

ONCE A MEMBER, ALWAYS A MEMBER:  
IDENTIFICATION INDUCEMENT MESSAGES IN NATIONAL SORORITY MAGAZINES

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**Title**

Once a Member, Always a Member:  
Identification Inducement Messages in National Sorority Magazines

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## **ABSTRACT**

As sorority membership numbers keep rising, national sororities need to be cognizant of the ways in which they may induce their members to remain active and involved within the organization. Identification inducement messages are one way in which sorority organizations can continually reinforce organizational identification within their membership. This thesis sought to discover the strategies and tactics found in national sorority magazines and expand Cheney's (1983b) identification inducement typology. A content analysis of 25 articles found new ways in which the strategies and tactics were used. All four strategies – common ground, identification through antithesis, assumed “we,” and identifying symbols – were found in the data and these strategies were used in new ways. Three new tactics – personal stories outside of the organization, positioning within the organization (both within the common ground strategy) and nicknames (within identifying symbols) – were found within the sampled articles.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

On over 800 U.S. college campuses, approximately 750,000 college students are members of sororities or fraternities as of fall 2012. This represents ten percent of U.S. college students (DeSantis, 2011). Nationwide there are over 655 collegiate and 4,500 alumnae chapters of 26 sorority organizations (NPC, 2012). Greek membership is not just during a member's collegiate career, but it is a life-long membership. Greek organizations continue socializing members after the collegiate experiences because alumni provide an important source of revenue, volunteers, and legitimacy to the organization.

Staying active, involved, and committed is one indicator of organizational identification (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). Identification at its broadest is "an active process by which individuals link themselves to elements in the social scene" (Cheney, 1983a, p. 342). These identifications can take many forms including gender, race, age group, political party, and religion. Specifically, organizational identification can be described as an individual's sense of belonging, loyalty, or commitment to an organization (Cheney, 1983a). The identification process is an individual one, but the organization can induce identification through persuasive communication with the goal that the individual will then make decisions based on the organization's best interest (Cheney, 1983a). For Greek organizations, these decisions often include staying involved with the fraternity or sorority and donating time and money to the organization's causes. Currently, the National Pan-Hellenic Conference (NPC), the governing body of national sorority organizations, has over four million alumnae members who donate over \$2.8 million to scholarships and \$5 million to worthy causes, and volunteer over 500,000 hours a year (NPC, 2012).

One way Greek organizations induce member identification is through their newsletters and magazines. All 26 National Pan-Hellenic Conference (NPC) sororities publish a magazine a

several times year in which all collegiate and alumnae members have access. One purpose of these newsletters is to keep alumnae members informed and involved in the sorority due to the lack of daily face-to-face communication collegiate members receive living and interacting within their houses. As sisters graduate, they no longer rely on the daily communication to stay engaged in the organization, rather most of the news they receive about the sorority comes from the quarterly magazines the national sorority produces or the yearly newsletters from their individual chapters.

As an active member of Alpha Xi Delta, I have experienced firsthand the transition from daily face-to-face communication to the quarterly updates on the sorority. I initiated into Rho chapter at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL) in 2006. I lived in my chapter house for three years living with five different sisters and was actively involved on different committees and positions until I graduated from UNL in 2010. I served as the Assistant Academic Achievement Chair, Academic Achievement Chair, and Vice President of Programming. I also served the Greek system as a whole as a Rho Gamma, or Recruitment Guide, to potential new members during recruitment week for two years. Rather than recruit potential new members to my specific chapter, I helped incoming members narrow their selections down and helped recruit girls to the Greek system as a whole. Since graduation, I have served the national organization by sitting on the national Academic Achievement team where I am serving my second term. I am currently the Midwest Academic Territory Director where I oversee 25 Alpha Xi Delta chapters. In this position, I participate in monthly team calls, communicate with all chapters, and process reports to ensure all chapters and individual members are following the academic guidelines set by the national fraternity<sup>1</sup>. I also provide support to current academic achievement

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<sup>1</sup> Alpha Xi Delta is a as sorority and a member of the National Panhellenic Conference, but it was founded as a “fraternity” and is still officially known as Alpha Xi Delta Fraternity.

chairs and help them implement new programs and incentives for current members to “realize their potential” in the classroom. I am not currently active in an alumnae group – therefore, I do not pay yearly dues to the fraternity – mainly because the closest alumnae group is five hours away. I do plan on joining an alumnae group when I move to Missouri for my PhD work where two alumnae groups are within a two-hour radius of where I will be living.

The purpose of this exploratory study is to discover the strategies national sorority organizations use to induce identification in their alumnae members. As sorority membership numbers continue to increase (NPC, 2012), it is important to understand the role newsletters and magazines play in inducing identification. High levels of identification are likely to enhance alumni support and commitment to the organization. First, this chapter will lay the theoretical foundation for this thesis by introducing organizational identification to frame this thesis in the context of the organizational identification conversation. Second, this chapter will give an understanding to the American Greek system to form a general understanding of this membership. Finally, this chapter will provide a rationale for the proposed study.

### **Organizational Identification Inducement**

Identification allows us to persuade and be persuaded and, in turn, influences members to act or behave in certain ways (Cheney, 1983a). Identification theory stipulates that identification is both a process and a form. First, it is an active process by which we “link ourselves to elements in the social scene” (p. 342). In this regard, we link ourselves to the groups and objects that reflect our individual values and goals. Within the context of organizational identification, the organization attempts to induce identification on the individual, given that that individual is inclined to identify by having similar values, goals, and interests of the organization. Individuals make a choice to identify with particular social collectives and these identifications, in turn,

influence our behaviors and actions. Second, individuals act out identification when they start making decisions based on the best interests of the group or organization (Cheney, 1983a). In other words, the form of identification is the behaviors of the individual; such as the likelihood of an individual working overtime or holidays, or donating time and money to an organization. A strong link between identification, decision making, and communication exists making it possible for organizations to attempt to induce identification due to the communicative nature of decision making (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987).

In a study of employee newsletters, Cheney (1983b) found that organizations employ identification inducement strategies through associative and disassociative communication. Building off of Burke's (1969) definition of these identification strategies, associative strategies attempt to induce identification by providing a connection between the organization and the individual employee while disassociative strategies attempt to identify a common threat to the environment which unifies the organization and the employee against the enemy. Cheney proposed four identification inducement strategies: common ground technique, identification through antithesis, the assumed "we", and unifying symbols. Cheney's (1983b) typology's has primarily been researched in the corporate setting. This study builds on of previous work (Adler, 1995; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999; Boyd, 2004) in expanding the typology into other contexts. Such a move answers Cheney & Christenson's (2001) call to bring together public relations and other forms of organizational communication due to the increasing interconnectedness between the two. They argue that identity has become the central issue for many organizations as they "talk" about themselves in a variety of communication areas and researchers need to ask more questions about the relationships between various audiences and the organization.

## **Understanding the Greek System**

DeSantis's (2011) book, *Inside Greek U*, explains three reasons why studying the Greek system is important. First, due to the secretive nature of fraternity and sorority life, most accounts of what it means to "be Greek" actually comes from an outsider's view or statistics on different aspects of Greek life, such as alcohol consumption or hazing procedures (e.g. Richardson, Wang & Hall, 2012). What remains to be studied is an insider's account about the nuances of what it means to "be Greek". Second, the Greek community comprises a large amount of American leaders. Greeks are more likely to be involved on campus and succeed academically when compared to their non-Greek counterparts (UMKC, 2012). Although the Greek system represents only 8.5 percent of the U.S. student population, it accounts for 85 percent Fortune 500 CEOs, 85% of Supreme Court justices, 70% of U.S. Presidents' cabinets, and 76% of U.S. Senators since the beginning of the twentieth century. All but two presidents have been Greek (UMKC, 2012). Third, beyond high profile decision makers, millions of Greek alumni are active in society at a variety of levels. Little is known about Greek alumni involvement in both the Greek system and society as whole. As DeSantis (2011) states, "understanding the Greek system is part of understanding America" (p. 9). Understanding the Greek system helps us understand how other organizations, particularly in non-work contexts, such as unions, professional organizations, and educational institutions, communicate with both the internal and external audiences.

### **History of the Greek System**

There are three types of organizations that use the Greek letter alphabet (DeSantis, 2011). The first type is professional fraternities and sororities which focus on a specific field or vocational training. Second, honor societies initiate those who have distinguished themselves in

scholarship. Third, social fraternities and sororities are what most people think of “being Greek” and are typically associated with big parties, hazing, and big chapter houses (DeSantis, 2011). The first social fraternity, Phi Beta Kappa, was founded at the University of William and Mary in 1776; however, shortly after they were founded, they became an honor society for individuals in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences (The Phi Beta Kappa Society, n.d.). The first social fraternities were formed to create a “men’s club that offered camaraderie, secrecy, and intellectual discussion” (DeSantis, 2011, p. 3). The original fraternities were segregated institutions, “reserved only for wealthy, white, Christian men” (p. 4). By the late nineteenth century sororities were founded to provide “white women a forum to discuss literature, poetry, and morality” (p. 4). In the early twentieth century, African-American fraternities and sororities were established. With all of the major changes that occurred to the education system in the United States during the middle of the twentieth century, “the older organizations, which brought members together for conversation and camaraderie, were transformed into social clubs dedicated primarily to amusement” (p. 5). Despite these drastic changes, many practices, rites, and rituals of the older organizations remain today, including hazing and segregation (DeSantis, 2011).

