support, role-models, social connections, and networking opportunities. Behavior expectations were communicated through ritual that influenced the sisterly relationships and atmosphere of the sorority. Ritual was described in opaque terms, such as secrecy and sacred, but it became clear that these factors contributed to the foundation of sisterly bonding. Patty explained, "It's cool that you have this secret thing that no one else knows. Then learning that no one else knows it, it gives you a deeper connection with those girls." That connection led to behaviors that demonstrated participants had internalized the values of the sorority and had acted in a sisterhood where in which supported and even sustained one another.

Furthermore, the concept of sisterhood referred to a deep connection with sorority sisters and the supportive community generated by that connection. Maureen said, "Without that ritual, without our secrets, I guess you don't have that common connection." This sense of community was deepened by participation in rituals, the values communicated through rituals, and the secrecy of them. Sally remarked, "We wouldn't have any organization; we wouldn't have any, anything without our rituals which it makes it really valuable and important." Beatrice shared, "It's really nice to know that we're bonded throughout the country. That all our girls are believing in the same thing and saying the same thing and believing in those words that we're saying." The shared experience of ritual served as a foundation for supporting one another's individual growth and development.

Participants also discussed that they became more self-aware as a result of their sorority membership. Stacy shared:

I was sort of this insecure person . . . now
I know what I'm good at, I know what I'm

not good at and I'm not afraid to admit those things . . . I'm not afraid to step up and be like "no, I'm really good at that and I'll handle this, but you can help me with this part of it." It really taught me, meeting these women who I'm now sisters with, who I am.

Others shared feeling the support of their sisters and the general sisterhood. Megan remarked, "Now that I'm in a sorority I have the support of all my alums and all of our chapter members and all of their friends and family so it just extends the impact [since] we have that connection." Additionally, Patty shared that it "makes me more confident in who I am. I've always known I can do things, but knowing I have 60 other women supporting me is great." This sense of community led many to believe they had the power and support to impact and to innovate their environment in positive ways that increased their self-efficacy.

Environment: Impact and Innovate

Impact and innovate defined the environment textural description category; as a result of ritual, participants internalized the values and contributed to a sisterhood that led them to act and to think in empowering ways about their environment. Ritual affected participants' views on the contribution they could make on their college campus as well as the larger community, which led to a paradigm shift and the development of a more civic attitude. Thus, participants' beliefs that they had the power to impact and to innovate in their environment led them to grow and to change in empowering ways. All participants shared a story of growth or change that influenced their self-efficacy. A few noted changing their major to a field that was a better fit for them, as well as enjoying campus life to a greater extent as a result of sorority membership. Others discussed their development as leaders from assuming new opportunities in the sorority and on campus to enhancing their organizational, listening, and cooperative skills. Sally

stated, "It's given me an opportunity to know I have a voice that others will listen to." Shelby also noted that she developed a greater ability to trust others as a result of her membership. She said, "I was always the type that said 'no, I'll just get it done' and now I've changed and will actually give people jobs and trust them . . . trusting your sisters to get things done is great." Several participants connected this type of growth to their sisterhood, which culminated in an impact on their environment.

Additionally, participants' beliefs that they possessed the power to innovate and to impact led them to become more civically involved in their campus and local community. Nearly all individuals discussed planning chapter activities, such as community service events or fundraisers. Megan provided an example of impact outside the sorority when she reported on establishing a new organization on campus. Other women spoke more conceptually about the way in which "power in numbers" enabled them to take action and provided an opportunity to make a greater impact. Kathy noted, "Having a sense of belonging to something a lot bigger than yourself is really important to me and I think it's going to help me make an impact in the future." The prominent connection in this category was that support from the sorority community enhanced the personal functioning and self-esteem of the participants and in turn, empowered members, both individually and collectively, to take action and to positively influence their environment.

Discussion and Recommendations

Initial findings supported the selection of SCT as the theoretical framework for this study, which provided an excellent model to analyze the data and interpret the results. Social cognitive theory has been used extensively in many studies, which illustrates the thoroughness of the model and its proven applicability to human behavior. The robustness of the theory lent confidence to the

approach taken in this study (Calantone, Harmancioglu, & Droge, 2010; Choi, Sung, Lee, & Cho, 2011; Redmond, 2010). All components of self-efficacy were present in the findings, and ritual appeared to influence the person, environment, and behavior of sorority women. These factors worked in a cyclical nature to continue to influence the development of self-efficacy and the ability to make an impact. Findings demonstrated the strength of the sorority community in impacting individual beliefs to increase self-efficacy. Interviewees attributed their self-assurance and perceived the ability to accomplish a task to be directly related to their sorority involvement. Sorority leaders and their advisors can use the shared impact of the sorority experience when encouraging students to participate in the recruitment process.

One challenge experienced in the study was the separation of the influence of ritual from the influence of sorority participation in general. Based on responses, this was not possible at this stage. Autumn described ritual by saying, "It's like the difference between family and friends... it [ritual] separates sororities from clubs, that's what makes it special." When specifically asked whether it was ritual or access to the group that provided the benefits, Susan said, "it's both... you can't separate them." The overall sorority experience appeared to have positively contributed to the development of self-efficacy, and the sorority experience was found to be interconnected with ritual. However, it was unclear to what extent perceptions of self-efficacy were attributable to ritual alone. As students articulated that participation in ritual and their sorority experience were intertwined, advisors should continue to provide support for the ritual experience as it is the aspect of the sorority experience that differentiates Greek-letter organizations from other opportunities for group development in college, such as intramural sports teams, residence hall communities, and student organizations.

While the findings of this study showed ritual effects to have been positive, the potential nega-

tive effects also were apparent. Conflicts can arise when ritual promotes an unhealthy or unsafe environment, or the values of the sorority are not in alignment with personal values. Interviewees asked participants about potentially negative effects of ritual. Patty shared that the pressure for correct ritual was sometimes stressful, and Susan expressed frustration when other members' actions were not in alignment with ritual. However, most commented only on the positive aspects of ritual, yet, it was not possible to determine whether that was due to their personal beliefs or the nature of the study.

Additionally, a challenge was experienced in determining whether participation in a sorority contributed to the increase in self-efficacy, or whether individuals with high self-efficacy were drawn to sorority participation, a similar challenge in research related to outcomes of Greek-letter organization membership noted by Hevel and Bureau (2014). The findings appeared to suggest that the ritual experience influenced the development of self-efficacy. Specifically, interview participants varied in their level of confidence when joining the sorority. Patty spoke about "going looking for the [sorority] table" and getting involved immediately, whereas Susan, Autumn, Shelby, and Kathy shared stumbling into it and not feeling confident when they began. These women were in very different places, yet all attributed growth to their sorority membership. This appeared to indicate that, no matter the starting place, sorority membership had a positive impact on the development of self-efficacy and the ability to make an impact.

The findings from this qualitative study reveal the "what" and "how" of the influence of sorority involvement, specifically participation in ritual, on participants' increased self-efficacy. On the measures studied in a recent quantitative-based study, no effect was found on critical thinking, moral reasoning, development of intercultural competence, inclination to inquire and lifelong learning, and psychological well-being as a result of Greek-letter organization membership

(Hevel, Martin, Weeden, & Pascarella, 2015). Probing further into the experiences of sorority members uncovers more about the unique aspects of their involvement that have not yet been explored and which cannot be explained through

quantitative surveys alone. Additional qualitative research is recommended to understand what aspects of the sorority experience contribute to various learning and developmental outcomes.

APPENDIX A

Student Involvement

1. Can you tell me a little bit about how you are involved as a student, such what organizations are you involved with and what is your role within them? What has your experience been like?
2. What are the benefits of having participated in this/these organization(s)?
3. Have you changed through your participation? If yes, how so?

Ritual

4. Does your sorority/fraternity have formal ceremonies or rituals for members only?
5. If yes, is there a difference between observing and participating?
6. How many times have you been an observer or active participant in your sorority/fraternity ritual?
7. How important is ritual to you?
8. How important is it to the members of your organization?
9. What kinds of thoughts or feelings does observing participating trigger for you?
10. What are the benefits of having a ritual?
11. Does participation in a ritual benefit you? Can you describe how?
12. Generally, rituals express some values or beliefs. Do you agree with the values or beliefs expressed through our organization's ritual?

Self-Efficacy

13. Are you familiar with the term self-efficacy?
14. If no, describe it...

15. If yes, can you share with me your definition of it?

16. Please share with me your definition of social impact.

Connecting Questions

17. Do you believe there is a relationship between self-efficacy and ritual participation?

18. What do you see as the major benefits of being a sorority member when it comes to your ability to make a social impact?

Demographic Questions

19. Gender

20. Age

21. Years of post-high school education

22. Years in sorority/fraternity

23. Major/Minor

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SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF SORORITY WOMEN LIVING IN RESIDENCE HALLS

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College students find a sense of belonging at institutions in multiple ways. For college women, the relationships they form through their campus involvements are important. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the social integration experiences of sorority women living in residence halls. The researchers found sorority women had positive community experiences and enriched relationship opportunities through their involvement in sororities and residence halls. The women felt more connected to people through the relationships they formed because of sorority membership, whereas they felt more connected to campus as a whole because they lived in the halls.

Both social and academic integration are crucial components to students' success in college and likelihood to persist to graduation (Tinto, 1993). Residence halls and fraternity/sorority communities work to achieve similar goals; they provide ways for students to be involved, form relationships, and become integrated into their campus communities. Additionally, students develop valuable life skills in both residence halls and fraternity/sorority communities. Although there are fraternity/sorority-affiliated students who live in residence halls, some of them do not actively participate in the events or leadership opportunities offered through residence halls. It would be helpful to staff working with them to know if their primary point of social integration is with their fraternity /sorority community or their residence hall community, or both. Thus, this study examined the social integration experiences of sorority women living in residence halls. Why are some students who are leaders and actively involved in their sorority communities not active in the residential communities in which they live?

The Importance of Social Integration

The theoretical foundation for this study rests with Tinto's (1993) work on the importance of academic and social integration in college. He suggested college students engage in a process of

becoming integrated into the academic and social communities of a particular institution when they successfully navigate three stages – separation, transition, and incorporation. Students who successfully navigate separation from their previous cultures and transition into the current higher education setting are considered to be incorporated into the collegiate academic and social settings. Tinto (2012) found that once students incorporate and assimilate to campus norms, they adopt these values and norms into their own value systems. Academic and social integration are considered most important to students' likelihood to persist to graduation. Students who successfully transition to their campus environments experience positive educational outcomes as well as build the foundation for future interactions with peers and faculty.

Most students make initial steps toward integration to the campus by becoming assimilated into campus sub-communities. Participation in fraternity/sorority communities and residence hall associations are both examples of sub-communities for college students. Social ties allow students to experience social integration and better social connectedness to campus as a whole (Bolle-Brummond & Wessel, 2012).

College Women's Social Integration

Gender differences have an effect on social integration and institutional commitment because of the likelihood of women, when com-

pared to male peers, to seek and create deeper, more meaningful social bonds with the people around them (Deaux & LaFrance, 1998). Integration is important for both sexes, but it may be more influential on institutional commitment of women because they tend to need and benefit from strong social connections (Jones, 2009).

While women benefit from social connectedness, they can also experience problems during their college experiences. For example, the lack of women represented in leadership roles at colleges and universities has made it difficult for women to relate at the institutional level because they did not easily have accessible role models and mentors who were of the same gender (Kinzie, Thomas, Palmer, Umbach, & Kuh, 2007). Some young women were unable to picture themselves in leadership roles because they lacked female leadership role models at an institutional level. Women who were active in single sex environments thrived, were more engaged, and formed better relationships with those around them when compared to women in co-educational environments. Women, especially those who are first-generation college students, need and benefit more from social support (Jenkins, Belanger, Connally, Boals, & Duron, 2013). In college, young women are able to experience social support networks in a variety of ways including on-campus housing and student organization membership.

Role of Sorority Communities

Sorority membership is associated with higher levels of social interaction and involvement (Walker, Martin, & Hussey, 2015), allowing students to engage in peer interactions, develop listening skills, and clarify their values through discussions with their fraternity/sorority-affiliated peers (Dugan & Komives, 2010). Students who are sorority-affiliated have a network of people with whom they are able to interact on a daily basis, which ultimately allows them to feel more socially integrated to their campus environment (Capone, Wood, Borsari, & Laird, 2007).

There are particular benefits for women associated with membership in all-female organizations such as a sorority. Sorority members are more likely to be successful at building consensus and finding a sense of ownership in their work and membership than their non-affiliated female peers; they are also better at facilitating decision-making processes within their organizations (Martin, Hevel, & Pascarella, 2012). Sorority membership has also been found to afford women unique leadership skills that could be transferrable to other organizations and future employment opportunities. Another benefit of sorority membership for women is an increased awareness and sensitivity to gender norms and stereotypes. Sorority members endorse more non-stereotypical attitudes in areas of female political leadership and belief in differential work roles when compared to their non-fraternity/sorority-affiliated peers (Robinson, Gibson-Beverly, & Schwartz, 2004).

Role of On-Campus Housing

Willoughby, Carroll, Marshall, and Clark (2009) suggested residential life communities have significant impact on students' development in college. The activities and social interaction that happen within a hall help facilitate campus social integration (Utter & DeAngelo, 2015). Within residence halls students have a natural support system from those they live near and have meaningful relationships with people who help them in dealing with stress, anxiety, and loneliness (Schudde, 2011). Students find solace in peers and form a close social network with people with whom they are able to interact regarding classes, campus resources, and other information. Additionally, students who live on-campus are more likely to use campus resources because they were referred either by someone who lives near them or by a campus housing professional with whom they interact. The sense of community offered by a residence hall contributes to successful social integration, thus encouraging students to persist to graduation (Erb,

Sinclair, & Braxton, 2015).

Women are more likely than men to value and seek out female friendships and social connections in order to feel supported during their college transition (Enochs & Roland, 2006). Since residence halls have climates similar to families, with boundaries and an atmosphere of care and concern, the hall staff can serve in pseudo-older sibling roles by providing mentorship and guidance during a student's transition. This type of environment is important for the adjustment of all students in college, but especially for women. Residence halls provide women with the environment necessary to create support systems and form relationships.

Method

The purpose of this study was to better understand the social integration experiences of sorority women living in residence halls. The research question was, how do sorority women who live in residence halls describe their lived experiences of social integration?

This study was grounded in qualitative phenomenological methodology (Creswell, 2013), which attempts to understand the point-of-view of participants to make a common meaning of their lived experiences. Qualitative methodology was used because it is "inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analyzing data" (p. 22). This approach was chosen because the researchers believed they would be able to learn most about the social integration experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls through in-depth interviewing. Phenomenology "describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 76). The lived experience being evaluated in the current study is the experiences and social integration of sorority women who live in residence halls. Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The selection criteria included sophomore, ju-

nior, or senior women who were members of a sorority, and lived in a residence hall at the time of the interview; the sorority women did not necessarily live together in the residence halls. This criterion was selected to ensure participants had a full school year immersed in on-campus housing and sorority membership, which allowed for richer discussion of their social integration experiences.

Data were collected from seven college women who were from a mid-sized, public, research institution in the Midwest. It was classified as a research-based university with an undergraduate profile consisting of full time, four-year, residential, and selective with a primary function of serving undergraduate students (Carnegie Foundation, n. d.). The campus has limited opportunity for sorority women to live in residential sororities, thus most of them either live in residence halls or in off-campus housing. The inclusion criteria established by the researchers were that the population included traditional college-aged women, ages 18 to 24, who belonged to a sorority, held at least sophomore standing, and lived in a residence hall. An interview protocol was created to help facilitate semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they "offer the interviewer considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the subject a chance to shape the content of the interview" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 104). The questions related to participants' experiences living in the halls, and as a member of a sorority. Participants were asked to compare both types of experiences and describe if one experience had a more prominent influence on the way they connected to the university. For both on-campus housing and sorority membership, the questions asked about impressions of their involvement, activities the participants were involved in, relationships with other members in their community, and favorite memories. To improve the trustworthiness of the interview process, a panel of experts knowledgeable in sorority life, university housing, and qualitative

methodology reviewed the interview protocol, and questions were revised based on the suggestions of the panel. The protocol was then tested with the assistance of women who were in the population but not in the study. Final revisions were made to the protocol based on suggestions from the initial test. After the study received IRB approval, individual interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Participants were assigned pseudonyms.

The data were prepared and organized by using interview transcripts to analyze and find consistent themes among the participants (Shopes, 2011). The transcripts were typed and checked for accuracy using the digital recording. The researcher reviewed the transcripts and “uptalk” and “fillers” were edited out of the transcripts to make the participants’ messages more coherent. Cameron (2001) found “uptalk” and “fillers” to be declarative utterances found in discourse, especially in sorority women. The researcher then used the transcripts to see if there were any common themes or answers to the research question. After the data were collected, data were coded using two types of codes – a priori codes and inductive codes (Creswell, 2013). The codes were combined into broad themes, interpreted, and analyzed. Once all of the themes were identified, a narrative of the themes and experiences shared by the subjects through interviews was compiled. Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) evaluative criteria (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability) were used to evaluate the data collection and analysis processes to ensure trustworthiness. The evaluative criteria were met in a variety of ways. Credibility was established through triangulation. The researcher used a review of literature and semi-structured, in-depth interviews to gather information about the social integration experiences of sorority women who lived in residence halls. Transferability was established through thick description. Dependability was established when the research advisor performed an inquiry audit of the raw data. Conformability was established

through triangulation and reflexivity in which the researcher kept a reflective research journal throughout the research process.

The seven participants were White, traditional-aged undergraduate women, between the ages of 18 and 24, and who had attended the same college for at least one full academic year. Three of the women were Resident Assistants (RA) and also members of a sorority. The participants represented four different sororities of varying sizes. The participants were as follows:

- Sarah – a junior, Public Relations major. She joined a sorority her sophomore year, unlike many of her peers that joined in the freshman year, because she was looking for more leadership opportunities.
- Hillary – a sophomore, Elementary Education major with a focus on Special Education. Her interest in joining a sorority came during the spring of her first year after she watched her close friends enjoy their sorority experiences.
- Dottie – a junior, Public Relations major. She joined a sorority after she decided to return to the institution for her sophomore year and was looking for ways to become connected to campus.
- Chelsea – a sophomore, English and Spanish major with a minor in Linguistics. She was interested in joining a sorority to meet new people and to feel more connected to campus.
- Anna – a sophomore, Journalism and Telecommunications double major. She was interested in joining a sorority in order to meet new people.
- Elizabeth – a sophomore, Psychology major with minors in Spanish and Psychology of Human Development. She was interested in joining a sorority immediately after arriving on campus.
- Heather – a sophomore, Chemistry major with a pre-physical therapy interest. Her goal in joining a sorority was to get more involved on campus.

The authors interact with undergraduates on a personal level and witness their growth and development over their time in the residence life, campus ministry, student activities, and sorority life. Our passion for our work with undergraduates comes from witnessing the impact involvement and leadership has on their collegiate experiences. The experiences that were most influential included being an executive officer in a sorority and serving as a Resident Assistant. Both of these experiences contributed to our individual persistence to graduation, while also aiding in personal development. We believe the college student experience is shaped by the different communities and environments to which they belong, giving them the opportunity to grow and develop. If we are to serve students in the residence halls, we need to better understand how to construct an engaging living environment. If our sorority students are not participating in the residence halls, is there something stopping them? Or, what can we do better to ensure they have the best experience possible? Student Affairs educators, especially those who work closely with sorority students who live in the residence halls, have an obligation to learn more about the experiences of this student population in order to better meet their needs.

Findings

The findings are organized into three thematic categories: experiences of community, enriched relationship opportunities, and patterns of social integration.

Experiences of Community

The participants reported the sense of community felt in the residence halls and sororities as important to their feeling of connectedness to campus. For the participants, a sense of community was felt when they knew the people who lived near them, had a good relationship with their RA, had positive experiences in their hall, and felt committed to participating in events

and activities offered in their community. The participants noted that hall events and philanthropy events stood out as memorable to their community experiences. Additionally, they felt a sense of community living in the halls because they were located on campus and were close to campus resources and amenities. The open door communities in halls made them feel connected to the people they lived near. The women spoke about the relationships they had with their RAs and how the relationships influenced their overall experience of community in the halls. Three different aspects affected their experience of community in the halls – convenience and proximity to campus resources, the type of community, and the influence of their RAs.

The women explained the various ways that living on campus was convenient for them. Many of them identified the residence halls as being in prime locations on campus. Campus resources, such as the health center or the library, were closer to them than to their friends who lived off campus. Hillary shared, “I like everything that is here. We have so many resources available to us that wouldn’t be available if you lived off campus.” Additionally, their location on campus allowed participants to get to classes or on-campus meetings more quickly. The ease of access and proximity to their hall rooms made living on campus easy and convenient.

Some of the participants mentioned the type of community – either first year or upperclassmen – influenced how often they interacted with other people in their hall community. Involvement tended to be higher in first-year communities, when compared to the halls they lived in during their sophomore year and above. Anna suggested:

When you get to your sophomore year you stop branching out. Like, freshman year you go to all that stuff because that’s how you meet people and that’s how you start conversations. But then sophomore year [you’ve] found your friend group. You don’t need to branch out more, and you’re so busy.

The participants further explained that their levels of involvement differed depending on the type of community in which they lived. As they spent more time in both the halls and sororities, they found their overall involvement in residence halls decreased. Many of them attributed this to their busy schedules or events being scheduled at conflicting times.

The communities formed in the residence halls offered students opportunities to experience a wide variety of people, including those with different majors, ethnicities, and family backgrounds. Additionally, their RAs had significant influence on the students' hall experiences. For those who had a positive experience with their RA, the communities thrived. Sarah shared: "having an RA, especially if they are one that's around a lot, can make a big difference on knowing where your resources are." It was also her experience with her RA that made her want to become an RA. Negative experiences with RAs also shaped hall environments. Chelsea explained that her RA was rude and unhelpful once in a situation involving her roommate who was sick and needed medical attention. Her RA did not help in the situation, and, instead, assumed the women had been drinking, so she treated them poorly. Chelsea had difficulty finding positive experiences in her community because she felt disconnected to her RA due to the negative interaction; she felt that her RA did not care about her or her roommate. The negative experience affected how Chelsea viewed her relationships with her peers in her living environment. When she felt that her RA did not care about her, she no longer wanted to participate in activities directed by her RA.

Although living in the residence halls offered opportunities for students to meet a diverse group of people of various majors, ethnicities, and backgrounds, women who belonged to a sorority made connections with a variety of people across campus. They suggested they felt part of the greater campus community because of their sorority membership. Sarah said, "I think the fact

you can see 100 people on campus . . . makes you feel like you're more at home. You're more familiar with different people." Many of the women talked about how their sorority sisters helped them to feel more connected to campus simply based on the number of people they knew. Additionally, the women noted that because of their sorority membership, they became involved in the larger campus community activities including student government, organizations related to their major, and service and philanthropic opportunities.

Another effect of sorority membership was that the women used their experiences to jumpstart their leadership in the campus community. Some of the other leadership experiences including being involved with Dance Marathon, serving as RAs in residence halls, and leading organizations related to their majors. The participants noted that when their sisters were involved in an organization, they were more likely to pursue their outside interests because of the example set by other sorority members. Sarah pursued an executive position on the campus Panhellenic Council. She said the following about why she wanted to apply for an executive position, "I really liked the idea of all the sororities working together on one council. It was no longer working to make just your sorority better, but to make Greek Life on campus better."

Many of the women noted their hesitance in joining a sorority was based on prior misconceptions they had about fraternity/sorority life. They suggested the negative media perceptions and conversations with peers, at times, portraying fraternity/sorority life as full of alcohol, drugs, and partying to be reasons why they were not originally interested in joining. The participants stated that it was after they spent more time with their sororities in weekly chapter meetings, regular social events, and through recruitment preparation. It was after the participants began to prioritize in order to spend time with their sisters and, as a result, formed deeper, more meaningful relationships that their percep-

tions about the fraternity/sorority community changed. The participants felt that their sorority sisters became like family and were relationships in which they felt truly known, loved, and respected.

Enriched Relationship Opportunities

The women referenced the relationships they formed with the people they lived near in the residence halls and with their sorority sisters as being memorable to their college experiences. The friendships made with the women on their residence hall floors, as well as with the other women in their sororities, helped them to feel part of the campus culture. They noted their relationships with the people around them helped them cope with their college transition, provided them with new opportunities, and offered a support network of women on whom they could depend.

The relationships the women formed in the residence halls were convenient because they were close to their friends who often lived right down the hall from them. The halls offered them the opportunities to meet and become friends with people they would not have otherwise met. Since the women lived in close quarters, they had a group of people who were physically close to them and could offer support, if necessary. Chelsea noted that when she received notice of her admission to a study abroad program, she was unable to contact her parents, “so I just ran down the hall and there [are] four other girls who are in our sorority, as well as my roommate, and ... celebrated with them.”

The women often talked about the relationships they formed in the residence halls as being their first connection to campus. Hillary shared, “a lot of people I had classes with, so I got to know people that way. And then the girls that lived next door, I actually live with now. It was just kind of like networking I guess.” There was always someone with whom to talk, share exciting news, or vent about a bad day. Another benefit of living in a hall was that it gave students the

opportunity to live in close proximity to people with whom they would not typically interact. Chelsea said, “you really are exposed to a lot of different people – people that are different than you and what you’re used to.”

However, based on time and energy spent, the relationships the women formed with their sorority sisters were deeper and more meaningful than those formed with the people who lived with in their halls. They felt more connected to their sisters, and, thus, continued to prioritize the time they spent interacting with the sisters. More time and energy allowed for deeper and more authentic relationships and conversation. Many of the participants commented that the relationships formed in their sororities were the most influential of their college experience. Sarah said, “the difference is the deeper connections. Yes, you’re not going to like everyone in your sorority ... but you care about them ... Even if you don’t know them really well you would do a lot more for them than you would for a random person on your floor.” Furthermore, Chelsea described how her commitment to sisterhood motivated her to be a better version of herself, holding herself to a higher standard, because she was representing her entire sisterhood. For Anna, going through recruitment solidified her relationships with the women she called sisters. “You really get to understand your sisters, and why you’re in this, and understand the deeper meaning to it all.” The relationships they made through their sorority allowed them to feel socially integrated into a community of people and allowed them to feel like they had successful experiences in college.

Patterns of Social Integration

The research question asked how sorority women who live in residence halls experienced social integration. Students who successfully adopt the prevailing norms of the institutional community are considered to be incorporated. Tinto found once students incorporate and assimilate to campus norms they are integrated

on campus, meaning they adopt the values and norms of the broader campus community into their own value systems (Tinto, 2012). Students who interact with their campus environments experience positive educational outcomes. Additionally, involved students build a foundation for future interactions with peers and faculty which could enhance their academic and social affiliations. The women experienced stronger social integration depending on how their experience was delineated – either in talking about how they felt connected to the campus community in general, or how they felt connected to their peers. The women felt more connected to campus as a whole because they lived in the halls, whereas they felt more connected to people through the relationships they formed because of their sorority memberships.

The participants were asked if living in the residence halls or being a member of a sorority made them feel more connected to campus. Four of the seven participants reported that the halls made them feel connected because of their on-campus location and their knowledge of campus events through in-hall advertisements. However, they experienced a deeper sense of connection based on the relationships they made in their sororities. For the participants, the stronger pattern of social integration in relationships was found in their sorority membership and the relationships they made because of it. This integration caused many of the students to grow closer to their sororities through activities and relationships.

Discussion

Influence of Community on Connectedness

The community experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls are influential in their feelings of connectedness and belonging to campus. The more positive experiences the women had in their residence halls or sororities, the more likely they were to feel connected

to the campus community; they had a desire to form relationships with the people around them and to participate actively in events and activities. When women find a community – be it through the residence halls or through their sororities – they find a home. It is the feeling of home and closeness that allows them to feel connected to the larger campus community.

The participants in this study had two main communities to which they belonged – their residence hall and fraternity/sorority communities. The women found a home in their residence halls, and they found other women with whom they could connect their sororities. The more socially integrated the women became through their hall and sorority experiences, the more connected they felt to the campus community as a whole. Their closeness and proximity to campus resources influenced their feeling of connectedness to campus. Additionally, their network of personal connections expanded as they got more involved. As sorority women who live in halls assimilated, they had better experiences with their communities.

Tinto (2012) suggested students who were socially integrated into their campus communities were more successful and more likely to persist to graduation. Their transition into college might be difficult, but if they are successful in their pursuits to get involved and find a community to suit their needs, they will be more successful. He noted both residence hall communities and fraternity/sorority organizations give students the opportunities to integrate into their communities by providing them with a subgroup of people who shared similar identities and values (Tinto, 2012). Bolle-Brummond and Wessel (2012) found social integration helped college students feel better connected to campus. In varying degrees, both living in a hall and being a member of a sorority were means of social integration and allowed the women to feel connected to campus. Students experience social integration in a number of ways (e.g., interactions in classrooms, residence halls, student organizations, etc.),

and once they are socially connected to campus, they are typically successful in their persistence to graduation. Utter and DeAngelo (2015) and Pike (2003) discussed the importance of students becoming integrated and connected to campus through the sub-communities of residence halls or fraternity/sorority life. For the participants, both their hall and sorority experiences affected their sense of social integration.

Importance of Relationships

The relationships that college women form because of their involvements are important in making them feel integrated to campus (Deaux & LeFrance, 1998). Therefore, the deeper and more meaningful connections they have, the better their collegiate experiences are (Jones, 2009). The relationships the women formed in their residence halls and sororities were important in their collegiate experiences. Enoch and Roland (2006) found female friendships help women transition into college. As they spend more time together, the casual interactions with the people who live around them often turn into friendships that are more meaningful.

The researchers found the residence halls served as a home away from home, and the people they lived with represented a pseudo-family during their time at college. The women find they can depend on their newfound friends for support through their college transitions. Living near their friends made it easy to share their excitement or disappointment. Baxter-Magolda (1999) cited extra social pressure women face when transitioning into college. However, residence halls provided built-in support systems through the friendships made with the people who live around them.

Transition issues emerge for women when they first enter college, and they benefit from the support of the people around them, especially from other women (Jenkins et al., 2013; Kinzie et al., 2007). The women found solace and comfort when they interacted with the other people in their residence hall communities,

who were often similar issues. They were able to form a support system and a network of people on whom they could rely to help them in their transition to college. The communities formed in their halls served as the foundation of series of experiences that allowed sorority women who lived in halls to feel connected to the campus community.

Martin et al. (2012) cited many benefits for women involved in all-female organizations such as sororities. The opportunities for development, relationships, and leadership are important to sorority women. Although the relationships the sorority women formed in the residence halls their freshmen years are important to their original social integration, the relationships they have in their sororities tend to last beyond those formed in the halls. The more time the women spent with their sisters, the closer they felt to them. Dugan and Komives (2010) found that fraternity/sorority members engaged in deep and meaningful relationships with their peers. In support of this claim, the sorority women said they experience an almost familial bond with the other women in their sororities. The women could imagine themselves interacting with their sorority sisters in the future, but they did not share similar sentiments when talking about the relationships they had with the women by whom they lived in the halls.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

How do student affairs educators wrestle with the need for connection and involvement in residence halls? Student affairs professionals may enlist the sorority women who live in their residence halls to collaborate on events; for example, the hall in which a sorority woman lives could sponsor her team at sorority philanthropic events, or her RA may take a group of residents from her floor to attend an event sponsored by her sorority. Alternatively, fraternity/sorority educators might consider co-sponsoring events in their members' halls. These types of events

were memorable to the participants and enhanced their positive experiences of community. It would be beneficial for student affairs educators to explore ways to connect the residence hall and fraternity/sorority communities.

Additionally, for institutions that do not have sorority-designated housing, it is worth considering providing housing options for sorority women to live together on one floor in a residence or have an entire residence hall available in which sorority women may live. If sorority women have the opportunity to live in a residence hall in close community with their sorority sisters, they could enjoy the benefits of living in a sorority, and the benefits of a residence hall. This living situation could potentially create more interest in participation in hall activities and programs. Looking at the experiences of women and giving them opportunities to share their voices is important for their personal development, social integration, and persistence to graduation. In particular, if we allow sorority women who live in residence halls to speak of their own experiences, to learn from their experiences, and to adapt to their needs, it moves us closer to helping in their social integration and getting them actively involved in their communities.