Despite the reports of drinking, hazing, and sexual assaults (see DeSantis, 2011 for a full review), Greek organizations continue to add to their ranks. College students join fraternities and sororities for personal growth, leadership opportunities, academic support, and volunteering (The Sorority Life, 2012). One reason sororities and fraternities continue to exist is because they fill a need to belong, create values that last beyond the college years, help individuals realize their potential through leadership and academics, and provide a “democratic social experience” (NPC, 2012). Once an individual decides to join the Greek system, he or she must go through a

mutual choice and selection process, most commonly known as rush or recruitment. Once a potential new member receives a bid to join a specific Greek chapter, he or she becomes a new member and goes through the pledging (and in some cases hazing) process to become a full member into the chapter. Membership is typically considered a lifetime commitment unless a member fails to meet academic, financial and/or behavioral standards as a collegiate member (The Sorority Life, 2012). As an active alumna member said when I initiated into the Greek system, “once a member, always a member”. (B. Allen, personal communication, October 28, 2006).

### **The Brotherhood and Sisterhood of the Greek System**

In his book focusing on the gender reinforcement of Greek membership, DeSantis (2011) found four main ways in which brotherhood is formed in fraternity organizations. First, there is a focus on the fraternity as family. Members are referred to as “brothers.” A new member has a pledge “big brother”, and in turn gains a “little brother” when new members join. In some ways, the fraternity bond is similar to other familial bonds where they fight, argue, but at the end of the day accept each brother for who he is and help each brother when he is in need. Second, there is a discovering of self-disclosure and intimate friendships in fraternities (DeSantis, 2011). Greek men live in close proximity to each other and often participate in retreats where the older brothers encourage younger brothers to share the most intimate details of their lives. Third, alcohol is seen as a communicative lubricant (DeSantis, 2011; Monahan & Lannutti, 2000). Even on the mandatory retreats described above, members are encouraged to drink to open up to their brothers. Lastly, the pledging and hazing process induces membership to the particular chapter. To become a member of a fraternity, a brother is often subjected to physical and emotional discomfort or punishment despite the fact it is illegal in all national organizations,

states, and schools. However, members feel a bond with their pledge brothers who shared the same hazing process and the brothers who came before them. Through this process, brothers understand that their pledge brothers will “have their back”. Many fraternity members feel like the tradition of the hazing process is *the* most important identification inducing strategy chapters use to strengthen membership. As one participant in the study stated, “take pledging [hazing] away and fraternities will die” (DeSantis, 2011, p. 171).

Alternatively, DeSantis (2011) discusses why “sisterhood is not like brotherhood” and why sorority members do not feel the same bond to their sisters or sorority chapters. First, sorority chapters are much bigger. The average fraternity has 65 members (NIC, 2012) where the average sorority chapter has 130 members (NPC, 2012). Fraternity brothers are able to form stronger connections to their brothers because there are less of them. A second, and related reason, is the fact many sororities form cliques within each chapter. With over 100 sisters, it is hard to make the time for each individual sister. Often smaller groups or cliques form weakening the bond to the chapter as a whole. Third, in sororities there is often competition and cattiness between sisters creating a barrier to a tight sorority bond (DeSantis, 2011). Lastly, and most importantly, there is the lack of the pledging process. Rather than cause physical and emotional discomfort, new members are treated to gift weeks and are taken out to dinner with the older members. In fact, if an older sister does something to cause a new member discomfort, even if done so unintentionally, it is often the older sister who is reprimanded; whereas in a fraternity, the pledging process reinforces the superiority of the upperclassmen and the inferiority of the new members.

The research on the Greek system has predominately focused on the fraternal brotherhood. Little scholarly research has been done on the communicative aspects of sorority



membership. A notable exception is the work by Williams and Connaughton (2012) which focused on the everyday talk in a struggling sorority organization. They found that members focused on the positive aspects of their organization both within the sorority and when talking about the sorority to outsiders. They also found identification and disidentification tensions between the local chapter and national organization. When expressing frustration with the struggling chapter, individuals tended to disidentify with the chapter and identify with the national organizations. This study seeks to advance the inquiry of DeSantis and Williams and Connaughton to understand how sororities continue the identification inducement process and why members stay committed after graduation.

### **Rationale**

This chapter introduced both organizational identification inducement and the Greek system. As the Greek system keeps expanding, sororities seek ways to keep alumnae active as volunteers and donors. Two unique aspects regarding the relationship between identification and the Greek system drive this study. First, Greek membership is not a static, short-term identification; rather it is considered a life-long membership that is communicatively developed at each stage of membership (pledge, member, alumnae). While there is considerable research on the pledge and member years, I am unaware of any study that explores identification inducement during the alumnae years. Second, this study is different than most studies focusing on organizational identification due to the Greek system's reverse paid relationship. Rather than getting paid by the organization (since most identification research has focused on corporate settings), this study is looking at a relationship where the individual pays to be part of the organization. To be active in most alumnae associations, yearly dues are paid. For alumnae members not involved in an alumnae association, there is no longer a reverse paid relationship.

The ultimate goal for the sorority and sorority newsletters are to get people back into the reverse “paid” relationship by means of paying dues, volunteering their time to national or local chapters, or to join alumnae groups.

This exploratory thesis will analyze the identification strategies present in the magazines of five sorority organizations during one calendar year. To accomplish this goal, this thesis will first provide a literature review of organizational identification and organizational identification inducement strategies. Second, this thesis will outline the decisions that were made regarding the criteria and selection for newsletters analyzed and also will detail the steps for the analysis of the selected magazines. Next, the results of the analysis will be presented to explain the strategies and tactics found in the sampled magazines. Lastly, the implications of the results will be discussed as well as the limitations and areas of future research.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational identification is moving to the forefront of organizational communication research (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). The past few decades have produced extensive scholarly research on organizational identification (e.g. Cheney, 1983a; Cheney 1983b, Scott, 1997; Russo, 1998; Meisenbach, 2008) and the topic continues to be studied. Much of the research focuses on employee-employer identification (e.g. Scott, 1997; Ashforth, Harrison & Corley, 2008); however, Williams and Connaughton (2012) stress the importance of furthering identification research into non-employment relationships, including volunteer and reverse paid organizations, where the individual has to pay the organization for membership or association. Identification in non-employment relationships are particularly important to the organization due to fact most volunteer organizations require members to provide financial support and volunteer their time to keep the organization running.

Despite the growth in research focusing on organization identification, little research has explored the process of how identification is actually formed and negotiated (notable exceptions being Meisenbach. 2008; Williams and Connaughton, 2012). There is even less research that examines the identification inducement process in non-work contexts, especially the reverse paid relationship (Williams and Connaughton, 2012). Most organizational communication research looks at the outcomes of identification (Ashforth et al., 2008). This chapter provides a review of relevant literature on organizational identification and inducement strategies. First, literature on organizational identification will be presented to understand how this study is situated within the research discussion of organizational identification. Second, Cheney's identification inducement strategies and tactics will be reviewed. Finally, the chapter will present the research questions.

## **Organizational Identification**

An individual identifies when there is a “perception of oneness or belongingness” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) to a particular target. Within an organizational context, targets can include social groups, organizations, professions, work teams, and roles. Identification is a necessary social process by which people define and “link themselves to elements in the social scene” (Cheney, 1983a, p. 342) and is the essence of who we are and why we do what we do (Ashforth et al., 2008). There are three main levels of identification within the organization (for a full review, see Ashforth et al., 2008). First, the meso-level incorporates social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1989). Our social identity is our identity based the social groups in which we value and place an emotional significance of membership (Tajfel, 1978). Social groups can include groupings such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, educational background, and class. Alternatively, our personal identity is the identity that makes us unique and different as an individual. The second level, identity theory, stipulates that identity is the “parts of a self composed of the meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in highly differentiated societies” (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 284). In regards to the organization, these roles can include occupations, careers, and relational networks. The third level is the individual identification with the organization, which is the focus of this study.

One identifies with an organization when “in making decisions, the person in one or more of his or her organizational roles perceives that unit’s interests – as that unit’s interests – to be relevant in evaluating the alternatives of choice” (Cheney, 1983a, p. 353). In other words, a person identifies with an organization when he or she make decisions based on the best interests of the organization due to the perception of "oneness" with the organization. Research has indicated a connection between decision making and identification (Simon, 1976). Cheney

(1983a) stipulated that most decisional premises have a communication base; therefore, identification, communication, and decision making are inherently linked. Persuasion, identification, and communication are also inseparable (Cheney, 1983a). Cheney (1983b) found that an “individual who is inclined to identify with an organization will be open to persuasive efforts from various sources within that unit” (p. 146). Identification often leads to action; this action occurs when an individual makes decisions based on the organization’s interests. Identification may ebb and flow over time (Cheney, 1983a), but identification leads to several outcomes including cooperation, effort, participation, motivation, task performance, turnover and turn over intentions, and information sharing and coordinated action (Ashforth et al., 2008).

A large body of literature exists explaining the moderators of organizational identification. To name a few, organizational identification has been linked to perceived external prestige (Bartels, Prun, De Jong & Joustra, 2007); teamwork, morale, information flow, involvement, supervision, meetings, and organizational culture (Schrodt, 2002); physical environment (Millward, Haslam & Postmes, 2007); and physical proximity in geographically dispersed organizations (Scott, 1997). Cheney (1983a) also found that identification is stronger among those closest to the "center" of an organization. For example, top executives and CEOs tend to identify more strongly than other members of an organization. Organizational tenure or length of time spent in an organization also positively influenced identification levels (Barker & Tompkins, 2006). Therefore, the profession, the organization, and the job are interwoven and interdependent (Russo, 1998). Identification levels in one aspect of an individual's roles within an organization also indicate identification levels in other roles and aspects of the individual-organization relationship. For example, higher organizational identification may influence identification with an individual’s professional or work group identification.

## **Identification in Non-employment Contexts**

Most of the organizational communication research focuses on the employee-employer relationship (notable exceptions include Kramer, 2011a; 2011b; Hinderaker, 2009); however, people spend a significant part of their lives in non-employment related organizations.