For those student affairs educators who do not identify as part of the fraternity/sorority community and may not understand the associated culture, it may be difficult to connect or advocate for fraternity/sorority affiliated students. Unfortunately, for some, experiences with fraternity/sorority affiliated students may be negative. It is critical to understand the good that comes from the fraternity/sorority-affiliated population and their service, leadership, and friendship. This includes authentic and familial-like bonds, increased likelihood of participation in on-campus activities, and feelings of connectedness to peers. It is also important to recognize the challenges associated with the fraternity/sorority community. Designing appropriate challenge and support around these issues is essen-

tial to build a quality residential community for fraternity/sorority students. Additionally, it is important to understand the benefits of living on campus, which include convenience to on-campus locations, ease in interacting with those that live in close proximity, and the influential relationship with RA. Both fraternity/sorority life and residence halls greatly affect the collegiate experience by enriched relationship opportunities and social integration into campus community for women. Women have the opportunity to form relationships, participate in leadership opportunities, and make lasting memories.

This study was limited by a lack of racial/ethnic and geographic diversity. Future research could be longitudinal exploring how feelings of residence and sorority life changes over time, and the experiences of fraternity men who live in residence halls. The study was also limited because three of the seven participants were RAs who had received significant training in how to connect to a group of peers. This training likely affected their experiences.

The intent of this study was to examine the social integration of sorority women who lived in residence halls. Living in on-campus housing provided a springboard for sorority women to get more deeply involved in their sorority organizations and to form relationships with those around them. Sorority women who live in residence halls experience positive social integration to their campus communities and benefit from the communities in which they are involved. Their first integration experience comes from living on-campus, getting to know their neighbors, and being closely connected to activities and events. Their deeper integration experience comes from their sorority membership, and forming deeper bonds with their sisters.

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THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SISTERHOOD WITHIN THE COLLEGIATE SORORITY: AN EXPLORATION

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The term “sisterhood” is one that has been used in a variety of ways to describe relationships among and between groups of women. Scholars have devoted little to no attention to the manner in which modern sorority members define and conceptualize their sisterhood experience. This study seeks to understand the various ways that collegiate sorority members define and experience the concept of sisterhood. The present study closely mirrors and extends the methodology and focus of the research on brotherhood conducted by McCreary and Schutts (2015).

Since their founding in 1870, collegiate women’s fraternal organizations (now referred to as sororities) offered a variety of benefits to their members. Sororities originally provided a source of solidarity and support for their members who found themselves as unwanted minorities on male-dominated college campuses in the late 19th Century (Turk, 2004). As the sorority movement expanded and grew, these initial concepts of solidarity and support gradually gave way to a sorority experience largely centered around social experiences and a sense of belonging (Turk, 2004).

Research on the sorority experience has been limited to a handful of studies focusing largely on educational outcomes. The body of existing research related to sorority involvement has shown both positive and negative outcomes, but has generally revealed that membership in sororities leads to more positive, and less negative, outcomes than membership in fraternities (Bureau, Ryan, Ahren, Shoup, & Torres, 2011; Hevel, Martin, Weeden, & Pascarella, 2014; Martin, Hevel, Asel & Pascarella, 2011; Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt, 2001). Sorority women outperform non-affiliated women on campus specifically in science fields, and sorority membership is shown to have continued academic benefits for women during the second and third years of college (Pascarella, et al., 2001). Beyond academic benefits, Asel, Seifert, and Pascarella (2009) also

found a strong relationship between membership in a Greek-letter organization and higher rates of involvement in social and co-curricular activities than non-affiliated students. The positive benefits of membership improve throughout a women’s collegiate experience. Pike (2001) noted that senior members scored higher than non-affiliated students on gains in student engagement and gains in student learning between freshman and senior year.

The term “sisterhood” is one that has been used in a variety of ways to describe relationships among and between groups of women. Scholars have used the term with regards to the feminist movement (Cassel, 1977; Siegel & Baumgardner, 2007), to describe the bonds between women of color (Austin, 1991) and even to describe the relationships among prostitutes during the early Twentieth Century (Rosen, 1983). While the term has been used with some regularity in the feminist literature, we are left to guess how “sisterhood” is experienced by sorority members, as no scholarly attention has been paid to that topic. While Turk (2004) has described the historic roots of sisterhood within the context of the collegiate sorority, scholars have devoted no attention to the manner in which modern sorority members define and conceptualize their sisterhood experience. This study seeks to fill the existing gap in the literature. Specifically, this study seeks to understand the various ways that

collegiate sorority members define and experience the concept of sisterhood.

In attempting to understand the concept of sisterhood within the collegiate sorority, this study closely mirrors the methodology and focus of the research conducted by McCreary and Schutts (2015) regarding how collegiate fraternity members define and construct the concept of brotherhood. Their research identified four unique but related schema employed by fraternity members to conceptualize brotherhood: brotherhood based on solidarity, brotherhood based on shared social experiences, brotherhood based on belonging, and brotherhood based on accountability (McCreary & Schutts, 2015). The research on brotherhood illustrated not only that the different schema of brotherhood can be identified and measured, but also that the dominant schema of brotherhood were strongly related to a variety of other important outcomes such as hazing tolerance, alcohol use, organizational attachment, and moral disengagement at both the individual and organizational levels (McCreary & Schutts, 2015). As fraternal brotherhood has provided a new lens through which to view these issues so common in fraternities, a similar study of sisterhood is a worthy undertaking. As noted by McCreary and Schutts (2015) “To understand the way that fraternity members define and conceptualize brotherhood is to understand the way they define the experience itself, and would provide valuable framework for understanding the behaviors and cognitions of fraternity members as a peer group” (p. 32). The same can be said for an understanding of sisterhood – as we seek to provide context to the outcomes of sorority membership, an understanding of how women define and conceptualize sisterhood provides a valuable framework and merits a more in-depth understanding than the current literature provides.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative, grounded-

theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) approach to understanding how sorority women define and conceptualize sisterhood. As the current literature provides us with no explanation of the ways in which sorority members experience sisterhood, a grounded-theory approach is appropriate in developing a theory of fraternal sisterhood. The researchers partnered with an international sorority headquarters to conduct semi-structured focus group interviews of sorority members attending the sorority’s convention during the summer of 2014. Focus groups were chosen over in-depth interviews for two reasons. First, as sisterhood is a group-relevant construct that involves social interaction and relationships, a group conversation (as opposed to individual interviews) seemed more appropriate (Liamputtong, 2011). Secondly, the researchers chose focus groups for convenience in that it provided an opportunity to hear broader and more diverse perspectives within a limited timeframe. In all, four separate focus groups were conducted, each lasting approximately 90 minutes, and each consisting of 12-16 sorority members. While this may be considered to be a large group for focus group research (Liamputtong, 2011), convenience dictated the inclusion of a larger number of participants per group in order to ensure diversity in terms of the participant’s backgrounds and experiences within the sorority, as the researchers were only given one day in which to conduct the focus groups at the convention. The participants were selected via stratified random sampling, ensuring diversity in terms of age, geographic representation, university size/type, chapter size, level of chapter involvement and chapter culture. This sampling approach is consistent with the sampling procedures for grounded theory research suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) in that the researchers approached the project with some understanding of the of the phenomenon we intended to study and intentionally selected groups of individuals most representative of that phenomenon.

The focus group participants all ranged in age

from 19-22 years old, and were predominately White/Caucasian, although there were also a small number of Hispanic, Asian-American and African-American participants. The focus group involved partially-structured questioning – the students were asked to respond to the questions “What is sisterhood,” “How do you think most of the members of your chapter think about sisterhood” and “How do you distinguish friendship from sisterhood.” Follow up questions were asked in order to better understand responses, to clarify ideas presented, and to distinguish various themes from one another as they emerged. Following the recommendations of Strauss and Corbin (1998), emerging themes were analyzed as they were collected, and each subsequent focus group built upon the themes and categories emerging from previous focus groups. Those themes that repeatedly emerged in the conversations became the focus of the latter focus groups, as the researchers sought better understanding of the concepts that were discussed by participants. The researchers collected detailed notes in addition to audio recordings which were subsequently coded. Following the recommendations of both Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Tesch (1990), the data were summarized and reduced into broader themes, and patterns within the responses were identified, including frequencies and differences within the responses. Once coded, the data were categorized and the emerging themes were analyzed, described and labeled.

The data collected revealed five distinct themes that sorority members use to explain or define sisterhood. We describe these data in the following section based on the primary themes which were identified in the analysis, including *sisterhood based on shared social experiences, sisterhood based on support and encouragement, sisterhood based on belonging, sisterhood based on accountability, and sisterhood based on common purpose.*

Findings

Shared Social Experience—“Having pictures of my sorority sisters and me in letters is one of the best parts of being in a sorority...”

The sorority as a social outlet and sisterhood as a primarily social construct was a clearly held viewpoint of a number of participants. These participants understood their membership in the organization to be primarily a social contract, as they joined the organization through a process emphasizing the social nature of the sorority, and these social ties remained important throughout their experience. One participant explained how the social nature of sisterhood was most important by stating “Right now it’s all about making friends and having a good time” as those social ties were pivotal to cementing a deeper connection down the road. This same idea was expanded upon by another member who said that “most people join for the social aspect, because they just don’t know what else is coming or what else to expect.” Another participant expressed that “whenever I started, I thought of the image, because I was an only child, so I wanted the image of me being with all my sisters having all these pictures, showing everybody that I had all these friends and I was just so excited about it” explaining that what she originally sought out from her sorority experience was the publically visible social status of being able to post photos of all her new friends on social media.

Some participants explained that many of their sisters would consider sisterhood in terms of who they party with on the weekends. The phrases used to communicate what sisterhood is to those members were “the women that drive me home from the bar,” “the person that holds my hair back when I drink too much,” or “my wing-woman.” Participants articulated that many of their chapter members found the pre-gaming and getting ready together before going out to be an important component of sisterhood. The overtly social nature of fraternities and sororities has been thoroughly examined in the

literature. Women in college have steadily increased their reported rates of binge drinking in social settings in the past decade. Nearly 40% of sorority women reported binge drinking once, and 20% report binge drinking three or more times when asked about their alcohol consumption in the previous 2 weeks (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Seibring, Nelson, & Lee, 2002). Smith and Berger (2010) explored how women interact and socialize within their peer groups. They found that alcohol consumption came after the primary relationships had been formed and was used as a method to deepen the bonds that women held with each other. Their study found that women in peer groups, including sororities, have a type of ritual related to their social interactions that includes pre-gaming together, going out together and then sharing stories together the next day. One of the most relevant pieces of this ritualistic social experience was that when members of the group shared their drinking escapades with others, the negative consequences were often rationalized as the inevitable byproducts of a good time (Smith & Berger, 2010). The storytelling part of the social experience highlights the positive aspects of drinking and partying, while downplaying the negative aspects, which together can have a reinforcing effect for members. As our research uncovered, this ritual is viewed by many sorority members as an important component to sisterhood that can serve to strengthen the relationships between members.

Some focus group members were hesitant to acknowledge the more social aspects of the sorority as being tied to sisterhood. One member explained that she initially did not want to categorize drinking and partying as part of sisterhood. When pressed to distinguish the difference between how she defined sisterhood and how she actually saw sisterhood displayed by members of her chapter, she resigned herself to the fact that attending parties together and drinking as a group was a part of her sorority's sisterhood. Others also described this version of sisterhood in a more negative light. As one student noted

“People [who think about sisterhood in this way] are only thinking about themselves. They think sisterhood is about the girls I want to go party with. That's probably why we're [her chapter] on probation.” Another participant described this version of sisterhood as a “sisterhood of selfishness. Girls only care about what's in it for them – whether or not they're having fun, and that's all they really care about.” In this sense, it is easy to imagine rifts in chapters, with factions divided along the lines of those who see sisterhood as a primarily social experience, and those who view it in more altruistic ways.

Comparatively, the social nature of sisterhood was less tied to partying and alcohol consumption when compared to the shared social experience of brotherhood in fraternities, as observed by McCreary and Schutts (2015). Men describe the social aspects of brotherhood almost exclusively in relation to “the fun times – the parties.” Rather, sorority members' conceptualizations of the social side of sisterhood revolved primarily around the social prestige and status that comes from membership. As a result, the image of the sorority is paramount in the minds of these members. This was brought to light by one participant who stated that “We are all one image, and it is important that members uphold that image.” Another participant noted “There is a sense of pride in our exclusivity. We share a bond that nobody else can understand.”

This emphasis on the importance of the perception of a social exclusivity could speak, at least in part, to the idea of sororities serving as gatekeeper related the social experience for female students on many college campuses. Stuber, Klugman, and Daniel (2011) studied the gender differences in social exclusion within the fraternity and sorority community and noted that men tended to join their organizations as a result of forming a social bond with current members, whereas women would join their sorority potentially for the perceived social status that group held (Stuber, Klugman, & Daniel, 2011). In other words, many women join their sorority

not because of a sense of connection or belonging to the individual members of that group, but because of their perception of that group's place in the social hierarchy of campus life. Based on this, one could hypothesize a strong relationship between viewing sisterhood as a primarily social construct and concern about the sorority's position in the social hierarchy.

The rise of the social nature of sisterhood was well-documented by Turk (2004) in her historical study of women's fraternal organizations. As she noted, the first generation of sorority members (circa 1870-1890) focused on mutual support and solidarity in the face of opposition to their mere presence on campus. Feeling pressure to justify their presence on campus, their efforts focused primarily on assisting and supporting one another in academic pursuits. As that opposition waned near the turn of the century, sorority members no longer found themselves struggling and isolated. As a result, sorority members of the 1890's and early 1900's de-emphasized the original intellectual mission of their organizations while emphasizing the social nature. Recitations and academic readings at chapter meetings were replaced by social critiques, teas, and parties with fraternities, as the sororities turned their attention largely away from their intellectual and scholarly pursuits and became focused instead on what could be described as social and largely superficial affairs (Turk, 2004).

Encouragement and Support—“My sorority sisters have my back and are there for me when I need them...” The most frequent theme to emerge from participants was the description of sisterhood as the presence of a constant source of encouragement and support. Participants were able to explain that the support and encouragement within the sorority holds a slightly deeper meaning than any support they may receive from their other friends. Participants described their sisters providing encouragement at all levels and supporting them in both positive times and negative times. This idea of mutual support was explained by one member

as “they (sisters) are there to celebrate with you when something great happens or they're there to comfort you and just be with you when something bad happens.” One woman expressed how the outpouring of support she received while performing in a school theater production highlighted the support and encouragement she felt from her sisters:

It's (sisterhood) that kind of love and support, having them be enthusiastic about whatever you do. That in turn makes me want to go do that for anything they have and support them as much as I can, because I feel loved and supported and valued for what I do.

Similarly, other participants noted sisterhood based on encouragement and support as a system of reciprocity, with one student noting “it is your role to encourage and support your sisters knowing you will receive that same commitment in return.” Another member explained that she first understood this level of sisterhood when she had to go to the hospital and several of her sisters showed up to be there with her. As she stated “It was then that I began to understand what it [sisterhood] was all about. It's about being there for people in need.” This sense of obligation applies even to members that are not considered close friends or acquaintances. As one member noted:

I'm not necessarily going to be best friends with 150 people in my chapter, but if one of those people needed something from me, I would do it. Even if they're not my favorite person, I might not get along with them all the time- I would do it because they are in my sisterhood.

Participants often framed their comments about encouragement and support in absolute terms and indicated that they would always be there for each other regardless of the circumstances. For example, one participant stated “When you can't trust anyone else, you can find a sister to trust. I have a hard time trusting a lot of my friends outside of (the sorority)... You just always have someone you can confide in when

maybe you don't want to confide in anyone else." Another put it into even simpler terms: "Putting your sister's needs above your own, at the times when they most need it." There was also a common theme of being there to answer late night calls as a show of support. As one member explained:

It's those calls you get at four in the morning and you still answer them even though you have to sleep because you feel that love for someone and respect to be like 'I don't care what time of the day it is, I don't care what the problem is I'm going to answer no matter what.' I feel like that's sisterhood.

This schema was similar, yet distinguishable, to brotherhood based on solidarity observed by McCreary and Schutts (2015) in their study of fraternity men. Both men and women used similar language to generally describe notions of "being there for one another" and "having one another's back." However, gender-specific differences emerged when asking about specific examples of how those notions of solidarity and support played out. For men, this more often involved physical support (*If my we were out at a bar and my brother got into a fight, I would have his back*) or group support (*If one of our guys got into trouble, it would be important that we rally around him and show our support*). This often manifested itself in behaviors that could best be described as a gang mentality. However, the support referred to most frequently by sorority members was emotional support (i.e. being there to listen, attending a pageant or theater production, talking through problems) and did not manifest itself in gang-like, negative behaviors that were observed by the men in McCreary and Schutts' (2015) study. In order to distinguish this difference, the term "support and encouragement" was used in place of the term "solidarity."

This finding is consistent with what we know about the different manners in which men and women conceptualize their relationships. Men tend to focus on the activities they partake in together as being the bedrock of the relationship,

whereas women focus more on the shared feelings, closeness and intimacy of the relationship (Walker, 1994). Handler (1995) investigated sorority membership as a strategy for navigating gender relations, focusing on two key aspects of the sorority experience: the closeness of the bond that can only be attributed to the sorority and a sense that the expectations of sisters are greater than the expectations of friends. Social support was found to be a key factor in predicting the success of a student's transition and adjustment to college. The increased social support from friends is predictive of increases in personal-emotional, social, and overall adjustment to the college/university environment (Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007). The sorority experience provides a structure in which collegiate women experience support and encouragement. Their perception of the level of support and encouragement that they receive from the group is a measuring stick for how strong they view the sisterhood within their sorority.

This schema of sisterhood is closely related to the concept of perceived organizational support. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1989) explain this concept in terms of a work-place setting in which an individual is more committed to the organization when they feel that the organization is committed to them. This concept appears to be closely related to the sense of encouragement and support found in the interpersonal relationships that develop between sisters within the sorority. As one focus group participant noted "Sisterhood is about putting the needs of others above your own." Sentiments such as these were frequently shared, and indicated a commitment to the organization that came about as a result of receiving encouragement and support from others. Participants were able to articulate a stronger sense of commitment to their sisters when they felt that those supportive commitment levels were reciprocated by others. Based on the research of Eisenberger et al (1989), this feeling can create an environment in which members of the organization will be

more likely to be retained in the organization for longer periods of time, engage and participate at higher levels, and pay back those levels of support and encouragement to others on a consistent basis (Eisenberger et al, 1989).

The historic study of sisterhood by Turk (2004) reveals that this sisterhood based on support and encouragement was likely the most salient form of sisterhood to the founding members of sororities in the 1870's through the 1880's. As she noted, the women who founded and joined sororities during that time period did so to provide mutual aid and assistance to their fellow co-eds during a time in which their presence on campus was met with hostility from students, faculty and society writ large. Feeling a great deal of pressure to justify their existence on campus, these early sorority members supported and encouraged one another in a manner that would reflect positively on one another, the sorority, and the female sex (Turk, 2004). While the present findings show that the support and encouragement sorority members feel today are less along academic lines and more along the lines of emotional support, the feeling of the sorority as a place of receiving that support was and remains an important feature of sisterhood.

Belonging—“I feel very connected to my sorority sisters...” Focus group participants frequently made mention of the sorority being their “home away from home” or their “family while in college.” This concept of a familial belonging was explained by one participant as:

No matter disagreements you have, no matter how many fights you get in with your sorority sisters- you always have the same goal no matter what. So I think that's where I find more connectedness more acceptance, and less isolation than in my own family.

There was also a common thread of the sorority being a way to form your own community while in college. One member explained the importance of this by stating:

(Sisterhood is) that transition from high

school to college, everyone has their high school group of friends but when you go to college, it's kind of like restarting a little bit, so sisterhood to me is that group of girls I've grown up with, through my college years.

Other members explained this same idea by stating that their sisterhood “made their campus smaller.” It was even explained that there was a sense of comfort for potential new members to know that on bid day they would instantly belong to a large group of friends. These initial ties are important to the concept of sisterhood and remain vital throughout a member's time in the chapter. When asked specifically why women stay in their chapter, the first response given was that there was a “sense of belonging.” One participant went on to explain that it was scary to think about where she would be without her sisters and described a sense of “unconditional love” from her sisters which made her want to stay in the organization.

Women indicated that this sense of belonging was often developed from a deep level of trust they did not experience in their other friendships outside the sorority. One way this was explained was “you just always have someone you can confide in” which was central to their view on sisterhood. Another described her sorority as a “community of inclusion,” indicating that it was a place where members felt accepted and could be comfortable being themselves.

This sense of belonging was often tied to sharing a bond they didn't share with others. One participant stated that:

There's no reason for it (the bond), you're just there and you understand that no matter what happens, no matter if you're in a fight or anything, you're always connected to our values and what we really are as a sorority, and that's what made me realize these are my sisters not just my friends.

Beyond the belonging found within their local chapter, members expressed the importance of feeling connected to strangers that shared their affiliation, one participant told the following

story:

We were on spring break on the beach, and this alum just comes running up to us because she saw us in our letter shirts and had to take a picture with us, had to talk to us about how recruitment went and everything. That connection I felt from a stranger that I've never met before in my entire life, had never spoke a word to, was not the same age- was just unreal. That made our whole trip.

Another member shared a similar story about her experience attending National Convention that further highlights the instant sense of belonging that is central to the concept of sisterhood:

I think that the term sisterhood goes beyond just a friendship...It's something that I feel is stronger than just an average friendship because you automatically share the same love for something...This is my first time meeting these girls and I already know that we have something in common. So I would automatically think of them already as something more than just the average person off the street or a friend. I feel like I already share something with them.

Each of these stories highlight the idea that sorority membership provides an environment in which an individual has the instant ability to belong and feel connection to a group. Baumeister and Leary (1995) assert that belonging is a universal and innate human desire that goes beyond the need to feel attached to others. It is proposed that the sense of belonging has two main components: "(1) people need frequent personal contacts or interactions with the other person and (2) people need to perceive that there is an interpersonal bond or relationship marked by stability, affective concern, and continuation into the foreseeable future" (p. 497). Both of these features were evident in the comments made by participants in the present research.

The concept of belonging is central to membership within a group. As noted by Durkheim

(1951), the need to belong is a fundamental human trait and can have a powerful influence on behavior. Expansion of Durkheim's original research on belonging shows that the ritual aspects of sorority life, both formal and informal, public and private, create a sense of belonging with the group. Marshall (2012) notes "organizations that require high degrees of belonging and belief from their members will exhibit and demand particularity high degrees of ritual behavior from those members, including initiation and significant ongoing feats of effort and/or abstinence" (p. 373). The sorority environment requires frequent engagement with ritual activities that help build a sense of belonging for members and also helps construct their view of sisterhood.

The language that participants used to describe their sense of belonging as it related to sisterhood within the sorority context were practically identical to the language used by fraternity members to describe brotherhood in the research conducted by McCreary and Schutts (2015), indicating that the human need to belong and connect within a group does not appear to vary by gender. As was noted in that research, sense of belonging has been studied within higher education (Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, & Woods, 2009), and has been shown to have a strong relationship with institutional commitment, intention to persist and actual persistence. It could be theorized from the present findings that increased rates of belonging within a sorority could lead to similar outcomes, particularly as comments related to belonging were often tied to comments about levels of commitment to the sorority and its members.

Accountability—*"It bothers me when my sisters fail to uphold the sorority's high standards..."* Participants expressed that accountability to one another and the organization were important features of sisterhood. This concept of accountability appeared as a sense of "owing" something to each other or the group as a whole that was not present in other relationships. This sense of "owing" something was explained by one

participant who stated “It (sisterhood) kind of comes as more of an obligation. Sometimes in my chapter sisterhood is more alerting people that we are all bonded together and it’s all one image.” Participants explained that joining a sorority is a choice, and a part of that choice is knowing you will be held accountable to a certain set of standards or rules that may not apply to other college students. This concept was communicated in a straightforward manner, as one participant put it “at the end of the day when you chose to join a sisterhood you chose to be held accountable for every single thing you do. So in that instance, sisterhood it just you know, holding each other accountable.” One woman explained her personal revelation about accountability in the following way:

I think that sisterhood, for me, was the first time I didn’t want to go (to an event) I didn’t want to do something and I realized that that doesn’t matter and that I need to be there because I need to be accountable for it.

Accountability was also explained as the need to engage in difficult or uncomfortable conversations with sisters related to their behavior or performance. One participant elaborated on this idea:

I think it (sisterhood) also goes back to accountability and commitment to that relationship-being like ‘you probably shouldn’t do that tonight’ or ‘that guy’s not the best guy for you’. Just having their back in that aspect is also about accountability and holding them to the standards that they signed up for and they said they believe in.

Another participant explained how part of sisterhood is tied to trust in the following way “it’s trusting that they will do what you ask them when it’s really important and when it really matters. And trusting that they will take responsibility for their own actions if it influences the representation of the whole group.”

Other participants discussed how chapter leaders are often the ones charged with holding

members accountable and have a higher level of responsibility because:

They see the bigger picture, they want the house (chapter) to excel, they care about the sisters, they will sacrifice going to formal to take care of a drunk girl or they will sacrifice going out to be with the girl that is upset.

The fraternity and sorority system creates a culture in which student are not only responsible for themselves as in individual, but are responsible to the group as a whole. The group structure expects individuals to ascribe to a set of shared expectations, and for all individuals to be accountable to those expectations (Beau & Buckley, 2001). The expectations members seek to uphold come from both formal and informal sources. The national organization may place certain expectations on chapters, and each chapter will create its own set of informal standards to which members are held accountable. Sorority members may be faced with situations in which they feel the need to be accountable to competing forces and, under those circumstances, they will act upon staying accountable to the strong personal relationship (Frink & Klimoski, 1998). Accountability within the sorority is tied to the perceived and varying levels of importance found in the relationships. Gelfand, Lim, and Raver (2004) conceptualize accountability as a system of webs which are “perceptions of the expectations and obligations that exist among entities, the direction of these connections, and their strength” (p. 154). The sorority allows for varying levels of accountability which in turn allows for members to experience accountability in multiple ways. This diversity of accountability appeared to manifest in two distinct ways in the present research. First, participants talked about accountability to the image of the sorority (i.e. “we are all accountable to the same image”), indicating that members were most often held accountable when their actions were perceived by others as harmful to the sorority’s image on campus. Alternatively, participants also discussed ac-

countability to the espoused values of the sorority (i.e. “when you choose to join a sisterhood, you choose to hold yourself accountable to our values”). This distinction, while subtle, could be indicative of a situation in which other schema of sisterhood are reinforced through systems of accountability. For example, accountability to the image of the sorority would appear to reinforce notions of social status and a sisterhood based on social experiences, whereas accountability to shared or espoused values may reinforce more evolved, altruistic notions of sisterhood.

Common Purpose—“Sisterhood is about being a part of something bigger than yourself...” Focus group participants explained the concept of their sisterhood being shown through having a common purpose, or an understanding of the “big picture.” Many of these statements focused on an understanding that the sorority was bigger than just the individuals in their chapter and were therefore a part of something larger. One participant explained this by stating “I feel like the transition (to sisterhood from friendship) would probably be when you do realize you’re working towards a common goal and you want to help each other in more ways than just going out and having fun.” Another participant echoed this idea by saying that “it’s [the sorority] so much bigger than you, it’s so much bigger than your chapter.” In a group setting females have been shown to display higher levels of responsibility towards fellow group members compared to males (Beutel & Marini, 1995). One woman explained this concept in the following manner:

We have that bond as women, we have that bond as sisters too, so it’s just like that unbreakable thing where every value you have, someone else shares it and any experience you have they understand it, whether they’ve been through it or not—they know someone who has - and that’s just really empowering to see where you can take the hard things you’ve been through and build each other up and spread that strength.

Some women expressed this sense of com-

mon purpose as being able to see beyond small issues, as ultimately members have the same goals in mind and are working towards the same ideals. One member explained how she viewed this idea by explaining “you’re fighting to build strong girls and you’re fighting for a bigger reason and you have a more important role than a ridiculous argument.” This highlights the idea that the common purpose of the sisterhood can serve as a rallying point for the chapter. Sorority members viewing sisterhood in this way are able to see beyond personal disagreements in order to advance towards the greater good of the organization and the individuals in it. One participant stated that “I think that there’s a sense that we’re doing something bigger when we’re together” to illustrate the feeling of common purpose found in her sisterhood.

It was suggested that this schema of sisterhood may be easier to grasp by attending a conference in which you see women from your organization that attend different schools, or by interacting with alumnae or national volunteers. One woman shared the following story about meeting members of the National Council for her sorority:

They are people, and not only are they people, they are sisters, they are my family and they have the same exact ideals and purposes that I do. And it’s crazy that we’re on the same playing field in the sorority overall because we’re all here for the same love and standards.

Participants expressed the benefit to being exposed to sisters outside their chapter in that it allowed members to see this common purpose was not just a local chapter common purpose, but a common purpose shared by all members of the organization.

The idea of a sisterhood based on common purpose was communicated in ways related to the organization itself, as well as to the individual women making up the organization. Some participants discussed sisterhood in terms of supporting one another, making one another

better, and helping one another achieve goals. One participant explained this concept in stating that “sisterhood is like being a part of a team, you’re all players and all working towards the same goal. So, the game is life, and you all want to win.” This sentiment was shared by another member who stated that “it’s about believing in one another and wanting to better one another.” Another woman stated that “it’s more than just having fun it’s more about believing in each other and wanting to better someone else in more ways than just having fun with them.” Others described the notion of improvement and success less in individual terms, but in terms of the organization’s success. One woman stated “sisterhood is about those moments of success and achievement. There is a sense of pride in carrying on the sorority’s legacy of success.” Others talked of celebrating the accomplishments of the group, both locally and nationally, and the sense of achievement that comes from sorority’s accomplishments and accolades.

The roots of common purpose can be seen in the concepts of reciprocity and human cooperation. The idea that sometimes one must act to benefit the group in a matter that may be detrimental to themselves is central to the structure of sisterhood. Indirect reciprocity models can be used to help explain behavior that creates an environment in which long term gains are made for short-term prosocial acts on behalf of an individual. Nowak (2006) explains indirect reciprocity in a way that is easily applicable to the sorority dynamic:

Helping someone establishes a good relationship, which will be rewarded by others. When deciding how to act, we take into account the possible consequences of our reputation. We feel strongly about events that affect us directly, but we also take a keen interest in the affairs of others, as demonstrated by the contents of gossip (p. 1561).

Simpson and Willer (2009) categorize two types of individuals that emerge in groups. Ego-

tists, who behave in a prosocial manner when reputational incentives encourage their behavior; and altruists, who do not need reward to engage in prosocial group behavior. Both sets of individuals may view common purpose as an important component of sisterhood but may have a different source of motivation to work towards that purpose. The altruists in the sorority could be viewed as having a higher level of dedication of commitment to the group as they could be motivated to increase the welfare of others at their own expense, whereas the egoists may only sacrifice their own needs when they see some other incentive (social status, a chapter office, etc.) as a possible prize down the road. Sisterhood based on common purpose serves as a way to conceptualize the abstract bond that members feel when they are working towards a greater good that may be absent in their relationships with family and friends.

Another concept that can be used to understand sisterhood based on common purpose is Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), which has been defined as the manifestation of a disposition towards prosocial behavior within a group setting (LeBlanc, 2014). Research at the organizational level has shown that, in organizations with more individuals measuring high on OCB, there is a stronger sense of community, culture and organizational performance. Research has also shown that women consistently measure significantly higher in this attribute than men (LeBlanc, 2014), which could explain why this schema of sisterhood was salient in females in sororities in the present study, but was not observed by McCreary and Schutts (2015) in their study of brotherhood among fraternity members. This distinction is noted in other studies related to gender differences in organizational culture, showing that women tend to be more cooperative, whereas men tend to be more competitive, jockeying with one another for status within the organization, working towards primarily self-serving goals (Sanelands, 2002).

Transcendent Sisterhood – The five hypothesized schema of sisterhood, as described above, shared both similarities and differences between the four schema of fraternal brotherhood discussed by McCreary and Schutts (2015). Similarly, men and women conceptualize feelings of belonging and accountability in much the same way. Distinctly, women’s solidarity embodies less negative behaviors when compared to men, women’s social experiences appear to revolve less around alcohol, and women appear to experience a sisterhood based on common purpose that is not experienced by men in fraternities.