Organizational identification relationships are diverse; therefore, it is important research looks at the relationships in different contexts than the traditional employment relationships (Meisenbach, 2008; Williams & Connaughton, 2012). Non-employment relationships include volunteer organizations, part-time, seasonal, temporary, and subcontracted labor, and reverse-paid relationships. Ashcraft & Kedrowicz (2002) found volunteering to be “third” type of membership contract in addition to work and family obligations. Volunteering gives members a third life experience, third kind of place and space, and a third type of “work.” The motives and values of volunteers to get involved in specific organizations tend to indicate identification with that specific organization (Scott & Stephens, 2009) due to the likelihood of the values of the organization matching the values of the individual. This finding collaborates Cheney’s (1983a) conclusions that individuals are more likely to identify with their employer if the organization’s values match the individual’s values.

Kramer’s (2011b) study of a community choir takes into account the fact that people’s lives intersect in a variety of areas. Individual’s work, non-employment, and family lives all intersect, which could be an important factor in identification (or disidentification) in non-employment contexts. In employment based relationships, individuals are either employees and members of an organization or they are not; however, Kramer (2011a) found two types of volunteer memberships: active and nonactive members. Active members are those who regularly participate in organizational activities whereas nonactive members are members who

had temporarily left the organization. These nonactive members still reported mostly positive perceptions of the organization but due to time and schedule conflicts, they were unable to actively participate in the organization. For some nonactive members, the temporary leave becomes permanent, some remain nonactive, and others become active members in the organization again.

Disidentification and ambivalent identification tend to occur when a member “is torn by contradictory values, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors” (Gossett, 2002, p. 389). Therefore, individuals tend to identify with organizations whose values are in concert with their own personal values and beliefs. Individuals who identify with an organization tend to support the organization in a variety of ways. For example, university alumni members provide various types of support including financial gifts, recruitment, career advice or job placement for graduates, participate in alumni events, and volunteer support for funds solicitation and organizational events (Ransdell, 1986).

### **Organizational Communication as a Form of Identification**

Identification can be encouraged through various means of organizational communication (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Organizational communication includes the “set of processes through which organizations create, negotiate, and manage meanings” (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, p. 234). Communication between the organization and the individual influences members’ determination to make the organization succeed (Williams & Connaughton, 2012). The more frequent the contact, the higher the identification (Cheney, 1983a). Organizational communication includes both internal and external communication because companies no longer separate the two fields in practice (Cheney & Chrisensen, 2001). Organizational communication scholars are starting to see the communication with employees and communication with

customers as having similar objectives; therefore, the internal and external aspects of organizational communication are often similar.

“Identification is the most significant...tool for the study of organizational rhetoric” (Cheney, 1983b, pp. 144-145). All public relations and market-related communication concerns identity (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). According to Boyd (2004), communicating identity is the translation of one’s wishes into terms of an audience’s opinions or persuading an audience to identify with the organization. Promoting identification through organizational communication involves repositioning the organization in people’s minds (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002). Organizations use different forms of organizational writings to communicate with both internal and external audiences in hopes of reframing and repositioning the organization in an individual’s eyes.

Newsletters are one form of organizational writing. In newsletters, issues of meaning and identification are negotiated between the organization and the individual (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). Newsletters have little dissent, debate, and criticism about the organization because the organization is able to control the content of the newsletters. As a result newsletters “may be viewed appropriately as messages from the organization to the [member]” (Cheney, 1983b, p. 149). Organizations are able to portray their priorities not as “the products of real choices, but as the way things are and the way individuals want them to be” (Cheney, 1983b, p. 156). As important as newsletters are to inducing identification, if people’s experiences in the organization are largely negative, the newsletter has little hope inducing organizational identification on the individual (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999) because employees typically develop their own identifications based on personal experience and only minimally on the newsletter content. People who identify with the organization tend to complete the inducements offered



within newsletters where those who disidentify with the organization tend to stop at the discourse level (Boyd, 2004). In other words, people who already identify with an organization are more likely to continue to identify or increase their identification levels as compared to before reading the newsletter. Individuals who disidentify with the organization may read the newsletter, but the inducements offered are not internalized. Individuals whose experiences do not match up to the newsletter content or individuals who disidentify with the organization will stop the identification process after reading the newsletter. However, DiSanza & Bullis's findings are not applicable to the sorority context due to the nature of sorority membership as discussed in chapter one of this thesis. Below is a detailed summary of the strategies organizations use to induce identification on their organizational members.

### **Identification Inducement Strategies and Tactics**

Within the context of organizational identification and communication, Cheney (1983b) offered a typology of identification inducement strategies. Identification and identification inducements are not the same thing. Identification is a state of being where identification inducing strategies are one way in which organizations persuade audiences to identify with them. Cheney operationalized Burke's associative and dissociative communication strategies of persuasion. Rather than focus on the individual, Cheney proposed that the organization initiates the inducement process through communication of its values and goals. Cheney posited that organizations employ identification inducement strategies through associative and disassociative communication. Associative strategies attempt to induce identification by providing a connection between the organization and the individual employee while disassociative strategies attempt to identify a common threat to the environment which unifies the organization and the employee.

Table 1

*Identification Inducement Strategies*

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Associative/ Disassociative</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Common ground	Associative	The organization links itself with others in an overt manner	See tactics in Table 2
Identification through antithesis	Disassociative	The organization positions itself and others against a common enemy	“The new government regulation prohibits [company] from expanding into new industries”
Assumed “we”	Associative	The organization subtly uses “we” and “they” to appeal to others	“We’ve had our share of problems”
Identifying symbols	Associative	Use of the organization’s name, logo, or trademark	Smokey the Bear, Apple, “Just Do It”

In his study of organizational newsletters, Cheney (1983b) proposed a typology of identification inducement strategies and tactics. These strategies include: common ground, identification through antithesis, the assumed “we”, and unifying symbols; and the following tactics within the common ground strategy: expression of concern for the individual, recognition of individual contributions, espousal of shared values, advocacy of benefits and activities, praise by outsiders, and testimonials by employees. The associative strategies in this typology include common ground, the assumed “we”, and unifying symbols, and identification through antithesis is considered a disassociative strategy (see Table 1 for a synopsis of the strategies).

Organizations use these strategies and tactics to “tap into the identification process, thereby catalyzing the persuasion of individual members (Cheney, 1983b, p. 150).

Organizational communication and rhetoric research using Cheney's (1983b) identification inducement typology has been limited. Within this body of research is Adler's (1995) work focusing on the strategies used within two different Lutheran church newsletters. Adler found the strategies to be more common in the established church than the newly formed church. DiSanza and Bullis's (1999) research on the typology in a newsletter by the National Forrest Service found an additional four tactics used in employee newsletters (global recognition of individuals, recognition of individual's contributions outside of the organization, invitation, and bragging) as well as an understanding of the employee perceptions of the newsletters. Boyd's (2004) study of the R. J. Reynolds's advertising campaign differs from previous research by focusing on external communication rather than internal; however, no new strategies or tactics were offered.

### **Identification Inducement Strategies**

Cheney's (1983b) original typology included four strategies: common ground, identification through antithesis, the assumed "we", and unifying symbols. These strategies are "intentional and unintentional attempts by the organization to convince employees to accept the organization's interest and values as his or her own to reinforce existing identifications" (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999, p. 355).

**Common ground.** Organizations use the common ground strategy when it "equates or links itself with others [the individual] in an overt manner" (Cheney, 1983b, p. 148). The organization often communicates its goals and values in a way that aligns with the individual member's values and goals. This associative inducement strategy includes the organization's attempts to persuade the member "I am like you" or "I have the same interests as you" (Cheney, 1983b, p. 148). This strategy can also be used by offering individual recognition through honors,

rewards, and organizational sponsored clubs. This is the most common strategy (Cheney, 1983b; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999).

**Identification through antithesis.** Identification through antithesis has been found to be infrequently used in internal communication (Cheney, 1983b; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999) but Boyd (2004) found this strategy extensively used in an external communication campaign by the tobacco company, R. J. Reynolds. This strategy involves the organization initiating inducement through “the act of uniting against a common enemy” (p. 148). The organization attempts to unite with the individual by positioning both the organization and the individual against a common enemy or outsider. These outsiders are presented as a threat to the organization’s values, goals, and prosperity. Often, this threat is in the form of the government and government regulation (Cheney, 1983b; Boyd, 2004).

**Assumed “we”.** The assumed “we” “the most subtle strategy in the typology (Cheney, 1983b). Though similar to common ground, the assumed we occurs when the organization actually uses the words “we” and “our” to signify organizational actions and beliefs. In this strategy, the assumed or “transcendent ‘we’ and the corresponding ‘they’ often go unnoticed as an appeal to identification between parties who may have little in common” (p. 149). This strategy includes both the objective and possessive forms of “we” and “they”. Cheney (1983b) argues that the assumed “we” can be a very powerful inducement strategy because it often goes unnoticed. The assumed “we” appears in more focused appeals to shared values and goals such as in communication by organizational leadership addressing the members of the organization (Cheney, 1983b).

**Unifying symbols.** The final identification inducement strategy does not fit the Burkean scheme, but Cheney (1983b) posited that it is “clearly an identification tactic” (p. 154) and

uniquely organizational. Unifying symbols stress the significance of an organization's name, logo, and trademark. An organization uses symbols to express what the organization is and is not (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). These symbols are key elements in organizational identities and Cheney (1983b) noted that organizations make serious investments in these unifying symbols. Unifying symbols help give employees a corporate identity and are easily recognized by both organizational insiders and outsiders.