The most significant difference observed between men and women, however, was not in the schema themselves, but in the manner in which participants described those schema. In particular, fraternity members in McCreary and Schutts (2015) research described brotherhood in a very static way. Participants described a well-established, firmly entrenched culture of brotherhood, and prospective members are recruited based on that culture, new members indoctrinated into that culture, and older members serve as guardians of that culture. Very little variation was observed between freshmen and seniors, as the manner in which someone was indoctrinated to think about brotherhood was likely to be the way they thought about brotherhood upon graduation (McCreary & Schutts, 2015).

Women in the present research, however, described sisterhood as a developmental process, indicating that most members come into the sorority expecting and experiencing the social nature of sisterhood but, over time, begin to understand and experience the more advanced notions of sisterhood. One participant described this process as the “transcendence from a sisterhood of selfishness to a sisterhood of selflessness.” As she stated, and as was reinforced by several other members, younger members tend to think of sisterhood in terms of whether or not they are experiencing fun things, and as they get older and gain experiences within the sorority, begin to understand that sisterhood is also about

servicing others, and sacrificing your own needs for the good of the whole. Some described this as a transition from friendship to sisterhood, where early on you think of the sorority as a group of friends to do fun things with but, over time, come to appreciate them as a sense of mutual support and betterment. Participants were also quick to point out that not all members transcend to these higher levels of sisterhood. To the contrary, they suggest that some women become “stuck” in the social nature of sisterhood, never seeing the sorority as more than a place to socialize with peers.

Limitations

The results of any study should be viewed within the context of their limitations. The present study includes a number of limitations that may have influenced the findings, foremost among them being the sampling procedure. Despite our efforts at stratification, the women participating in the focus groups were a largely homogeneous group. They were mostly White, many of them held leadership positions within their chapters, and the focus groups took place at a national convention. In fact, in one of the focus groups, the members had just completed a ritual session. It is quite possible that the experience at the national convention primed the participants in a way that may have altered or influenced their actual attitudes towards sisterhood. In seeking to overcome this limitation, the researchers asked questions such as “how did you think about sisterhood upon joining the sorority” and “how do you think most of your members back home in the chapter define sisterhood.” Answers to these questions often provided key insights to the researchers.

The participants also all represented the same organization. While the authors went to great lengths to ensure that questions were asked in a general way, it is possible that certain cultural fixtures or rituals of this particular organization could have created certain notions about sister-

hood in the focus group participants that may not be present in women from other organizations. For example, if a key component of this organization's ritual were mutual support, then a notion of support as a key element of sisterhood may have been more salient with women in this organization that it might be for women in a different organization whose ritual focuses on things other than mutual assistance. Future research should target women from multiple organizations in order to determine if these findings are generalizable to a broader population, and should also specifically target women from culturally-based sororities.

Discussion and Implications for Research and Practice

This study has demonstrated that sorority members have distinct ways of conceptualizing the notion of sisterhood. This study should have strong practical application to scholars seeking to better understand the experiences of sorority members, as well as practitioners working with this student population.

Sisterhood based on shared social experiences is likely the only theorized schema that could be viewed as problematic. Women thinking of sisterhood in this way are likely to be more inclined to pursue primarily social interests within the sorority. It could be expected that these members are more likely to binge drink regularly when compared to members who place less emphasis on the social nature of sisterhood, and as a result may be less likely to succeed academically and less likely to persist within the sorority or within their institution of higher learning, as these outcomes have both been tied to increased alcohol consumption (CASA, 2007). Future research should investigate the relationship between these variables.

Sisterhood based on common purpose, in contrast to brotherhood based on solidarity observed in men by McCreary and Schutts (2015), appears to be a largely positive construct. As

McCreary and Schutts (2015) found a strong relationship between solidarity and increased support of hazing behaviors, future research should investigate whether feelings related to support and encouragement within sororities can be too high. While generally, sorority members are less supportive of hazing than fraternity men (Ellsworth, 2006), and the new member education process within sororities tends to be less focused on building a bonded unified group of new members, future research should investigate, particularly in sorority populations that have experienced with hazing, whether this form of sisterhood has any relationship with hazing attitudes or behaviors.

While the descriptions of belonging between women in this study and men in the McCreary and Schutts (2015) study were nearly identical, the frequency with which these notions were mentioned was significantly less in the present study. The present research would indicate that sisterhood based on belonging, while certainly present and clearly communicated within the focus groups, was much less salient within the sorority population. Future research should seek to confirm whether belonging is, in fact, less salient in women's groups and, if so, why.

As noted by Gelfand et al. (2004), accountability involves being answerable for actions and decisions within certain cultural contexts. The research by McCreary and Schutts (2015) found strong negative relationships between brotherhood based on accountability and unethical, pro-organizational behavior (Umphress & Bingham, 2011), which is of importance in this study. A strong sense of accountability within an organization could be the mechanism by which anti-social behaviors are prevented, and pro-social behaviors promoted. This may be of significance to practitioners seeking to align sorority members' behaviors with espoused organizational values – by fostering increased levels of accountability within a sorority, one may be able to reduce the unethical behavior within that organization. In addition, as noted earlier, the method and tar-

get of chapter accountability (i.e. accountability to the projected image or accountability to espoused values) should be disentangled to better understand how various cultures of accountability contribute to or inhibit other forms of sisterhood.

Sisterhood based on common purpose appears from this research to have many positive and altruistic qualities. However, when pressed, many focus group participants struggled to articulate the ends of that purpose (i.e. to what end are you working towards? What is the common purpose of the organization?). While the schema appears to be most closely related to a general notion of self-sacrifice and organizational citizenship behavior (LeBlanc, 2014), future research should seek to investigate, within the context of the local chapter, both the means and ends of this schema and its potential utility to practitioners working with these populations.

Future research should also investigate whether the schema of sisterhood can be quantitatively measured. The authors suggest the use of sequential exploratory strategy in taking these qualitative data and using them to build and test an instrument aimed at measuring the hypothesized schema of sisterhood. Once developed, such an instrument could be used to correlate the various schema with other variables of importance to the sorority experience.

Understanding how women conceptualize sisterhood should prove useful for practitioners working with sorority members. Educational programming can be crafted around each of these schema and used to promote fluid movement towards a transcendent experience. At a group level, there is potential to use this research to assess the overall state of a chapter. For example, if the majority of a group conceptualized sisterhood as a purely shared social experience, it could serve as a call to work closely to provide supportive measures that will allow member to experience deeper levels of sisterhood.

Acknowledging that women have the potential to grasp deep levels of organizational com-

mitment, or common purpose, can help professionals create more developmental opportunities to cultivate a transcendent sorority experience. This can help foster a better sense of life-long membership within collegiate women. The difficulty that some participants had with communicating the intricacies of common purpose serves as a strong reminder that professionals can assist members by engaging them in meaningful conversations about the purpose of their organization and their role as a part of a larger entity. Being able to identify members that can conceptualize and articulate the common purpose of the sorority experience can serve as a valuable tool for professionals. Those women can benefit the overall community by engaging fellow students in peer-to-peer conversations about membership which can promote growth and development for all members. Learning about the journey women go through during their membership positions practitioners to help women clarify and conceptualize the “bigger picture” of the sorority experience.

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SORORITY WOMEN, DRINKING, AND CONTEXT: THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENT ON COLLEGE STUDENT DRINKING

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The purpose of this study was to explore college drinking from the perspective of sorority women, including delving further into situational or contextual conditions related to the environment where drinking occurs, and examining the extent to which gender influences associated behaviors and choices related to drinking. Data collection occurred through three focus groups; in all 25 undergraduate sorority women participated. In addition, six focus group participants volunteered to take part in individual follow up interviews. Findings illustrate the prevalence and influence of a male dominated drinking environment, specifically identified within fraternities, and highlight sorority women's awareness of gender differences and subsequent choices. Implications for college administrators and health educators responsible for campus programming and prevention efforts are provided.

Over time perceptions of women's use of alcohol have varied with notions such as "real ladies don't drink" to "real women drink beer." Nevertheless, like other behaviors once attributed to men, it has become more socially acceptable for women to engage in consuming alcohol, and in particular, drinking in larger quantities (Young, Morales, McCabe, Boyd, & D'Arcy, 2005). Nowhere is this more prevalent than on college campuses. Over the years evidence has shown women's drinking levels have increasingly reached rates similar to men, and college women who drink continue to exceed the recommended limits on weekly alcohol consumption (Wechsler, et al., 2002; White & Hingson, 2014; Young, et al., 2005). White and Hingson (2014) posit rates of higher drinking levels among women are ingrained in the youth drinking culture. Significant emphasis has been placed on quantitative studies as a primary investigative tool for understanding college student drinking. These efforts has resulted in identifying a number of patterns related to high risk or binge drinking among college age women, and more specifically among sorority women related to quantity and frequency of use and associated behaviors. However such measurement studies have only provided part of the picture, neglecting the subjective experiences of participants and their understanding of

high risk drinking and meaning behind this behavior. Similarly, drinking patterns among Greek letter organization has received much attention as a whole but fewer studies related to descriptive data about the setting or environment exist (Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 2009). The present study focuses on sorority women and aims to understand how the context, specifically venues where women engage in drinking, influence behaviors and choices associated with drinking.

Review of the Literature

Drinking on college campuses has long been recognized as a public health issue. Findings from national data sources, including the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study (CAS), the Core Institute (CORE), and Monitoring the Future (MTF), are in general agreement that two of five U.S. college students engage in heavy episodic drinking (also known as binge drinking, defined as five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women on a single occasion within the past two weeks) and that consumption is generally heavier for men than women (White & Hingson, 2014). The phenomenon is certainly not new and when considering established patterns of college student drinking specific to women, data from the CAS survey

from 1993, 1997, 1999, and 2001 (Wechsler & Nelson, 2008), suggests each year rates of women's drinking over time are converging with that of men's (Keyes, Grant, & Hasin, 2008). Data from the 2001 CAS supports findings of increased drinking by college women. During this time, frequent binge drinking (defined as binge drinking three or more times in the past two weeks) increased 17.1% to 20.9% as did drinking with the intention of getting drunk from 12.3% to 16.8% while abstinence, or rates for women who never or rarely drank alcohol, decreased 26% to 21% (Wechsler et al., 2002). More recent data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (SAMHSA, 2013) show similar rates of alcohol use in the past month for women (58.2%) as men (60.8%) and data from the 2011 MTF indicated 68 percent of men and women have both reported having been drunk at some point (White & Hingson, 2014). Clearly this is an issue college administrators have been addressing for some time.

Serious consequences exist for all college students who engage in heavy episodic (binge) drinking including blackouts, violence, physical injuries, and alcohol related traffic accidents (Wechsler, et al., 2002; Wilsnack, Wilsnack, & Kantor, 2013). In many ways, these consequences are compounded for women who, due to biological differences, experience the onset of intoxication occur more rapidly than men. In this regard, the harmful consequences associated with drinking behaviors remains especially notable for women. For instance, women's ability to process alcohol contributes to the vulnerability of health related effects including faster onset of liver disease, greater risk of heart problems, accelerated brain atrophy, and increased risk of reproductive disorders (Wilsnack, et al., 2013). Additionally, because alcohol abuse and misuse often occurs in social settings, the chance of risky sexual behaviors and sexual assault increase with higher rates of alcohol use (Kaya, Iwamoto, Grivell, Clinton, & Brady, 2016). Given the rates of young women's drinking patterns are converging

with that of men, as well as the distinct health consequences associated with high risk drinking for women, the continued need to address risk and protective factors related to women's drinking patterns is imperative.

Finally, as sorority women are the focus of this study, it is important to understand the drinking norms specific to this group as established in the literature. Multiple studies consistently find members of sororities drink more often and in greater quantities than their non-affiliated counterparts (Caudill et al., 2006; Sher, Bartholow, & Nanda, 2001; Wechsler et al., 2002; Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 2009). According to the 2001 College Alcohol Survey 62.4% of sorority members engaged in binge drinking compared to 40.9% of other female students, and 75.4% of students living in a sorority house were considered heavy drinkers, compared to 45.3% who lived in other student housing (Wechsler, et al., 2002). Furthermore, researchers Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport (2001), contend women affiliated with Greek letter organizations are at greatest risk to begin binge drinking and experience negative consequences soon after arriving in college as they have been found to be least experienced in consuming large quantities of alcohol prior to coming to college. Ironically, while much is known about drinking patterns among sorority women, less is known about the relationship between alcohol use and the environment specific to Greek letter organizations. While fraternity houses aren't the only location where undergraduate drinking occurs, they are one of the primary settings where members of Greek letter organizations socialize; therefore it would be reasonable to consider this venue further.

Drinking Context: Fraternity/ Sorority Parties

It is important to understand the context of where alcohol is consumed, specifically with regard to the Greek letter organizations. Students living in both sorority and fraternity houses are

more likely to support “partying and drinking” as important activities, with about two-thirds (69%) of the fraternity-associated men and almost half (45%) of the sorority-associated women indicating partying is important (Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 2001, pg. 401). Research indicates individuals vary their drinking behaviors by location and identify some drinking contexts as higher risk (Lewis, et al., 2011). A closer look at parties supported by Greek letter organizations show this environment is associated with the greatest frequency of high risk drinking (Park, Sher, & Krull, 2009; Turrisi, Mallett, Mastroleo, & Larimer, 2006) and students attending these events have been found to have higher blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels (Glinemann & Geller, 2003). Additionally, with the exception of off-campus parties, students consume larger quantities of alcohol at fraternity/sorority parties than any other context (Paschall & Saltz, 2007).

Literature related directly to understanding the physical environment associated with fraternity houses is sparse and inconsistent, yet what is known seems to present unique challenges for women. For example, Bleeker and Murnen (2005) found men living in fraternity houses were more likely to display objectifying images of women in their rooms and hold beliefs supporting women’s desire to engage in rough sexual acts. Likewise in a significantly older study, Rhoads (1995) concluded parties held in fraternity houses portray a patriarchal system in which men are elevated to a higher status and privilege based on higher levels of alcohol consumption. He further determined fraternities have the potential to marginalize women by determining conditional circumstances (how a woman is dressed, or the way they look) in which women are included or excluded in their social functions. In another study by Martin & Hummer (1989), women were described as “bait” for recruiting new members in which the fraternity openly promotes attractive women as part of their brotherhood. More recently, Wechsler,

Kuh, & Davenport (2001) found 69% of sorority members considered sexual assault to be a problem compared to 39% of fraternity members. This notion is reinforced in findings by Bannon, Brosi, and Foubert (2013) that show sorority women are more likely to be survivors of sexual assault and fraternity men are more likely to be perpetrators compared to other students. Finally, fraternity houses meet the criteria for defining a sexually objectifying environment with evidence of engrained traditional gender roles, disproportionate ratio of men to women, and pervasive lack of power experienced by women (Szymanski, Moffitt, & Carr, 2011).

Such evidence suggests parties held at fraternity houses may contribute to an environment which promotes the disenfranchisement for women. Though some evidence in the literature supports the context of fraternity houses as having the potential to marginalize women, it would be unfair to paint all fraternity houses in this light. For example, Boswell and Spade (1996) found women identify fraternity houses as a safe zone and a source of support where “a woman could go and get drunk if she wanted to and feel secure that the fraternity men would not take advantage of her” (p. 134). Likewise not all sorority women drink, nor do they all fraternize this setting, and sorority women may choose other venues in which to drink. What is evident is the gap in the literature describing this environment.

Gaining further knowledge about the environmental influences faced by undergraduate sorority women will help researchers identify factors that promote high risk drinking and identify potential intervention strategies to reduce potential harm. As noted earlier, most of the data generating social and cultural influences of college drinking patterns have emerged from quantitative studies, whereas there is a need for greater qualitative research to help uncover further nuances of this phenomenon. Specifically, further research is needed on the drinking context and more specifically in relation to male centered environments (including fraternity houses) where

sorority women may engage in high risk drinking. Likewise, given what is known about this context, an unintentional, and perhaps little recognized consequence, is the potential for women to feel exploited and devalued in this setting. It is with these questions in mind the study at hand was developed.

This study explores sorority member's perceptions of high risk drinking behaviors and the context where this occurs. Using a qualitative approach provides a voice for women to share their experiences and offer new perspectives to support the unique needs of women. The current study aims to add to the literature on drinking context and social norms by exploring sorority women's perceptions, behaviors, and choices related to drinking in the natural environment where it occurs.

Methods

Sample and Procedure

The study took place in a moderate sized (6,299 undergraduate students), predominately Caucasian, university with women accounting for 54% of the undergraduate enrollment and 27% were sorority members. Focus groups and individual interviews were conducted with sorority members (aged 18-22) to explore their understanding of the drinking environment. To obtain information-rich samples, focus group participants were identified and selected using purposeful sampling consisting of undergraduate women who were (a) full time (b) second, third, and fourth year students and (c) members of a sorority. Participants were recruited through personal invitation, flyers, email correspondence, council meetings, and professional campus connections. The researcher contacted the first three sororities who expressed an interest in participation. Written consent was obtained from each participant and individuals who participated in follow up interviews received a twenty dollar gift certificate. The institutional review board of the researcher's university found the project to

comply with appropriate ethical standards.

Focus group and individual interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. Overall twenty-five women (ages 19-22) from three distinct sorority chapters participated in the study including 6 second-year, 10 third-year, and 9 fourth year students. As first year students had not yet become members of sororities at the time of the study, they were excluded. Many women spoke of being active on campus within their sorority or through involvement in extracurricular activities; all but two students identified as Caucasian. Members were familiar with one another and with venues where drinking occurs, therefore having shared insight into similar experiences and behaviors. All participants reported engaging in high risk drinking at some point in their time at college and were forthcoming in their description and perception of their experiences.

Six follow up in-depth face-to-face individual interviews occurred within one to two weeks following the focus group, providing a second method of data generation. Individual participants were selected based on criterion sampling, meeting the following: (a) had expressed personally engaging in recent binge drinking behaviors during the focus group (b) identified as living or had lived in the sorority house, and (c) equally represented second year, third year, and fourth year students. The time between the focus group discussion and personal interview provided an opportunity for the women to reflect on their construction of drinking behaviors and insight into patterns shared earlier. Interviews occurred in settings of the participants' choice.

Focus Groups and Interviews

A semi-structured interview guide was used to elicit information about women's experiences and to allow for additional comments and discussion by participants. This approach supports the intent of naturalistic inquiry while providing comparable data across subjects through the use of standardized questions (Cantrell, 1993). Research questions related to high risk drinking

and the context in which it occurred provided an overarching guide to frame the study, with prompts addressing experiences, perceptions, and behaviors. Some questions included: What is the drinking culture like on campus? How is high risk drinking defined? Where does drinking occur? What are some positive/negative aspects of drinking and where it occurs? and How is drinking perceived by men/women? Follow up individual interviews asked women to reflect further on these questions and provide specific examples of experiences that shaped their view on drinking.

Data Analysis

The author sought to explore the effects of the environment on women's drinking behaviors and perceptions of this experience. An interpretivist paradigm allowed for meaning and constructions of women's experiences of drinking, gender, and context to emerge. This perspective emphasizes how meaning is constructed experientially and socially (Jansen & Davis, 1998), and is a particularly relevant viewpoint in the college setting where social context influences drinking behaviors.

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim; to maintain confidentiality all participants were given pseudonyms and informed no identifying information would occur in research outputs. For analysis of transcripts, the researcher used a constant comparative method as a framework for coding, reduction of data, and final written discussion on the development of themes. This approach is useful for generating a small number of findings and to support complex connections from information generated (Priest, Roberts, & Woods, 2002). This process helps to identify similarities and differences in the data and provides a means of linking data to conceptual issues (Rossman & Rallis, 2010). Further reduction occurred until data saturation (no new insights) became evident (Creswell, 2014). A secondary form of

data analysis used holistic coding to understand field notes, personal reflections, and observation (Creswell, 2014). Combining holistic data with categorical data enriched the interpretation of the study. The resulting parsimony of ideas and clarity of themes are presented using thick rich descriptions in a narrative form allowing the voices of participants to be heard both collectively and individually.

Trust in the researcher was demonstrated by participant's willingness to engage in open discussion about experiences not always viewed as socially acceptable, especially with two thirds of the participants being underage. Additionally, researcher bias including ideas and personal experiences can influence the interpretation of outcomes. This study is grounded in strategies recommended by Creswell (2014) to strengthen the trustworthiness and authenticity of results including (a) triangulation of data through the use of multiple sources, (b) member checking to ensure accuracy of themes, (c) clarifying researcher bias through ongoing journaling of personal values, opinions, and biases and (d) through peer consultation to discuss methodology. The overarching perspective of interpretive phenomenology acknowledges multiple perspectives exist and therefore it is noted that results are not representative of the student population as a whole. As the findings are presented in the women's own voices, readers can make logical connections between this study and other similar settings.

Limitations

Several factors could have impacted the results of this study. Findings illustrate a select group of women's constructions of their experiences are bound within context, place, and time. Specifically, affiliation with Greek letter organizations includes a social environment with unique organizational norms and structure that influences behavior. For example, it was assumed membership in a sorority led participant's to abide

by their chapters rules and internal governance. Likewise, participants may have felt either pressure to conform to group norms or maintained a sense of safety in sharing their personal views in a supportive environment where they may not feel judged by their sisters. Also, one's drinking patterns are influenced by time (spring semester), scheduling (holidays, course examinations), and campus specific events (sports, formal dances, etc.).

It should be noted due to the nature of the study, findings cannot (and should not) be generalized to other settings. Likewise, personal values, experiences, and realities of both the researcher and participants cannot be separated from the information generated and therefore may influence the results (Creswell, 2014). Recognizing this possibility, the practice of self-reflection by the researcher was necessary, requiring careful consideration of personal beliefs and values as a woman and a researcher, former engagement in Greek life and membership in a sorority, motives driving research, and how personal past history may influence the interpretation of the women's voices and stories heard through data collection. In an effort to minimize bias, the author engaged in transparency through discussion with other researchers, peer debriefing, and reflexive journals, all appropriate methods intended to reduce and clarify researcher bias (Creswell, 2014).

Results

In analyzing the data collected through focus groups and individual interviews, three themes were identified as follows: (1) the perception of the culture and drinking behaviors unique to the campus environment and men and women, (2) the environment in which drinking occurs is predominately male oriented, influencing women's behaviors and choices, and (3) identified risks by participants who conformed to the unspoken norms established in this context. Embedded in these themes women articulated awareness of the inequalities within the environment and ex-

pressed some insight into the subsequent choices they made in order to participate in the drinking culture. Women were also cognizant of potential consequences, particularly as they reflected on their past experiences or as they understood this to be true for younger women.

Theme One: Setting the Stage: Campus Drinking Culture

To begin, it is important to understand the drinking culture described by the women in this study. Participants readily identified drinking alcohol as a regular and significant part of their undergraduate experience:

it's like the weekend activity, as in like a lot of people will ask "what are you doing this weekend" and you'll say "going out;" and "going out" is synonymous with getting drunk, and so it's kind of like how you define what you do with your time

Rationale for engaging in drinking were fairly typical for this population, mostly revolving around drinking as a social activity with some expressing the lack of alternatives, going so far as to say "*if we didn't drink, what would we do on the weekends?*" At the same time, women possessed insight into other groups of students who chose not to drink indicating: "*there is a sizeable population who really don't drink at all, or who drink very little.*" Although drinking was described as appealing to a specific segment of the student body, those students that didn't drink were described negatively as being "*holed up in the library*" and as being "*overly concerned with their academics.*"

Women were open in sharing their personal drinking behaviors and shared perceptions of alcohol use in relation to gender. For example, women believed men experience more pressure and drank more frequently ("*if a guy turns down a drink, he is told to "man up" and drink something*") and in greater quantities ("*men who could handle a lot of drinks are held in high regard*"); expressed that men were more likely to drink beer; and believed men engaged more often in competitive drinking. On the other hand, women were de-

scribed as preferring hard liquor, mixed drinks, or wine and identified drinking as a vehicle to socialize. The perception of both men and women was drinking is the glue tying together social activities and weekends of “going out” becoming synonymous with “getting drunk.” Many women disclosed consuming high levels of alcohol or associated with others who did so and found such behaviors as acceptable, particularly if it wasn’t a regular occurrence. This level of acceptance was expressed in the following statement “*there is a sense of being in college, I don’t have a care here, so if I’m going to binge drink, this is the best time to do it.*”

Drinking behaviors tended to shift over the time of the college experience. Women who entered college as non-drinkers found themselves drinking more frequently later in their college experience. Earlier drinking experiences (first/second year) were described as sporadic and associated with reckless behaviors while older students (third/fourth year) suggest safer and more regular drinking patterns. Participants reflected on behaviors of first year women as “*roaming the campus, stopping at various social events, and meeting strangers.*” Beginning second year and subsequent years after, women described their drinking patterns as more established, occurring within smaller groups of friends. An example of this transition in drinking patterns follows:

Freshman and sophomore year are spent largely pre-gaming in someone’s room and going to the fraternities or going to an off campus party whether it be a sport’s house or what not. Junior and senior year, ... [is] more casual get-togethers with friends and either doing that for the duration of the night, or maybe going to an off campus party and very rarely going to one of the fraternities. ... senior year there won’t be pre-gaming and you’ll just go straight to the bars.

Women perceived men as drinking significantly more and having more pressure to do so; for instance it was heard “*plenty of the girls choose not to drink and still have a good time,*” however men

were unlikely to decline a drink “*in fact, I rarely find a guy that is not drinking*” said one participant. Drinking was described as a “*non-issue*” for women in the presence of other women, but in mixed company they experienced increased pressure to drink. If women chose to abstain for the evening, participants said they were frequently asked by men to drink anyway. Some rationalized men’s behavior as “*being good hosts*” while others said men didn’t want to “*drink alone.*” These examples illustrate the participant’s general acceptance of alcohol use and perception of gender differences, setting the stage for understanding the influence of context on women’s behaviors and choices.

Theme Two: Drinking in a Male Dominated Environment

Participants expressed if they chose to drink, especially if they were under 21, they often did so in a predominately male dominated environment. Though some participants identified private houses located off campus (occupied by men), the majority indicated drinking most often occurred at fraternity houses within Greek letter organizations. In part this is due to rules prohibiting sorority members from drinking or hosting parties involving alcohol in their residence. The National Panhellenic Conference, the umbrella organization supporting sororities, has established guidelines prohibiting women from hosting alcohol related events or possessing alcohol within sorority houses. In contrast, no such national standard exists for fraternities. One woman said:

we follow the campus rules and our international rules. So campus rules say that if you are over 21 you can have alcohol in your room and drink alcohol in your room... our international rules for our sorority say that we are supposed to be dry permanently as one of our ideals that we uphold.

The differentiation of drinking policy’s among sororities and fraternities creates a fundamental discrepancy where drinking is permitted. The international rule prohibiting sorority members

from drinking in their own house, as compared to fraternities who have more permissive rules related to alcohol on the premise, not only set different standards for drinking but perhaps implies it is fundamentally wrong for women to engage in this behavior.

if you are underage or a freshman, a lot of [women] go to the frats just to drink because they know they are going to get it, so it puts the power into the fraternities if you want to think about it that way.

The drinking environment is highly influenced by Greek letter organizations in other ways as well. Throughout the academic year events such as recruitment, homecoming, formals, and other social events involve the participation of both sororities and fraternities, often requiring its membership to take part in the event. For example,

I notice in our sorority, the day before bid day, every semester we have prefrat night [referring to a step in the recruitment process] and all of the girls in all of the sororities dress up and go around to all of the frats, and all of the frats have alcohol, and it's the one time our entire sorority, like all 90 girls are together and it's really just a bonding thing, like people you have never talked to before, but your drunk and you're like, look at all of these things we have in common

Consistent with this environment was the notion fraternity houses resembled a "local bar" with large open rooms to accommodate dance parties. They were described as dirty and smelling of stale beer with concrete floors or beer soaked carpets and having well-worn and stained furniture. The participants shared stories of having to use a dirty bathroom that was "not suitable for a woman" and not wanting to drink tap water from the sink.

Theme Three: Influence and Risks Associated with Drinking in a Man's World

With drinking venues predominately controlled by men, if women choose to drink, they have to conform to male standards. Women

spoke of adapting behaviors in a number of ways to assimilate to the drinking environment. For example, they altered their dress, changed drinking patterns, and conformed to more traditional gender roles. The following exemplifies this behavior;

It tends to make the girls dress [in a more provocative manner] because they are going to get more alcohol, like if I showed up in a sweatshirt, a guy's not going to be like 'here is a shot' so you wear as minimal clothing as you can, and the power is all in their hands, like, oh you're not pretty...so I'm not going to give you alcohol because that is just a waste of my time

Women articulated this as being "sexist" yet willingly participated. Likewise, women acknowledged being described as "objects at parties for men to control through the alcohol" with this being particularly true for the experiences of first year women who were sometimes seen as being ridiculed and exploited by men at parties.

Influence of gender was further evidenced by men controlling admission to parties and access to alcohol. Women indicated you had to "know someone" to enter a party, and once there, alcohol was often obtained "behind closed doors in a guy's room." Drinks were made specifically for women, described as "girly drinks" in large tubs making it difficult to track consumption and "definitely more dangerous because you don't know what is in that cup." At the end of the evening, women are faced with the decision to leave, sometimes alone, or to remain after hours. The women agreed this choice was often made for them as described in the following typical example of what occurs near the end of a fraternity party:

at 1:45 they cut all the lights on and say if you are not [with] frat X or you are not dating one then get out. And this is said over a loud speaker.

Some parties possessed sexually explicit themes requiring women to dress provocatively and role play positions of lesser power. An example of this type of party was described as "Golf

Pro's and Tennis Ho's" (professional male athletes and female escorts) or "*Sec's and Exec's*" (where women are scantily dressed secretaries and men are well-dressed executives), both exemplifying power differentials. These parties were described as intentionally appealing to first year sorority women whereas upper class women purposefully found alternate venues, particularly when they turned 21. However, men were described as continuing to engage in these parties and intentionally trying to connect with younger women.

Other patriarchal patterns and stereotypical gender roles emerged. Women described themselves as "*nurturers and caretakers*" while men were portrayed as "*dominant, experienced, and powerful*." Evidence of caretaking roles exhibited by participants included, helping other women get home safely and caring for their general well-being, especially if they were sick. Men's defined role of "*protector*" included walking women home or regulating the supply of drinks. Men were seen in roles of dominance, authority, and experienced in regard to alcohol use because they purchased, poured, and controlled its access, making them "*more knowledgeable and equipped to handle alcohol*."

Sorority women who chose to engage in sexual relationships were described by participants as having a negative reputation on campus, whereas men who engaged in similar experiences were perceived to be held in high regard (by other men) for engaging in sexual encounters. Likewise, women who engaged in sexual relationships during these parties described sometimes having to adapt their personal values resulting in feelings of shame and guilt. Some women acknowledged making poor decisions while under the influence associated with sexual relationships. One woman described "*hooking up with a guy*" involving unprotected sex, in her words:

"I don't even know if he remembers me because we were both fairly inebriated and I had class with him the semester after that and I just remember being so ashamed and at the same time, I'm like why am I ashamed? It was a mutual thing, but I was

really drunk..."

Other times women justified their behavior or minimized the potential serious consequences by attributing their decisions to a perceived lack of choice. This was most evident after a party stating; "*I don't really know how else to deal with it other than to laugh it off*," or "*I was really drunk so it doesn't count*."

Discussion

This qualitative study explains how within one campus environment, heavy episodic drinking is perceived as acceptable and almost expected, drinking behaviors are heavily influenced by a strongly male dominated environment, and sorority women alter their behavior in order to assimilate to this environment. In particular the identified themes "*campus drinking culture*," "*drinking in a male dominated environment*," and "*influence and risks associated with drinking in a man's world*" uncovered gender discrepancies, power differentials, and ways in which women adapt to the environment in order to conform to established gender norms. Results describe situations where women are faced with incongruencies related to their choice to drink, and socializing in a significantly male oriented domain resulted in modifying personal values and behaviors.

Themes suggest existing traditional gender roles embedded in this setting may contribute to power differentials and the marginalization of women. Similar to earlier research noted, (Bleeker & Murnen, 2005; Martin & Hummer, 1989; Rhoads, 1995) some fraternity parties were described as having an established patriarchal hierarchy. This was first evident regarding basic differences in quantity, frequency, and types of drinks held in high regard for men over women. Other patriarchal standards emerged regarding informal rules and norms established around acceptance to parties, whereas women were only allowed to gain entrance to parties if they met ambiguous and superficial standards set by men. Similarly, parties with sexually explicit

themes further exemplify gender norms associated with this setting.