### **Identification Inducement Tactics**

In addition to the inducement strategies, Cheney's (1983b) typology identified several tactical categories used to initiate identification. Differing from the strategies defined above, the tactics are defined as "specific forms of appeals" of the general inducement strategies (Cheney 1983b, p. 150). All tactics previously found fall within the common ground strategy. Cheney's original typology included six tactics: expression of concern for the individual, recognition of individual contributions, espousal of shared values, advocacy of benefits and activities, praise by outsiders, and testimonials by employees. DiSanza & Bullis (1999) added an additional four tactics in their Forest Service study. Though distinct in nature, the tactics can also overlap. See Table 2 for a full breakdown of all ten tactics and examples of each.

**Expression of concern for the individual.** In this tactic, "the stress is on the people who *belong* to the organization rather than on the organization as a collection of people" (Cheney, 1983b, p. 150). This tactic is used by an organization to demonstrate compassion and caring for organizational members on an individual level. Cheney refers to this tactic as the "people factor".

**Recognition of individual contributions.** The second tactic includes recognizing the individual contributions made to the organization. The use of this tactic implies that the

contributions of members build and sustain organizational values and ideals (Cheney, 1983b). Common forms of this tactic include “Employee of the Month” or special clubs and awards based on contributions. Memberships in these clubs and obtaining these awards help foster an environment of dedication and loyalty to the organization from employees. It is important to note, that to be successful as an inducement tactic, membership in these clubs and receipt of these awards must be a realistic goal for most (if not all) employees (Cheney, 1983b).

**Espousal of shared values.** Cheney (1983b) describes the espousal of shared values tactic as the organization’s appeal to employees based on presumed shared values. This tactic includes any attempts by the organization to convey the message that “‘we’ have the same interests as ‘you’” (Cheney, 1983b, p. 151).

**Advocacy of benefits and activities.** Organizations use the advocacy of benefits and activities tactic to highlight company-offered employee perks (Cheney, 1983b). Individuals become attached and identify with an organization because of the benefits employees receive, often not found in competing or different organizations.

**Praise by outsiders.** The praise by outsiders tactic is the only tactic that allows for an outsiders voice which allows the organization to gain legitimacy in their employee’s eyes (Cheney, 1983b). Sources of this praise include magazine articles, newspaper stories, industry awards, and support of the organization from influential individuals.

**Testimonials by employees.** Organizations use testimonials of employees to offer perspectives other than management. Often, these testimonials include “quotations by employees expressing dedication, commitment, even affection with regard to the organization” (Cheney, 1983b, p. 152). Organizations use testimonials like this to gain employee morale and

Table 2

*Identification Inducement Tactics\**

<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example</b>
Expression of concern for the individual	The organization demonstrates compassion and caring for employees at the individual level	“We are highly divisionalized so our staff can find a home”**
Recognition of individual contributions	The organization focuses on the individual contributions made to the organization	“Tami Montoro, Alpha Chapter, pulled the whole thing together”***
Espousal of shared values	The organization appeals to members based on the presumption of shared values	“They were celebrating the completion of many new visitor developments that help make [name] a showcase of recreational opportunity” ***
Advocacy of benefits	The organization highlights organization-offered perks	“[Company] has a library, daycare and gym on site for employees”
Praise by outsiders	An outsiders’ perspective allows the organization to gain legitimacy in their members’ eyes	An outsider to the organization states: “I would like to bring your attention to the service I received at [company]” ***
Testimonials by employees	The employees offer a different perspective than management	“I have found my purpose as a member of [organization]”
Global recognition of individuals	Organizational praise for a group or class of individuals	“Law enforcement officers do an outstanding job of talking about their jobs” ***
Recognition of individual’s contributions outside of the organization	The organization recognizes individuals by name for their donations to other organizations	“Sarah has recently been named the outstanding young alumni from Alma college for her dedication and service to the university”

Continued...

Table 2. *Identification Inducement Tactics (continued)*

<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example</b>
Invitation	The organization requests that members become part of a particular group or project	If you would like more information about initiating a similar project, please contact...***
Bragging	The organization boasts about the time, money, or effort it makes to a task or project	"Rho was able to volunteer over 1,000 hours last month alone to the cause"

*Notes.*

\*All tactics fall under the common ground strategy

\*\*Example adapted from Cheney (1983b)

\*\*\*Example adapted from DiSanza & Bullis's (1999) study of the U.S. Forest Service

support from secondary sources within the organization, especially when the testimonial comes from a co-worker or acquaintance.

**Global recognition of individuals.** The global recognition of individuals tactic is the first tactic added by DiSanza & Bullis (1999) and involves organizational praise for a class or group of people as a whole rather than for specific individuals. This most frequently includes giving recognition to a work group or team for an accomplishment.

**Recognition of individual's contributions outside of the organization.** Recognition of individual's contributions outside of the organization recognizes individuals by name for their donation of time, money, effort, or receiving awards from groups outside of the organization (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). These groups can include community, religious, volunteer or other non-work or work groups.

**Invitation.** The tactic of invitation involves an organizational request for an individual to become part of, remain involved with, or contact the organization or its members for a particular group or project (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). Invitation includes information about joining work



related and non-work related activities, clubs, volunteering efforts, and committees or planning teams.

**Bragging.** The last tactic, bragging, involves the organization boasting about the time, money, or effort a unit, group, or the organization applies to a task (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). Often bragging includes information about completing important projects or the amount of time volunteered or money donated to various causes.

The identification inducement typology provides a framework to analyze persuasive organizational communication (Cheney, 1983b; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). These strategies and tactics are used to influence the relationship between the individual and the organization. They may be intentional or unintentional, but these strategies are used frequently by organizations to induce identification among employees.

### **Outcomes of Identification Inducement Strategies**

In addition to the textual analysis of newsletters, DiSanza and Bullis conducted interviews with U.S. Forest Service employees to gauge reader responses to the newsletters. The researchers used the interviews to explore the “micromoments through which the [identification] process occurred” (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999, p. 250). These interviews suggested that personal experiences within the organization played a significant role in the responses to the identification inducements in the newsletters. They found four main employee responses to the inducements offered. First, *nonidentification* can occur. In this situation, readers read the newsletter purely for the purpose of human interest or learning about the organization. Second, *textual identification* occurs when the individual identifies with the organization as depicted or through the person depicted in the story or through unifying symbols (e.g. Smokey the Bear). Third, *contextual identification* occurs when the individual remembers past relationships with the

people depicted in the stories, remember places visited or worked at in the past, recognize similarities with the people depicted and agree with the organization's articulated decision premises. Lastly, *disidentification* occurs when personal experiences contradicts the story, the individual holds negative perceptions of the newsletter and if there is not enough recognition of the local forest. To my knowledge, no other study has expanded on the outcomes of the identification inducement strategies.

### **Conclusion**

In order to understand the current context of organizational identification, this chapter first provided an overview of the literature on organizational identification. This was followed by a discussion of organizational communication. Finally, this chapter reviewed the typology of identification inducement strategies and tactics. To conclude, the research question will be put forward.

As discussed in the introduction chapter, alumnae members tend to be less involved in their sorority because they are too busy in their first two dimensions of life (work and family), they feel they have outgrown the Greek system, and feel unwanted and uncomfortable going back to their chapter houses (DeSantis, 2011). It is important for sorority organizations to induce identification in their alumnae members to provide the financial and volunteer support to keep the sorority running. This study adds to our understanding of organizational identification by exploring the ways identification inducement strategies are used in national sorority magazines. Expanding from previous literature, this study will focus on the internal communication to members in a non-employment setting. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

RQ1: What identification inducement strategies are used in national sorority magazines?

RQ2: What identification inducement tactics are used in national sorority magazines?

### **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

The current study examined the identification inducement communication in twenty-five national sorority magazines using Cheney's (1983b) typology as a method of analysis. To answer the research questions posed, a two-stage textual analysis of the magazine content was conducted. Documents are rich sources of information that are "contextually relevant and grounded in the contexts they represent" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 277). Other advantages to textual analysis include the availability, nonreactivity, and truth value of documents (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

#### **Sample**

Most national sororities distribute a national newsletter or magazine four times a year; Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall. The magazines are distributed in both electronic and print form to members. These magazines are created by alumnae members of the sororities who are also staff members of the national organization. These texts are written by members of the organization but are influenced by the organizational leadership. Though intended for members, most sorority magazines are accessible by non-members on the sororities' website. These magazines are intended for, and primarily read by, members of each sorority, but only certain information is given. The rituals and secret information, which could be forms of identification inducements, are never shared in the magazines due to the possible public nature of the texts.

After receiving a list of all 26 National Pan-Hellenic Sorority organizations, I searched the chapters' websites to find access to the sororities' magazines. Sorority magazines were included in the possible sample of this study if they had public access to at least four issues online. Some sororities only had four issues online; some had up to ten years worth of issues online. Out of the 26 national sororities, 19 sororities met those criteria; seven sorority organizations did not have online access to at least four of their magazines. Since I am part of

the Greek system, my sorority (Alpha Xi Delta) was not included in the sample. This was done to prevent bias due to the years of identification messages already received from the sorority. Out of the remaining 18 sororities (Phi Beta Phi, Kappa Alpha Theta, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Alpha Phi, Delta Gamma, Gamma Phi Beta, Alpha Chi Omega, Delta Delta Delta, Sigma Kappa, Zeta Tau Alpha, Alpha Gamma Delta, Alpha Gamma Delta, Alpha Delta Pi, Delta Zeta, Kappa Delta, Alpha Sigma Tau, Alpha Sigma Alpha, Alpha Epsilon Phi), five sororities were selected by a random number generator<sup>2</sup>. The magazines from Alpha Sigma Alpha, Delta Gamma, Gamma Phi Beta, Sigma Kappa, and Kappa Alpha Theta were chosen. The random purposeful sampling technique (Patton, 1990) allowed for an in-depth analysis of sorority newsletters; however, it does not permit statistical generalization. Random purposeful sampling (Patton) is used as a way to reduce the number of cases to allow for in-depth analysis; this strategy is applicable particularly when the cases are highly homogeneous.