One of the most apparent biases was evident with regard to the location where alcohol consumption occurred, identified as being predominantly male dominated settings. Because women expressed strong opposition to drinking in their sorority house, and in particular if women were under the legal drinking age, they sought out other venues, most often fraternity houses. Women expressed an awareness of the gender biased environment (e.g., having to walk to/from fraternities, needing to know someone to gain entrance, and acting and dressing in different ways) but few had insight as to the implications of this social structure (e.g., giving up control, relinquishing choices, powerlessness). However none of the participants expressed the need to change this policy and little is mentioned in the literature about this inherent difference.

While many of the women acknowledged the existing power differentials, sometimes even expressing the injustices, they described feelings of ambivalence or lacked awareness to do anything about it. Some expressed discrepancies in their feelings toward the male dominated structure; for example, they enjoyed socializing with men, yet they didn't approve of the men's treatment of women, particularly the younger women; they expressed the themes of the parties as demeaning, yet they engaged in the role play; and they felt drinking only at fraternities was unfair, but admitted they wouldn't want strangers in their own house. As long as male dominated environments remain the primary choice for engaging in drinking, it is likely women will continue to conform to male standards.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

Continued research and changes to prevention practices are needed to create safer and equitable campus settings for college women, specifically for sorority members. Although women in this

study appeared cognizant at some level of existing gender inequalities and power differentials in the college drinking environment, more can be done to illuminate these differences. While education alone does not create behavior changes, raising awareness and insight is a critical first step. Authority figures and campus prevention specialist should know how existing gender biased drinking cultures contributes to the potential exploitation of women and may increase the risk of victimization. Similarly, sorority women need to be aware of how engaging in high risk drinking behaviors in a male dominated environment has implications in making personal decisions and maintaining control.

Greek letter organizations are a central core to many universities and have the potential to significantly impact the drinking culture. Influences on the drinking context should continue to be examined from both a macro and mezzo perspective. For example, from a national perspective, policies for fraternities/sororities established by the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) and the North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) establish unequal standards for men and women from the onset. The impact of these policies may be an area for further exploration as other researchers have noted (Ackerman, 1990, Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 2001). Wechsler et al. (2009) noted college institutions are sending mixed messages by not holding fraternity and sorority members to institutionally approved standards of acceptable behavior. Finally, environmental norms of Greek letter organizations should be explored. It is important to note participants in this study expressed the desire and enjoyment in socializing with members of fraternities, therefore engaging men in their perception of the environment (rather than identifying them as targets of change) is central to this conversation. Working with these groups can help neutralize inequalities and power differentials inherent in these systems.

Most importantly, prevention efforts need to consider gender specific programming to address

women's issues of personal safety, empowerment to make choices, and to raise awareness of existing inequalities. As evident in this study, sorority women described venues where drinking occurs to shape their drinking choices and behaviors and expressed these differ from fraternity men. Prevention initiatives have overwhelmingly neglected the inherent male dominated drinking environment; likewise there is a significant gap in the literature with regard to environment. Further research on high risk drinking, the influence of gender, and the environment should include multiple perspectives, specifically soliciting male oriented social organizations, membership with diversity, under and upper level students, and other groups of women. Additionally, protective factors within sororities should be further examined to identify and raise awareness of the power they possess. The college drinking environment is complex system with inherent gender differences steeped deep into the college culture. Issues of gender inequality should not be ignored and the unique experiences of women need to be continually integrated into research and prevention programming. It is hoped this study may serve as an impetus for more research concerning the impact of environment and college student drinking.

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LIVING MEMORY: WHAT IT PORTENDS WHEN THE FOUNDERS STILL LIVE

ARI STILLMAN, FUEL CYCLE

What informs an organization's identity? Older organizations have annals that record the history for posterity, but what of newer organizations? Their history has yet to be made and much of it is as open to negotiation as their future unfolds. To explore this contingency, I delve into one organization, a young fraternity, during an occasion in which memories are exchanged and organizational identity is expanded. What I discovered elucidates the power of living memory and the fecundity of an occasion such as a national convention for keeping it alive.

Introduction

Just over 25 years ago, Pierre Nora (1989) lamented that “the acceleration of history” has resulted in a proliferation of *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because of the disappearance of *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory (p. 7). He argued that memory has become crystallized in a fixed, archival past known as history and that “real memory... remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting” (p. 8). Yet his model does not apply to fledgling societies, the pasts of which are still as alive as their founders. With the help of Karl Mannheim’s framework articulated in his “The Problem of Generations” – the seminal work exploring aberrations and continuity of knowledge transfer from one generation to the next – I will examine some of the characteristics, processes, and mechanisms of one such society, a men’s fraternity, to negotiate its living memory as well as how and to what degree the fraternity comes to a reflexive collective historical awareness. Given the dynamics discussed, the ensuing portrait will elucidate what the future portends for the collective memory of the fraternity’s membership once its living memory can no longer be verified by firsthand accounts.

Methodology

Participant observation was used over the course of nine consecutive, annual national con-

ventions of the fraternity to which to author belongs. This experience as a whole does not constitute a formal ethnography but rather served to inform the present inquiry. While the fraternity serving as a case study will be obvious to those who know the author, its name will not be mentioned herein so as not to interfere with the organization’s search engine results.

Following the national convention of July 2014, the author individually reached out to 12 attendees via email asking them about their convention experiences and perceptions about how the interactions between younger members and older alumni differed. The members were identified based on acquaintanceship with the author and segmented so that six were young alumni (having graduated college within the past five years) while the other six were older alumni (having graduated college six or more years prior). These categories are not standardized delimitations employed by the fraternity itself but instead reflect how the author perceives generational differences for the purpose of analysis. All twelve attendees agreed to participate in the study.

Since the attendees returned to their respective cities following Convention, interviews could not occur in person. In the interest of expediting data collection and avoiding scheduling issues, following conventional practices in exploratory research design (Henry, 2008, p. 92), the author thought it efficacious to send each participant a questionnaire via email to

which they could respond at their convenience. This asynchronous approach obviated the normal transcription process and allowed the author to code emergently and analyze the text with alacrity rather than after all questionnaires were completed.

Questions were formulated based on Mannheim's (1952) theory in order to test whether his observations held true for a categorically different type of inter-generational dynamic. How the object of this study is categorically different from Mannheim's (1952) work, as well as key aspects of his theory, will be unpacked throughout the remainder of this article.

Born Yesterday

Founded less than twenty years ago¹, this fraternity experienced explosive growth and maintains forty federated chapters across the continental United States. Due to such youthfulness, the fraternity lacks a true cultural memory in the sense of an objectified "past with fixed content and meanings" but rather is comprised entirely of communicative memory, or the "historical experiences of contemporaries within a few generations" (Erll, 2011, p. 311). This is to say that the National Founders of the fraternity are still alive. In turn, this allows for the past not to be a truly fixed history since members can still ask questions and receive answers from those who were agents in the history's forming.

Founded in the 1990s, the fraternity and its members were born into an emergent age of connectivity. By the time the earliest members were in college, email and text messaging were already commonplace and other social media such as Facebook became prominent as early as 2004 (Marichal, 2012, p. 4). This historical and social configuration made a formative impact on the fraternity's nascent identity by affording its members communicative capabilities far more dynamic and expeditious than the letter writing of older fraternities (Syrett, 2004, p. 107). In

the place of snail mail, fraternity members have engaged in email correspondence via a national listserv, which disseminates messages to every single member who maintains a freely provided fraternity email account. This technological innovation has directly shaped the fraternity's social structure and culture, enabling a more accessible imagined community of a national brotherhood.

The community is imagined in the sense that members join at a particular chapter but are told that they are part of a nationwide brotherhood. As such, an individual member's experience may not expose him to the national scale, so such a community is imagined until experienced otherwise. As the historian Nicholas Syrett notes (2004), Benedict Anderson thought that print culture and letter writing "functioned as a way for citizens of newly constructed nations to imagine themselves as connected with their fellow citizens – to imagine, in essence, a nation" (p. 107).

But more than imagining, modern media and increased ease and speed of transportation compared to the nineteenth century have encouraged fraternity members to travel and meet each other via road trips, regional retreats, and national conventions. It is the latter phenomenon that I will explore as my case since it best exemplifies the processes and mechanisms by which living memory is negotiated.

A Bridge Between Worlds

Members of the fraternity (colloquially known as and henceforth referred to as Brothers) may attend a national convention for different reasons. Some of the undergraduates may ostensibly attend to fulfill a national requirement – that is, a minimum number of representatives required of each chapter to send so as to ensure that each chapter is represented. This requirement stems mostly from the desire that members from each chapter are able to experience the na-

¹At the time of this writing (Spring 2017).

tional brotherhood. The secondary reason is to ensure adequate attendance so that the fraternity does not lose money from the costs of organizing the convention. Other undergraduates may attend because they heard stories of how much fun it is. Alumni who attend, however, are under no pressure to do so² and tend to have been to at least one convention in the past. A number of alumni shared that one of their principal motivations for attending convention was to relive their college years. As one of them expounded, now that he has graduated and works a full time job, it is much less feasible “to visit as many different chapters as [he] could to see the similarities and differences we share as fraternity members.” To this extent, he continued, “convention is a great time for alumni who are busy in their lives to come together and relive the basic commonality we have with each other, being in the fraternity.” For such alumni, conventions clearly serve as *lieux de mémoire* at which they can reminisce about the past.

This “basic commonality” is as vital as sharing a common language and as will be demonstrated is the cornerstone that makes all meaningful interaction between Brothers possible. As one alumnus shared, “We all did similar things to join the fraternity and that gives us a natural connection that no one else has.” Indeed, such consubstantiality, or identification with another through shared commonality that does not deny the distinctness of both parties (Burke, 1969, p. 21), facilitates not just the reconnecting between Brothers who previously knew each other, but also makes possible expeditiously intimate encounters between Brothers meeting for the first time. As another participant reminisced in one story,

Despite not knowing the undergraduate [member], somehow I [could] relate to this individual based on the commonality of basic membership as well as a personal relationship with one of [the] distin-

guished alumni [from the undergraduate member’s chapter].

This type of encounter, in which individuals previously unknown to each other were able to connect based on their consubstantiality and in some cases mutual friendships, is typical of Convention. As another alumnus summarized, intimate exchanges between brothers who hardly or did not previously know one another “is what Convention is all about.” He then embellished: “what once was a fifty-school crowd on Thursday night ended up being a one-brotherhood crowd by Sunday.” The fraternity prides itself on feeling like an extended family – a dynamic showcased annually at its family reunion known as Convention.

This effect would not be possible if Convention was merely a *lieux de mémoire*, for new bonds and memories are forged there year after year. One of the reasons for this is that Convention fosters a renewed sense of organizational embeddedness, or the sense that one’s social ties are embedded in an organizational setting (Small, 2009, p. 229). Although no longer in the social location at which their ties were first made, the fraternity convention creates a synthetic locus of brotherhood similar enough to the chapter milieu that causes attendees to relocate themselves in *lieux de mémoire*. It facilitates a sense of familiarity and security that one alumnus described as a Fraternal Bubble:

At convention, you feel unnaturally safe when you are with all of your brothers. Normally walking to 7-Eleven at 3am in the morning in a neighborhood you are not familiar with is absolutely absurd. However, at convention this notion never enters your head. It is like the confines of the real world disappear and you are basically in a Fraternal Bubble.

In this ‘present continuum,’ “the external environment itself takes over the job of ordering memory into a sequence... as long as we re-

² The seven officers on the national executive board are an exception, as they organize each national convention and it would be a conspicuous *faux pas* for any of them to be absent.

main in these contexts, we remain surrounded by clues which prompt our memory” (Fentress & Wickham, 1992, p. 73). Maurice Halbwachs helpfully refers to clues in these contexts, which are primarily other people, as *cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, or social frameworks of memory. As he explains, “we often experience things in the company of other people who can later help us to recall these events” (1992, p. 40). To such an extent, returning to social frameworks of memory can effectively dredge up dormant or subconscious memories and corresponding personas associated with them (Stillman, 2014, p. 38). In essence, as historians James Fentress and Chris Wickham succinctly declare, “we are what we remember” (1992, p. 7).

The Future is Now

Conventions are also the sites of new memories, however, as they are more than occasions for alumni to relive their pasts. As one alumnus from an isolated chapter on the West Coast shared, “my motivation for attending was to meet new brothers and re-unite with ones I’ve met before.” This dual inclination, both to renew extant ties and create new ones – combining sites with real environs of memory – characterizes much of the alumni rationale for attending.

Yet most of the attendees, in fact, are undergraduate members experiencing Convention for the first time.³ For them, Convention is indubitably a *milieu de mémoire* in which many of them meet Brothers from distant chapters in a setting of expanded brotherhood. However, it is also a *lieux de mémoire*, as undergraduate attendees seemed to “talk about their pledge process, what

gear they have, [and] what types of ‘debaucherous’ activities they participated in with other brothers.” When not discussing their careers or family, alumni, on the other hand, “talked a lot about what is missing from the fraternity for alumni participation and involvement [sic].” These substantial differences in conversation characterize much of the dialogue when undergraduates or alumni talked among themselves, but exchanges across generations tended to deviate significantly such that each was aware of the social location of the other. As one alumnus reported when a much older Brother introduced himself, “I found it kind of interesting how respectful everyone got initially. It was like a table of ‘old heads’ turned into NIBs.” By NIBs, he was referring to the vernacular abbreviation for a newly inducted brother. While such a hierarchy of seniority is inculcated into members before they are initiated, generational differences between Brothers are not always so linear in practice.

It is important to highlight that ‘generational’ in this sense does not refer to the biological life course usually delimited every thirty years (Mannheim, 1969, p. 278), but instead reflects the fact that most members attend college for four years and so fraternal generations might be said to turn over every four years. Yet with the fraternity, generational location, that is, “one born within the same historical and cultural region” (p. 303),⁴ is not determined by chronological time but by how far removed a member is from college. As Jan Assman and John Czaplicka note (1995), this is a temporal “horizon shifts in direct relation to the passing of time” (p. 127). For example, undergraduate Brothers may all

³At the July 2014 convention, 168 Brothers attended, which is atypically less than the 200 or so who usually attend. Of the 168, 111 were undergraduates, representing just over 20% of the fraternity’s undergraduate membership. One of the reasons that fewer alumni than undergraduates attend, despite there being significantly more Brothers who have graduated than are currently matriculated, has to do with the Convention itinerary. As one of the oldest alumni in attendance shared, “I would have liked to have seen [more] older alumni but if there aren’t events geared towards the alum, what incentive is there for them to attend?” Most organized events are educational workshops targeting undergraduate edification in best practices. However, since a number of alumni discussed their desire for more programming targeting themselves, it is entirely possible that an “alumni track” may run parallel with an undergraduate track in the future, thereby encouraging greater alumni attendance.

⁴In the sense that I am appropriating the term, “born” may refer to being born into the fraternity.

be part of one generational location and alumni Brothers who are up to several years out of college may belong to the same insofar as they identify with the historical and cultural conditions of the generation (Mannheim, 1969, p. 288). However, after being removed from college five or more years, the social distance and generational location seem to collapse as if to consolidate similarities. As one alumnus who graduated college six years ago said of another who graduated fourteen years ago, "I remember [the older Brother] saying 'It's great to meet a like-minded individual.' We are from different eras of the fraternity but shared similar views." Here the generational gap seemed to close through a shared mentality, as the older alumnus recognized the younger one as a kindred spirit or 'old soul' rather than belonging to a subsequent era. Mannheim (1969) refers to this process as a "stratification" of experience or consciousness such that individuals from different generational locations, which are mere potentialities, "experience certain historical processes together" that in turn foster greater consubstantiality between them (p. 297-8). This generational stratification may be more common at national conventions since fewer older alumni attend, so perceiving the social distance between themselves and the younger Brothers makes it easier to bond with peer alumni with whom they have more in common.

Such commonality in disposition or mentality situated in a stratified socio-historical configuration does not, however, locate individuals belonging to different generational locations within the same "actual generation." Mannheim (1969) adopts this latter term to refer to "Youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems" – a factual cohort within a fixed social location (p. 304). In the fraternity, the baseline actual generation is what is known as Line Brothers (LBs), or individuals who joined the organization during the same semester and year. During the new member education process preceding initiation, the fraternity emphasizes the importance of LBs as individuals to whom aspiring members

should seek support and fellowship, as they all experience the same concrete social forces and participate in a common destiny. The fraternity encourages this relationship between Line Brothers across the nation. During the intake process, the fraternity provides phone numbers to aspiring members at other chapters as a means of social support throughout the process. Typically LBs within the same geographic region will meet at least once before initiation to foster stronger ties. However, LBs at individual chapters may experience unique circumstances in their own chapter that differentiate them as separate generational units. While the LBs at other chapters serve as a support network, the vast majority of the intake process occurs within the social setting of their respective chapters, thereby affecting "the material of their common experiences in different specific ways" (Mannheim, 1969, p. 304).

Convention affords the opportunity for many LBs from across the nation to meet for the first time, which typically produces an immediate bond due to their heightened consubstantiality. As one alumnus shared after being approached by one of his LBs who he had not met,

I immediately shook his hand and gave him a hug... We shared sentiments that Fall 2008 was a good semester and said our 'see ya later.' Throughout Convention, in addition to remembering his name (tough thing to do when you meet 100 new people in two days), I would regard him as a closer acquaintance than the many other Brothers I shook hands with over the weekend.

The significance of the 'LB connection' is not just an orientation toward each other, but rather forming "a link between spatially separated individuals who may never come into personal contact at all" (Mannheim, 1969, p. 306). While this is true of all Brothers in the fraternity who hail from different chapters, the bond is especially strong among Line Brothers. As one younger alumnus embellished the connection, comment-

ing on seeing alumni from different generational locations interacting as previously described, “Regardless of age or [initiation] year they spoke to each other the way I speak to my Line Brothers.” Indeed, Line Brothers have even created mechanisms such as private, exclusive groups on social media to cavort in their generational location – proclaiming such sentiments as the superiority of their semester compared to others – and sharing memories specific to their socio-historical configuration.

Aside from generational differences, another important difference is the individual cultures and traditions that develop at each chapter. When a new chapter is founded, the Brother chosen to oversee the expansion tends to bring traditions from his home chapter to a new offshoot of Brothers. As a result, idiosyncrasies can be transmitted from one chapter to another. These idiosyncrasies, which folklorists have termed ‘oikotypes’ (home types), come to characterize habits of thinking peculiar to one community (Fentress & Wickham, 1992, p. 74). As variations across chapters tend to emerge whether due to the founders not being present to affirm orthopraxy or otherwise,

The existence of oikotypical variants demonstrates that [traditions]⁵ do evolve. Evolution here is a process of transmission and diffusion... We often... can trace certain paths by which the [tradition], or a new version of it, diffused from one group to another. We can also trace lines of transmission showing how a single [tradition] broke up into related ‘species’. (p. 74)

As an example of this phenomenon, one alumnus recounted asking the oldest alumnus in attendance

How it is coming back and seeing where

the fraternity is now. [The alumnus] said he never imagined they’d end up at this point. He also talked about how ridiculous some of the pledge traditions are. He said he went to [his alma mater chapter] to visit and [the Brothers] were asking him about some tradition they have. He was confused because they were so adamant that this was one of their most important traditions, but he realized that it was just something he decided to do when he was bored one night. It’s interesting how the ‘most important traditions’ are rooted in the most irrelevant actions.

While it is unlikely that most important traditions manifested so willy-nilly, such an occurrence demonstrates one example of how oikotypes can manifest. In this way, differences within and across actual generations at various chapters can be traced back to common deviation.

The previous account likewise illustrates how national conventions facilitate dynamic renegotiation of the fraternity’s collective memory, which is the “creation of shared versions of the past which come into being through interaction, communication, mediation, and institutionalization” (Erll, 2011, p. 305). More specifically and building off the ‘brotherhood’ metaphor, convention discourse exemplifies Halbwach’s (1992) understanding of family memory as a “typical inter-generational memory: a kind of collective memory that is constituted through ongoing social interaction between [family members]” especially through sharing stories at family get-togethers (p. 306). Brothers share stories, both located in their particular chapter history and from the past, in a dynamic process of re-mythologizing the fraternity’s collective memory.⁶ In this way an exchange of “living memory” takes

⁵ Although contextually the authors are referring to stories, for all intents and purposes, stories are narrative traditions and so I have replaced references to stories with traditions in the cited quotation.

⁶ It is hard to say if this process occurs at the conscious or subconscious level. I suspect it is a mixture of both in the sense that Brothers actively rearrange parts of their family memory when presented with contradictory or superseding information, though it is impossible to measure how such exposure comes to bear on their worldview.

place between eyewitnesses and descendants (p. 306). For the younger Brothers in attendance, Convention affords the ideal opportunity to access sites of memory hitherto unknown or previously inaccessible, allowing them to fill in gaps in their family memory. This dialectic process of renegotiating collective memory by exchanging stories and filling in memory gaps applies both to younger and older Brothers. For neither is it complete, as each lacks the insights of the other. For the younger, they learn about the past, which they appropriate into their repertoires. For the older, they learn about the present, which they likewise internalize – updating their living memory with new information often pertaining to fraternal events that transpired after they graduated college. This process often invokes nostalgia for the past and comparison of how things have changed and what has remained intact. As an older alumnus shared,

I was proud to feel that our core values still existed but I felt that we lost the “family” feeling. We are almost too big... I could proudly say in 2003 I knew every single brother in the fraternity... I used to go everywhere and everyone knew who I was and was running to me to give me a hug.

Such a sentiment reflective of attachment to the past and resistance to structural and cultural changes between generations is common, as the experiences of each generation provincialize them to their respective generational locations and memories (Mannheim, 1969, p. 300; Connerton, 1989, p. 3).⁷ Indeed, obstacles and adversaries considered formative to one generation may no longer be relevant to another just as practices that once were commonplace may become more difficult or precluded completely due to new circumstances.⁸

As Mannheim (1969) describes it, “the older generation cling to the re-orientation that had been the drama of their youth” (p. 301, emphasis original). While the older generations will not acclimate to new innovations as readily or as fully, as Mannheim (1969) notes, that is perfectly suitable to the natural order of generational succession (p. 302). For the younger generation, however, exposure to the living memory of the fraternity is vital to glean parts of the family memory not otherwise in its purview. One young alumnus from a relatively isolated chapter on the West Coast recounted a story in which he met two Brothers who were initiated soon after the fraternity’s founding:

When I had first met [the older Brothers], I had to ask them about the new member education process regarding their expansion effort with the [only nearby chapter], seeing that the expansion [New Member Educator] was from their chapter. I was very curious about [that chapter’s] founding since they were the ones that pledged us when expansion occurred at [my chapter]. I’ve heard stories about this process before but I wanted to take the opportunity to directly hear it from them in person and get their insight as they were members at the time of this process. Throughout time, the styles, traditions, and formalities of the process has changed quite a bit to the point where [the older Brothers] don’t recognize most, if not all, aspects of their process in today’s modern process. But what I’ve come to learn is that members of [the older Brothers’] new member education process most accurately reflects how the Western region conducts [its] new member education process.

⁷ It should also be noted that when a member stops “go[ing] everywhere” and actively involving himself in the fraternity’s affairs, he cannot expect new generations of Brothers to know who he is. Even so, there is something to be said for the fraternity’s imagined community when the founders and oldest members confess that they never imagined it becoming as expansive as it did. As will be discussed later in the paper, an accelerated tempo of social change necessitates that traditional attitudes adapt toward “a new centre of configuration” that Mannheim calls generation entelechy (1969, p. 309).

⁸ This is not to rule out the role of other formative factors in history. See Mannheim, 1969, p. 312-20).

There are several important takeaways from this episode. First, the alumnus from the West notes how he had heard stories that predated his initiation (in fact, they predated his chapter) that have come to bear on his experience. He recognized the opportunity to engage with the living memory of members from a previous generation of Brothers to verify the stories he had heard. Second, he noted that the current new member education process as it typically exists at most chapters has (d)evolved significantly since its inception and that the process at his chapter most closely reflects the original process as corroborated by the older Brothers. In this way, the oikotypical tracks can be verified not just by comparing what is to what is said to have been, but also through the link of an isolated region unexposed to the aberrations of the past.

Living Ancestor Worship

More than repositories of the past, older alumni also tend to be relegated to an almost mythical stature, as younger Brothers hear lionized accounts of the former's deeds and in many cases try to live up to them (Welzer, 2010, p. 7). These family memories "fulfill normative and formative, value-related and identity-related functions" (Erll, 2011, p. 307) such that they comprise a kind of mythology. One alumnus commented on this dynamic and his attempt to subvert it:

Often times as the alumni become further removed, some of their stories become exaggerated and all of the work they have done for their chapter is placed on a pedestal. Therefore, when undergraduates hear of these great alumni, they often feel as if they can never live up to them. So some of the topics I shared included all of the delinquent behavior these respected alumni partook in when I visited [their chapter]. The reason I wanted to share these embarrassing stories was to humanize the alumni of the chapter so the undergraduates may see that they are not

any different from them. I feel by giving the undergraduates an opportunity to see the similarities of those respected alumni, they too may feel empowered to achieve that same sense of pride while being able to slip up here and there in college. It is through the fraternity that any brother can talk to another and share great stories because they have the commonality of membership.

The alumnus here expressly wanted to denounce the perceived fixity of the past by invoking consubstantiality to the more fallible characteristics or less glamorous experiences of alumni so younger Brothers would feel less pressure to live up to an impossible standard. It makes sense, however, that only the positive accounts of alumni are retold, as "social groups tend to remember that which corresponds to the self-image and interests of the group" (Erll, 2011, p. 307). As memories tend to serve as "models for future conduct and as ways of self-description" (Erll, 2011, p. 307), telling less than exemplary stories could have negative portents for all who hear the story (as well as those who experience the symptoms of such exposure).

This silencing of the past or selective forgetting applies not just to the stories of individuals, but to the mythologized cultural memory itself. The oldest alumni in attendance reported that a number of younger Brothers asked them what it was like in the early days and some asked about the fraternity's "true history." This occurrence is noteworthy not only because it allows younger Brothers to ask questions of the living memory of older alumni (which fosters their building a more complete family memory), but also because it reveals that some younger Brothers are aware that the history taught to them and advertised on social media may not be the full story. When asked about such a line of inquiry, one of the oldest alumni replied,

Earlier on, it made sense to change our history in order to make us sound legitimate... I don't have an issue with telling

any Brother our history although I usually reserve that for more of the older alumni. To me, undergrads and new alumni are too immature to hear it.

This privileged information of a secret history, not archived in writing but only in the living memories of those privy to its existence, illustrates an integral function of national convention: the opportunity to exhume the mysteries of the past by interacting with its undertakers. Brothers exposed to such a version of the past are forced to reconcile the believed historicity of their collective memory and how this new information comes to bear on everything they took for granted. This illustrates Mannheim's (1969) point that "Even in negation our orientation is fundamentally centered upon that which is being negated, and we are still unwittingly determined by it" (p. 298). So long as the secret history remains in living memory, circulated among those privy to it, such a version of the past will inevitably infect how family memory is negotiated: it will just be a little family secret.

Herein lies the root of the problem of generations. As one alumnus observed, "Each year the number of alumni in attendance who I had experienced undergrad with becomes smaller and smaller." Having fewer older Brothers in attendance implies that each older Brother at convention becomes more of an authoritative narrator of the fraternity's living memory since there are fewer individuals who could contest his empirical testimony with their own (Collingwood, 1946, p. 235). As Astri Erll notes (2011), commenting on family memory: "Inter-generational memory thus goes back as far as the oldest members of the social group can remember either their own experiences or stories that they heard from their elders" (p. 306). Any Brothers with whom the secret history is shared then become secondary sources, prone to forget details in its retelling if such interstices were not already forgotten or left out when they first heard the story (Hobsbawm, 1972, p. 3). This means that when those Brothers who lived that secret history die

or stop attending convention, the fraternity's actual history, so long as it is never codified, acquires a mythic character – whispered about as it already is but this time patently unknowable.

The secret history is not the only "family tradition" excluded from formal codification. Another tradition involves stealing items that bear the fraternity's letters from other Brothers when visiting them, informing them of the theft after returning home, and the victims visiting the thief at his chapter to retrieve the stolen item(s). The original purpose of this tradition was to encourage Brothers from separate chapters to visit each other, but as the purpose sometimes gets left out of communicating the tradition, Brothers think the idea is just to steal lettered items from other Brothers. This communicative lapse often manifests during national conventions. At the July 2014 convention, when it was announced that some Brothers were missing a number of items, one younger Brother confessed to "not knowing there were rules and apologized for doing what he did." If such a tradition can be diffused without reference to its purpose, one can only imagine other oversights that have been transgressed – integral facts left out of the knowledge transfer devoid of qualifying details to contextualize the whole cosmology. As J. G. A. Pocock explains in greater detail, this is one symptom of the failure to codify the formal organization of a society (1962, p. 242).

The second implication of this problem of generations is what Mannheim (1969) calls the "entelechy" of a generation, or the centrifugal expression of a generation's way of experiencing life and the world (p. 283). Being part of a certain generation limits one to a "specific range of potential experiences, predisposing [one] for a certain characteristic type of historically relevant action" (Mannheim, 1969, p. 291). When the historical and social situation change, de-stabilization of the status quo occurs (Mannheim, 1969, p. 295). Effectively, new generations facilitate "reevaluation of our inventory and teaches us both to forget that which is no longer useful and

covet that which has yet to be done” (Mannheim, 1969, p. 294). This process becomes more fluid as fewer members of the older generations exist or are even present to provide input, so it becomes the prerogative of each generation to reflect on what vestiges of the past are relevant to incorporate into the present and which to discard to the void of history. In the case of the secret history, it has already been replaced by a crafted history more indicative of the normative values of the current generational entelechy.⁹ There is also much to be said about the intrigue and power of an unverifiable myth, as it encourages a degree of symbolic restoration by which Brothers can evoke affective responses yoked toward living up to a nostalgic romanticized social imaginary (Hobsbawm, 1972, p. 8).

Limitations

This inquiry encompasses a single fraternity and is not intended to be generalizable to other fraternities or sororities for that matter. On the contrary, the spirit of inquiry guiding this exposé is meant not just to demonstrate how memory is negotiated in a young organization, but, as a corollary, how it can be manipulated and the factors involved in doing so. Readers should be mindful that history is by its nature an anthropological construct – that is to say not historicity – and is subject to the selection biases, incomplete accounts, and ideological agendas of its architects. As such, it would be prudent to approach it with ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ – philosopher Paul Ricoeur’s phrase for the air of skepticism one should take “to draw out less visible and less flattering truths” possibly occluded in a text (Felski, 2012).

Conclusion

The case of such a young fraternity offers an

alluring account of how living memory is exchanged among members and what is at stake to be lost from its collective memory if eyewitness accounts are not archived for posterity. What legitimates the present and explains it is the idea of the past as a process of becoming the present (Hobsbawm, 1972, p. 11). So long as national conventions recur and are attended by Brothers young and old, the living memory of the fraternity will survive as *milieux de mémoire* regardless of codification. The conversations between Brothers of all generations exchanged at conventions foster a particularly reflexive historical awareness – one which, as it currently stands, openly engages with the past toward edifying the living memory of the fraternity.

Since whoever controls the past controls the future, as George Orwell warned, the future depends on those who have the power to narrate the past. In the case of the fraternity, that prerogative falls to older Brothers who can share their personal accounts with others. Or more politically, as one of the older alumni alluded to earlier, the national executive board can rewrite history in such a light as they want the fraternity to be known.

There is also the option that more concretely addresses, though does not resolve flawlessly, the “Problem of Generations” – to codify the stories told from which traditions are borne. By codifying the “why” – the telos behind institutionalized traditions – subsequent generations will be able to return to as close to the source as they can get to understand the *raison d’être* for what they do, putting speculation to rest. While this may be a more difficult and creative task for older fraternities that lost their founders long ago, for younger ones such as the one discussed herein, the time is ripe to capture the past as it actually happened so as not to risk leaving the transfer of living memory to chance encounters.

⁹ In this case I am referring to a different kind of generational unit, one reflecting generational differences between national executive boards whose members have agency over the direction of the fraternity. As a member of what might be called the second generation of national executive boards – that is, the first generation in which no founding members occupied seats – I had a direct hand in rewriting the fraternity’s official history to reflect a particular ideological agenda.

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