I downloaded, saved, and printed the most recent four issues (Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall 2012) from each magazine. There was a total of 335 articles (average issue had 16.75 articles) within 826 pages of text (average issue had 41.3 pages; average article had 2.47 pages). These magazines included 98 feature articles (average issue had 4.9 feature articles). The magazines ranged in length is from 24-53 pages; the mode page number of the magazines was 52 pages. To further narrow the sample size, the feature articles for each sorority's newsletters were pulled out and assigned a number. Since identification is an ongoing process, the feature articles were selected because they likely provide identification messages and focus on the sorority as a national organization rather than individual chapter recruiting messages. DiSanza & Bullis (1999) found many individuals who did not read newsletters due to the content in the magazines. Since the feature articles are on the cover of the magazine, they may induce members to read the

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<sup>2</sup> [www.random.org](http://www.random.org)

magazine and therefore increase the chance of members being exposed to the identification inducements offered within these articles. For each sorority, five feature articles were randomly selected for a total of 25 articles and 88 pages of text. The average article length was 3.52 pages per article; the shortest was one page, the longest was 12. A list of the 25 articles can be found in Appendix A. The narrowing of the sample allowed for an in-depth analysis to occur and the development of information-rich cases tied to organizational attributes. Moreover, this approach was an expansion of previous identification inducement research utilizing newsletters that utilized a single text (DiSanza & Bullis). The five selected sororities are detailed below. It is important to note that a full accounting of each sorority's history is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, readers are encouraged to consult the endnotes provided should such an account be of interest.

### **Selected Organizations**

Alpha Sigma Alpha (ΑΣΑ) was founded in 1901 at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia<sup>3</sup> (Alpha Sigma Alpha, 2013). Alpha Sigma Alpha currently has over 150 collegiate and alumni chapters across the United States. “Alpha Sigma Alpha promotes high ideals and standards for its members throughout their lives by emphasizing balance among our four aims of intellectual, physical, social and spiritual development” (Alpha Sigma Alpha, 2013).

The *Phoenix* of Alpha Sigma Alpha, the official quarterly publication of the sorority, has been published continuously since 1914. The magazine's mission is to “reflect the character of the organization and its members and communicate the goals and the direction of the sorority and Foundation” (Alpha Sigma Alpha, 2013).

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<sup>3</sup> For a complete history of Alpha Sigma Alpha, please visit their website at [www.alphasigmaalpha.org](http://www.alphasigmaalpha.org)

Delta Gamma ( $\Delta\Gamma$ ) was founded in 1873 in Oxford, Mississippi, at the Lewis School for Girls near the University of Mississippi<sup>4</sup> (Delta Gamma, 2013). Delta Gamma's membership has grown to more than 142,000 women worldwide with 147 collegiate chapters and more than 250 alumnae groups across the United States and Canada. Delta Gamma offers women of all ages a rich heritage based on principles of personal integrity, personal responsibility and intellectual honesty. Its primary purpose is to foster high ideals of friendship, promote educational and cultural interests, create a true sense of social responsibility, and develop the finest qualities of character (Delta Gamma, 2013). *The Anchora of Delta Gamma* has been published continuously four times a year since its establishment, more than 100 years ago. The mission of *The Anchora* is "to inform, educate, entertain and inspire readers on subjects relevant to the Fraternity, its members and Greek life; to encourage members' lifetime involvement and "Do Good" spirit; and to serve as a permanent record of Fraternity history" (Delta Gamma, 2013).

Gamma Phi Beta<sup>5</sup> ( $\Gamma\Phi\beta$ ) was founded in 1874 at Syracuse University in New York (Gamma Phi Beta, 2013). Gamma Phi Beta has almost 200,000 members and more than 175 collegiate and 150 alumnae groups throughout the United States and Canada.  $\Gamma\Phi\beta$  strives "To inspire the highest type of womanhood" (Gamma Phi Beta, 2013). Gamma Phi Beta's newsletter, *The Crescent*, has been published four times a year since 1902 and includes information about sorority programs and services, chapter activities, individual members, and feature stories of interest to women.

Kappa Alpha Theta ( $\text{KA}\Theta$ ) was founded in 1870 as the first Greek-letter fraternity for women at Indiana Asbury College (now DePauw University)<sup>6</sup> (Kappa Alpha Theta, 2013).

Kappa Alpha Theta has over 170 collegiate chapters and 200 alumnae groups across the United

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<sup>4</sup> For a complete history of Delta Gamma, please visit their website at [www.deltagamma.org](http://www.deltagamma.org)

<sup>5</sup> For a complete history of Gamma Phi Beta, please visit their website at [www.gammaphibeta.org](http://www.gammaphibeta.org)

<sup>6</sup> For a complete history of Kappa Alpha Theta, please visit their website at [www.kappaalphatheta.org](http://www.kappaalphatheta.org)

States and Canada. KAΘ's mission is "Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, Kappa Alpha Theta exists to nurture each member throughout her college and alumnae experience and to offer a lifelong opportunity for social, intellectual, and moral growth as she meets the higher and broader demands of mature life" (Kappa Alpha Theta, 2013). *The Kappa Alpha Theta Magazine* is published four times a year and is intended "to update, educate, and entertain readers about the Fraternity and its college and alumnae chapters and to serve as an enduring link between the international Fraternity and its members" (Kappa Alpha Theta, 2013).

Sigma Kappa (ΣK) was founded in 1874 at Colby College in Waterville, Maine<sup>7</sup> (Sigma Kappa, 2013). Sigma Kappa has almost 250 collegiate and alumnae chapters across the United States. "The purpose of Sigma Kappa Sorority is to provide women lifelong opportunities and support for social, intellectual and spiritual development by bringing women together to positively impact our communities" (Sigma Kappa, 2013). The *Sigma Kappa Triangle*, Sigma Kappa's official magazine, was established and has been published regularly since its first issue in January 1907. I was unable to find the mission statement of the *Sigma Kappa Triangle*.

### **Analysis**

A multi-step analysis was used to determine the identification inducement strategies used by national sorority newsletters using a sentence as a unit of analysis. The sentence was chosen as a unit of analysis for its balance of reliability and validity (Tangpong, 2011). Too small of a unit of analysis (e.g. word) would have caused issues of validity because words can have different meanings and it is the context of the word which assigns the meaning to that specific word. Too large of a unit of analysis (e.g. paragraph) would have caused reliability issues because several strategies may be occurring in a paragraph and it may be hard to for coders to assign the paragraph as one strategy and achieve inter-coder reliability between them. The

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<sup>7</sup> For a complete history of Sigma Kappa, please visit their website at [www.sigmakappa.org](http://www.sigmakappa.org)



analysis included closed, open and axial coding strategies. Prior to coding, the data was read through in its entirety twice then typed into an excel spreadsheet to code for the identification inducement strategies used.

To answer RQ1, the data was analyzed using Cheney's (1983b) strategies – common ground, antithesis, assumed “we,” and unifying symbols – as an *a priori* schema. A fifth category was used to code any text found to be non-identification inducing text or text that offered “other” types of identification. I trained an additional coder<sup>8</sup> about the different inducement strategies and provided a detailed code book for her use during coding. An additional coder was used to prevent personal biases from influencing the strategies identified in the selected documents. Ten percent of the selected text was analyzed by both coders to ensure the same strategies were identified within the text and reliability was not reached in the first round of coding. The differences were discussed and the coders were retrained on the strategies. Another 10 percent was coded and reliability was reached ( $\kappa = .828$ ) with a consensus being found on the data placed in different codes. Once consensus was reached, each coder analyzed half of the remaining texts. A final 10 percent was coded by both coders to ensure drift did not occur while coding; reliability was again researched ( $\kappa = .792$ ) and the coders came to a consensus on the text placed in different strategies<sup>9</sup>.

To answer RQ2, all text was coded by myself to find the tactics within each strategy using the coding software MAXQDA. The use of an open coding system allowed for an exploration of strategies and tactics not found in Cheney's original typology where the closed coding system was used to find the strategies and tactics previously identified. I read the data found within each strategy twice before starting open and axial coding. For the first strategy,

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<sup>8</sup> The additional is also affiliated with a Greek organization, but not one of the five organizations chosen

<sup>9</sup> Reliabilities were calculated using ReCal at <http://dfreelon.org/utis/recalfront/>

common ground, I used the ten tactics provided by Cheney (1983b) and DiSanza & Bullis (1999) - expression of concern for the individual, recognition of individual contributions, espousal of shared values, advocacy of benefits and activities, praise by outsiders, and testimonials by employees, global recognition of individuals, recognition of individual contributions outside of the organization, invitation, and bragging - as an *a priori schema* along with an “other” category for text that did not fit a previously identified tactic. The other category was then coded using open and axial coding (Straus & Corbin, 1998) and two additional tactics were found. I then went into the text identified as the remaining three strategies - identification through antithesis, assumed “we,” and symbols - to code for the tactics used within each strategy. Through open and axial coding (Straus & Corbin, 1998), I found one tactic for identification through antithesis, two in assumed “we,” and three within symbols. Lastly, all data not coded within the strategies was reread to ensure all data that included identification inducements were coded as identification inducements. Eighty-three percent<sup>10</sup> of the text identified as strategies from the first round of coding were found to include identification inducement tactics.

### **Conclusion**

This study was interested in determining which identification inducement strategies and tactics were used by national sororities within their newsletters to alumnae and collegiate members. To do so, five national sorority newsletters were analyzed using closed, open, and axial coding to identify Cheney’s (1983b) identification inducement strategies and tactics. The results of this analysis will be presented in the next chapter.

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<sup>10</sup> Included is the percents of the text previously classified as identification inducement messages: 86 percent of the common ground strategy, 22 percent of identification through antithesis, 64 percent of the assumed “we” strategy, and 88 percent of identifying symbols were coded into tactics.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This study explored the identification inducement communication in national sorority magazines by examining five articles from five different sororities for a total of 25 articles. Specifically, this study used a combination of closed, open and axial coding to discover the specific strategies and tactics communicated to active and alumnae members. First, the data was coded using Cheney's (1983b) typology as an *a priori* schema for strategies and the tactics within each strategy. The data then was coded using open and axial coding for the remaining text to identify any additional strategies and tactics. Seventy percent of the data was coded; a breakdown of the strategies and tactics can be found in Table 3. The remaining 30 percent of the data represented text that was more contextually based that focused on providing background on events, locations, and member experiences and included no identification inducements. For example, to set up a story about two members who volunteered after the Joplin tornado, Alpha Sigma Alpha gave background information about events leading up to the volunteer effort. In another example, Delta Gamma communicated the importance of friendships in our lives. As the article explains "there is something very vital about women's friendships" and how important it is for women to have friends in our lives. However, this example does not induce identification to the organization, but to womanhood in general; therefore, it was coded as non-identification. The results of this study found no new strategies; however, it did identify four new tactics within the common ground (two new tactics) and symbols (two new tactics) strategies. This chapter presents the results of these findings by discussing the four strategies of the typology - common ground, identification through antithesis, assumed "we," and symbols – and the tactics used within each of those strategies.

Table 3

*Frequency of Strategies and Tactics*

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Common ground		1156
	Testimonials by members	233
	Bragging	108
	Espousal of shared values	97
	Invitation	68
	Recognition of individual's contributions	48
	Global recognition of individuals	22
	Advocacy of benefits and activities	12
	Recognition of individual's contributions outside the organization	9
	Praise by outsiders	6
	Concern for the individual	0
	Personal stories outside the organization*	442
	Positioning within the organization*	111
Identification through antithesis		11
Assumed "we"		81
Identifying symbols		152
	Letters*	32
	Nicknames*	70
	Symbols	50

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\*Added tactics to the typology

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### **Common Ground**

The common ground strategy included the overt attempts by the organization to link itself with its members (Cheney, 1983b) and was the most common type of identification inducement strategy (n = 1115). Previous research found 10 tactics within this strategy (Cheney; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999), but through the open and axial coding process I found two additional tactics used in national sorority magazines. One original tactic, expression of concern for the individual, was not found in this dataset due to the target audience of the magazines. Expression of concern for

the individual would be more likely found in recruitment literature due to the nature of the recruitment or rush process where the sorority is attempting to gain new members. The eleven tactics found in this study are testimonials by members, bragging, espousal of shared values, invitation, recognition of individual's contributions, global recognition of individuals, advocacy of benefits and activities, recognition of individual's contributions outside of organization, praise by outsiders, personal stories outside the organization, and positioning within the organization.

### **Testimonials by Members**

Testimonials by members occurred when organizations offered an individual member's perspective about the organization (Cheney, 1983b). Testimonials by members was the most frequent original tactic of the typology (n = 233). In the following passage, a Gamma Phi Beta alumna explained her role as chapter advisor:

I stayed involved after graduation by becoming a chapter advisor for Alpha Alpha Chapter. My role as chapter advisor was to share my experiences and help the women see the "big picture". I wanted to inspire them to be better than they knew they could be. I did not come into this role knowing all there is to know. I grew into it. In fact, I am still learning today. I did learn, however, that advisors make the difference between a chapter that is getting by and one that shines. I encourage alumnae to work with any of our many collegiate chapters - if not in person - connect by email, phone or Skype.

The alumna member explained her experiences as a Gamma Phi Beta volunteer and then encouraged all alumnae to volunteer for the sorority as well. Sigma Kappa shared the story of a member who had the opportunity to visit Sigma Kappa's national philanthropy headquarters: "I feel very proud, honored, inspired and grateful to be a Sigma Kappa, experiencing Colby College and the Maine Sea Coast Mission firsthand. I felt inspired to see the impact Sigma Kappa has had over the years with the Maine Sea Coast Mission, and very grateful to be able to be a part of such a once and a lifetime opportunity." The idea or value being communicated (for example, getting other alumnae members to get involved) came from an alumna member rather than

through the leadership's voice. In other words, the sorority offered an individual's members voice to give a different viewpoint than the leadership's perspective alone.

### **Bragging**

Bragging occurs when the organization mentioned what it has given in terms of money and services to their members, philanthropies, and communities at large (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). Bragging was used 107 times in this data set. For example, Delta Gamma stated their "Foundation funded a new Braille room for the Children's Center for the Visually impaired in Kansas City" which is a part of their national philanthropy – "protecting the gift of sight" (Delta Gamma, 2013). In another example of bragging, Alpha Sigma Alpha said, "On December 6, 2011, Alpha Sigma Alpha and GetSomeGreek presented a check to the American Red Cross for \$5,000 during a small press conference on the campus of Missouri Southern State University." Though many of these instances occurred when the sorority discussed their national philanthropies, the organization can brag about other things as well. For example, Kappa Alpha Theta bragged about the quality of its members by stating, "The candidate pool from which we select our grant recipients - Theta collegians, alumnae, and chapters - is brimming with potential for personal development and growth through serving." These examples demonstrated how sororities brag about the good that comes from the sorority – either contributions or facts about the organization or its members.

### **Espousal of Shared Values**

Espousal of shared values arose in the explicit ways organizations formed common ground between itself and its members based on the presumption of shared values (Cheney, 1983b). Common bonds included values, history, philanthropies, and shared experiences by members (n = 97). By focusing on what is shared, the organization induced members to identify

with those values and in turn the organization itself. Delta Gamma called upon its members by stating three explicit values that made Delta Gamma unique from other organizations: “Respect. Love. Lifetime...This is lifetime membership. This is sisterhood.” In another example, Sigma Kappa spent an entire article talking about the history and relationship with their philanthropy, the Maine Sea Coast Mission. The sorority depicted the first meeting between itself and the philanthropy in the following excerpt:

That all changed in 1910 when Myrtice Cheney, Alpha, learned of the Maine Sea Coast Mission. “I heard Mr. MacDonald [Rev. Alexander MacDonald, founder of the Maine Sea Coast Mission] speak at the Woodfords Congregational Church in Portland about the needs of the women and children who were living lonely lives. A little later, I volunteered to see what I could do at Crowley Island during the summer of 1910.”

This history was shared by all sisters; therefore, members could identify with both the history and the philanthropy itself tying members and the sorority together. Kappa Alpha Theta demonstrated the importance of continued involvement in this statement, “A link is just one of the pieces of what we consider the Theta experience - from college chapter to alumnae link and also to alumnae chapter or circle.” These examples demonstrated how sororities attempted to induce identification by putting forward the shared values, history, and experiences between the organization and its members.

### **Invitation**

Invitation occurred when the organization invited its members to participate in a variety of ways - whether by joining a particular club or group, giving financial contributions or volunteering for the organization (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). Sororities also used this tactic to offer suggestions and invite members to follow organizationally prescribed suggestions and recommendations to uphold the sorority’s values and planned activities. Sororities used the invitation tactic 68 times in this dataset. For example, Gamma Phi Beta offered several

suggestions to chapters to celebrate the Month of the Scholar (February), such as: “Invite PanHellenic sisters with dean's list honors to a scholarship dessert” and “Pick a day to distribute goodie bags containing candy, pens, pencils and study tips to fellow students.” Alpha Sigma Alpha called upon its members “To register for the 2012 national convention & leadership conference, [by] download[ing] the registration at [www.AlphaSigmaAlpha.org](http://www.AlphaSigmaAlpha.org).” Sigma Kappa attempted to get their members to donate to their national philanthropy by calling on them “Donate Online: Visit the Sigma Kappa Foundation website and select Maine Sea Coast Mission as the gift designation.” All of these examples induced members of the sorority who identified with that organization to complete the following activities, and in turn, invited members to join the sorority’s efforts.

### **Recognition of Individual’s Contributions**

Recognition of individual’s contributions focused on the contributions, efforts made, and services given by individual members to the sorority (Cheney, 1983b). Sororities recognized individual contributions 48 times in this dataset. Sigma Kappa gave recognition to a member who helped her chapter receive national attention through their anti-hazing campaign in this example, “EVP Ashley Okorn was credited with organizing the chapter's RESPEKT campaign.” Delta Gamma’s year end report included four pages thanking donors for the contributions made to the organization in the following manner:

Our gratitude goes to our donors who gave to the Delta Gamma Foundation between July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012. Once again, your generosity has played a critical part in an outstanding year.

Anna Boyd Ellington Link: \$500,000 to \$999,999 – 1 name listed

Eva Webb Dodd Link: \$250,000 to \$499,999 - 1 organization listed

Mary Comfort Leonard Link \$100,000 to \$249,999 - 6 names and organizations listed

Diamond Link: \$50,000 to \$99,999 - 12 names and organizations listed

Leadership Link: \$25,000 to \$49,999 - 28 names and organizations listed



Hope Link: \$10,000 to \$24,999 - 84 names and organizations listed  
Founders Link: \$5,000 to \$9,999 - 117 names and organizations listed  
President's Link: \$2,500 to \$4,999 - 287 names and organizations listed  
1873 Club: \$1,873 to \$2,499 - 194 names and organizations listed

Delta Gamma only gave recognition to individuals and organizations who gave at least \$1873 (the year of their founding) rather than all members who donated to the organization that year. Sororities were selective in giving recognition and only recognize certain benchmarks or services. Not every contribution made by members was communicated in these sampled magazines.

### **Global Recognition of Individuals**

Organizations also gave praise to a group or class of individuals for their contributions (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). The main difference between the group recognition and the individual recognition was the lack of specific names in the group recognition where in the individual recognition, all individuals are specifically stated. Recognition of a group of individuals occurred 22 times within the data. The most common groups recognized in sorority magazines are collegiate or alumnae chapters (n = 14). Sigma Kappa recognized a chapter as a whole in their contributions in this example: “Kappa Psi, Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis, sold over 60 bracelets on campus during National Hazing Prevention Week.” Delta Gamma communicated “The Foundation is proud to report that the Lectureship program has been completed at the following campuses: Akron, DePauw Duke, Houston, Indiana, LSAU, Michigan, Mississippi State, Mizzou, UND, Oklahoma, Purdue, SMU, Texas, TCU, Texas A&M, Washington, and Wichita State.” Global recognition of individuals gave praise to the chapters and campus as a whole rather than individual members of that particular chapter.

### **Advocacy of Benefits and Activities**

This tactic occurred when the organization highlighted the benefits and activities offered by the organization (Cheney, 1983b) or what the organization can do for its members. Benefits and activities were communicated 12 times in the sampled magazines. For example, Kappa Alpha Theta mentioned the grants and scholarships they offer members by stating, “These grants allow Thetas to attend leadership conferences, travel across the globe to serve in third-world countries, build homes for deserving families in areas struck by national disasters, and so much more.” Officers who attended the Gamma Phi Beta’s national convention were able to experience “motivational workshops and helpful how-tos...collegiate chapter presidents and advisors will gain valuable leadership skills to CONNECT. IMPACT. SHINE.” The sororities advocated for their benefits, activities, and perks of being a member and identifying with this organization by explicitly stating what the sorority offers its members.

### **Recognition of Individual’s Contributions Outside of Organization**

Organizations also give recognition for contributions made outside of the organization (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). These instances were communicated when the sorority recognized individuals by name for their donations to other organizations. Within this dataset, sororities praised individuals for contributions outside of the sorority nine times. For example, Alpha Sigma Alpha praised two members for volunteering during the Joplin tornado recovery: “While some individuals and residents of Joplin were heading away to escape the destruction caused by the storm, two AΣA alumnae [Nicolette Cusick and Kelly Bontrager] made travel plans to head into town and get to work.” The article then went into details about those two members and what they contributed to the recovery effort. Kappa Alpha Theta also discussed the contributions members made to other organizations by stating “Katie Bonfigilo, Maggie Dering, and Elizabeth

Mundy, all Ohio State, participated in the Teach for America program.” The contributions made by those members were not to the organization itself; however, to another organization or cause.

### **Praise by Outsiders**

Praise by outsiders is communicated when an outsider perspective is offered to help the organization gain legitimacy in its member’s eyes (Cheney, 1983b). Outside perspectives were offered six times within the sampled magazines. In an article focusing on their philanthropic partner, Maine Sea Coast Mission, Sigma Kappa’s magazine included the following passage: “The Maine Sea Coast Mission is deeply grateful for Sigma Kappa's 100 years of support. We look forward to partnering for many more years to help those in need on islands and in coastal communities of Maine.” Gamma Phi Beta also communicated to its members the importance of their partnership with their new philanthropy, Girls on the Run, in this example, “Both organizations are committed to creating a world where the strength, dignity and courage of women can be honored, celebrated and activated,” expresses Girls on the Run Founder Molly Barker.” These types of recognition gave an outsiders perspective to the legitimacy of the sorority and the services the sorority offers.

The nine tactics described above were all included in the identification inducement typology outlined by Cheney (1983b) and DiSanza & Bullis (1999). Through open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) two new tactics were found. The two new tactics are personal stories outside of the organization and positioning within the organization.

### **Personal Stories Outside of the Organization**

Personal stories outside of the organization were communicated through a description of an individual's life or story that does not directly relate to the organization. These personal stories induced members to identify with the sorority because they share the common bond of

sisterhood and the members depicted in these stories became an embodiment of the values of the sorority. These stories were used in three ways: first, as an embodiment of the values of the sorority; second, to connect the organization to an outside event; and third, to credit the organization in a member's success. In this first example, Delta Gamma shared the story of Eva Marie Saint, an Academy Award winning actress and Delta Gamma sister. To set up the article, Delta Gamma began by describing the moment she won her Oscar,

He asked for the envelope. And then, Frank Sinatra leaned into the microphone and announced her name with reverence. But she didn't dare budge. Her husband's grip was still on her tight. "Don't jump up!" he urged. "For you, for me, for the baby - wait 10 seconds!" So Eva Marie Saint smiled and dutifully counted before rising to accept her Academy Award. The Best Supporting Actress of 1955 gave birth to their first child two days later.

The personal story set up the rest of the article as it described the story of Eva Marie Saint's life and how she got to where she is today. In this article, Eva Marie Saint became an embodiment of Delta Gamma's values by leaving a "timeless legacy that's touched and impacted millions." The idea of leaving a legacy is a value Delta Gamma instills in all its members and Eva Marie Saint becomes a "legacy of Delta Gamma" and a legacy in Hollywood. In a way, this could be considered a form of bragging – another tactic – but this is a personal story told through the lens of the individual rather than the organization stating what this member accomplished. The difference between bragging and personal stories outside of the organization is the voice the story takes. This story of the accomplishments of Eva Marie Saint is told through a secondary source, Eva herself, rather than the organization which makes this example fall into personal stories outside of the organization.

Second, sororities used personal stories outside of the organization to connect members to an event or cause outside of the organization itself. Alpha Sigma Alpha situated the sorority within a non-organizational context while describing a member's experiences during the Joplin

tornado. Alpha Sigma Alpha included this testimonial about the aftermath of the tornado: “After I found out how terrible it was, my first thoughts were to my sisters that lived in town. Mentally, I went through and made a list of sisters that lived or worked where it hit and began calling...find out that all of the members in our chapter were accounted for until the next day around noon.” This story described an event outside of the organization, but Alpha Sigma Alpha framed this tragedy in a way to tie the tornado and the organization together. By using the chapter president’s attempts to find all members, the organization situated itself within the context of the tornado inducing members to identify with the organization and event itself.

The third way the sororities used this tactic was by explicitly tying the member’s personal story outside of the organization and the sorority together. These personal stories offered were not about the organization, per se, but these stories credited, at least in part, the sorority membership for their accomplishments. In other words, without the sorority, the individuals would not be where they are today and would not have achieved everything they had accomplished. Kappa Alpha Theta recognized itself in the success of a member in this excerpt,

By far, my greatest accomplishment from my Theta Foundation grant was establishing an information center staffed entirely by refugees, for refugees in Mwanze Refugee Camp, Zambia. Going back the second year to work with some of the refugees as their education advocate helped to deepen my understanding of the issues facing developing countries, and changes of displaced communities like refugees. I have since solidified my dedication to the nonprofit and international development community, which has prompted me to get involved in policy and advocacy in Washington DC.

Kappa Alpha Theta took credit for the success of this member because the sorority gave her the grant to start this path. By crediting the sorority’s grant, the organization is essentially advocating for the benefits and activities of the organization through a secondary source. Rather than explicitly stating the benefits – which would fall into the tactic of advocating for the

activities and benefits – the sorority uses the personal stories of their members to advocate for these things.

The tactic of personal stories outside of the organization included ways the sororities used the individual experiences of members to induce identification in other members of the organization. These stories were used in three ways: first, as an embodiment of the values of the sorority; second, to connect the organization to an outside event; and third, to credit the organization in a member's accomplishments.

### **Positioning within the Organization**

Positioning within the organization communicated the specific location, position, chapter, or status of the individual or location in relation to the sorority. This tactic allowed members to identify with certain members or locations based on the similarities – such as position or chapter affiliation - they may share with the members depicted. Through this positioning, members can also make connections between themselves, other acquaintances, places they have been, and the individuals or locations discussed in the magazine articles.

In an article discussing the volunteer efforts of members after the Joplin tornado, Alpha Sigma Alpha stated “Joplin is the home to Alpha Sigma Alpha's Zeta Alpha Chapter at Missouri Southern State University” in order to position Joplin within of the organization at large to connect members to that specific location being discussed. Within these sampled articles, the sororities also positioned members in terms of the initiating chapter in which they were a member. For example, Delta Gamma mentions the chapter as an identifier of the member within the sorority, “Cassandra Seiboldt, Kappa-Nebraska”. The initiating chapter became an important facet to the description and introduction of members in every article within this sample.

Sororities did not talk about individual members without positioning that member in terms of their initiating chapter.

Another way the organization placed the member was based on position or status within the sorority. For example, the sentence “Florence Ashby, one of Kappa Alpha Theta's first educational leadership consultants” explained how she was connected to the organization and why she was being interviewed for the article about the ELC program. Delta Gamma explained the connections Jim has to the organization and why he has a scholarship in his honor: “Jim was a member of Phi Delta Theta and beloved husband of H.K. (Helen Catherine) Davis Stuart, Kappa-Nebraska, father of Catherine (Kit) Stuart Schmoker, Kappa-Nebraska, and grandfather of Kim Schmoker Hunnewell, Alpha Upsilon-Southern Methodist.” He was not a member of  $\Delta\Gamma$  but this example explained how he was connected to the sorority. The following is an example of Alpha Sigma Alpha’s attempt at combining both the location, chapter and position when placing the member within the organization, “Tara Marr Horenek, HH, an  $\text{A}\Sigma\text{A}$  alumna who attended Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, KS.” In this one example, her chapter (HH), status, and geographic location were given to position Tara within  $\text{A}\Sigma\text{A}$  as a whole. The mention of a member’s position within the organization allows the member being discussed to gain credibility especially when she holds a leadership position within the chapter or organization.

The common ground strategy included all of the ways the sorority explicitly linked itself with the individual member in an overt way (Cheney, 1983b). The results indicated sororities use nine out of the original ten tactics as outlined by Cheney and DiSanza & Bullis (1999) - testimonials by members, bragging, espousal of shared values, invitation, recognition of individual’s contributions, global recognition of individuals, advocacy of benefits and activities,

recognition of individual's contributions outside of organization, and praise by outsiders. Sororities also use two additional tactics - personal stories outside the organization and positioning within the organization - in an overt way. The next strategy, identification through antithesis, will now be discussed.

### **Identification through Antithesis**

Identification through antithesis included the ways organizations position themselves against an enemy and, therefore, creates an “us” versus “them” categorization drawing identification from its members (Cheney, 1983b). This strategy was used only 11 times within this dataset. While previous research has focused on the threats to the organization (Boyd, 2004), there were no instances of stated threats to the individual sorority nor individual chapter. Enemies to the individual sorority may not be present in a public document because “enemies” to sororities are often discussed off the books or are kept private. In my experiences in the Greek system, the “enemies” to my sorority were the other sororities my chapter was in competition with – in terms of rankings or recruitment – or on a national level the individual chapters who were struggling to stay in good standing with the national sorority. In the case of the former, each sorority chapter has its own chapters to compete against and the context of each university plays a role in the “enemies” of the individual chapter. For the latter, that national sorority keeps quiet the “problem chapters” and would not mention these “enemies” in a public forum. All of these enemies are discussed behind closed doors and between members face-to-face. As a member of a sorority, I have never seen a public document that would include “enemies” to the specific organization, rather the discussion of “enemies” focuses on the Greek system as a whole.

The enemies stated in this dataset were threats against individual members and the Greek system as a whole; however, only threats against the Greek system induced identification with



the organization. Threats against individual members were often communicated in terms of diseases or tragedies that affected one particular sister. Though the sororities expressed and identified an enemy, they focused on only one individual member's experiences rather than the organization and how that enemy affects the organization. In other words, though an enemy was expressed, it did not induce identification with the sorority.

Threats to the Greek system as a whole, specifically the threat of hazing, were the only example of identification through antithesis that induced organizational identification. A Gamma Phi Beta article stated "Too many of our nation's universities and colleges are guilty of some form of hazing...This vicious cycle will continue until colleges attempt to put an end to it...We must take action before a tragedy occurs." Sigma Kappa also communicated this enemy by explaining "The ultimate goal of the Greek System is to prevent hazing from happening in the first place." These examples demonstrated explicit statements made by the sororities indicating an enemy to the Greek system as a whole, and in turn, the sororities themselves. These explicit statements of enemies induced identification in members by calling out hazing as a threat to the sorority and calls members to help put an end to it.

### **Assumed "We"**

The strategy of assumed "we" has been previously defined as the subtle use of all forms of "we" and "they" to appeal to others (Cheney, 1983b). Through open and axial coding, I found two main ways in which this strategy was used. First, "we" was used as the subject of the sentence to denote both the organization and Greek system as a whole. Second, "our" was used as an adjective tying the organization and members together by connecting them through a common bond. Assumed "we" was used in 81 instances through the data. It is important to note that there were many more instances of the assumed "we" that fell into other strategies due to the

mutually exclusive coding of strategies; therefore, this strategy was used more frequently than these numbers suggest.

First, assumed “we” included the organization’s attempts at using “we” to signify the organization or industry as the subject of the sentence. Sororities used this tactic to state specific actions or feelings stated by the organization or system which appeals to the member’s identification as a member of that particular sorority. “We” was used as the subject of the sentence 33 times to denote the sorority or Greek system. By using “we” the sorority depersonalized the actions and beliefs taken by the national sorority and focused on the collective action by the sorority. Since the members who read the article was a member of the sorority, she was part of this collective we and took the “we” to include herself. As the sorority said “we did this” or “we believe that” the individual member internalized it as “I did this too” and “I also believe that.”

For example, a Gamma Phi Beta communicated “we” to signify the sorority by stating, “We encourage chapters to find local organizations that are building strong girls in their communities... As a sisterhood, we accomplish amazing things together, but we proudly acknowledge that our real strengths lie in the originality of each member.” Sigma Kappa communicated “we” to signify the Greek system as a whole in this example: “To what extent are we adding value to, and teaching values as part of, the educational experiences of collegiate women?... If future students are going to be so different, we should consider doing things differently to attract women.” In both these examples, “we” was used as the subject of the sentence to signify either the sorority or the National Panhellenic Conference as the subject taking those actions or believing those values. As part of this collective “we” the individual sorority sister internalized those actions and beliefs as something she did or believed as well.

The second way sororities used the assumed “we” strategy was through the use of “our” to appeal to members by discussing sisterhood, values, membership, finances, philanthropy, or other items that the organization could take ownership of. “Our” was used in terms of ownership 48 times in these sample magazines. To sorority sisters, the “our” emphasizes a shared sense of responsibility and ownership of symbols and values. “Our” is also a depersonalization of the meaning induced by “my”. As a sister reads “our” she internalizes the values and symbols and creates the personal connections to “my” values and symbols.

Kappa Alpha Theta’s use of the possessive “our” was found in this example: “The group of Theta women whose dreams are realized through our programs symbolize the North Star of our organization; an entity so powerful, bright, and promising that has and always will guide the way for us, motivating us and all those who support our organization.” Other common examples of this tactic included communication about “our values,” “our sisterhood,” and “our volunteers.” The sororities showed ownership of these people, values, and symbols in the sampled magazines. The subtle “our” induced identification in members by including them in the language they use tying the organization and member together.

The assumed “we” strategy was used in two different ways differentiated by the part of the sentence in which it was used. The first way, “we” was used to denote the individual sorority or the Greek system in general as the subject of the sentence. Second, “our” was used to connect the individuals and sororities through a common and shared bond. These two tactics were subtle ways in which the sorority induces identification in its members.

### **Identifying Symbols**

The final strategy, identifying symbols, included the use of the organizations name, logo, or symbol to induce identification (Cheney, 1983b). Previous research has discussed all

identifying symbols together, but through the open coding process, I found three main tactics in this strategy: letters, nicknames and symbols. First, the use of the sorority letters was an important identification inducement tactic (n = 32). Rather than saying Alpha Sigma Alpha, for example, the organization used ΑΣΑ to induce identification in its members. Sorority letters mean something different to members than the name of the organization alone. Each letter of a Greek organization signifies a specific value of that organization. Therefore, ΑΣΑ is different to members than Alpha Sigma Alpha; the letters themselves are a form of identification inducement. Out of the five sororities sampled, only two, Alpha Sigma Alpha and Delta Gamma (ΔΓ), used their letters in the sampled magazines.

Sigma Kappa, Gamma Phi Beta, and Kappa Alpha Theta never used their letters to induce identification in this data set. However, members of these sororities do not typically shorten to their names to their letters alone in everyday talk (as demonstrated on their websites); they did, however, shorten their names to shortened versions, or nicknames, of their sorority. These nicknames were used 70 times within the sampled articles. For example, Gamma Phi Beta became “Gamma Phi” and Kappa Alpha Theta become “Theta.” Therefore, it may not be the letters, but the nicknames themselves that organizations use to induce identification. Another facet within this strategy included the instances where the organization used the organization’s name, nickname, or letters to refer to their membership and sisterhood. For example, sororities used “ΔΓs,” “Thetas” or “Sigma Kappas” when discussing memberships, groups of sisters, or promoting the good that they have done in their communities or chapters. These short hand names, both letters and nicknames, became important tactics sororities used when inducing member identification because it was something all members can relate to and identify with.

The last tactic under identifying symbols was the symbols of the sororities themselves. These examples mentioned specific symbols, events, and other things related specifically to the sorority which every member would be familiar and therefore, can identify with. For example articles mentioned “Bid Day,” “White Ceremony,” “District Day,” “The Foundation,” “Grand Convention,” “Founders,” “Promise Program” and the specific philanthropies in which the sororities are partnered. Every member in the organization recognized these symbols, and therefore, can be induced into identifying with the organization. The sororities linked themselves, their members, and their symbols together to increase identification within its members. Along with letters and nicknames, these symbols are an important way in which organizations induce identification within their members.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the identification inducement communication in national sorority newsletters using Cheney’s (1983b) original typology. The results of this study found that a variety of strategies and tactics were used to induce identification in members of sororities. Specifically, the common ground strategy was the most frequently used strategy (n = 1155) using eleven tactics: testimonials by members (n = 233), bragging (n = 108), espousal of shared values (n = 97), invitation (n = 68), recognition of individual’s contributions (n = 48), global recognition of individuals (n = 22), advocacy of benefits and activities (n = 12), recognition of individual’s contributions outside of organization (n = 9), praise by outsiders (n = 6), personal story outside the organization (n = 442), and positioning within the organization (n = 111). The second strategy, identification through antithesis (n = 11) only used on tactic – enemy against the industry as a whole. Next, the assumed “we” strategy (n = 81) used two tactics: “we” (n = 33) and “our” (n = 48). Finally, identifying symbols was the second largest strategy (n = 152) and

used three tactics – nicknames (n = 70), letters (n = 32) and symbols (n = 50). Theoretical and practical implications of these results will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION**

This study explored the identification inducement messages found in national sorority newsletters and sought to answer the following research questions: (1) What identification inducement strategies are used in national sorority magazines? and (2) What identification inducement tactics are used in national sorority magazines? Results indicated several ways in which sorority organizations induce organizational identification. These strategies and tactics were used in new ways that has interesting implications for identification inducement research. First, sororities frequently used personal stories to induce identification in their members. Second, three new tactics were found in this study and the strategies were used in new ways. Next, this thesis extends Cheney's (1983b) work into a new organizational form – non-employment contexts.

### **Identification through Personal Stories**

The personal stories offered in the newsletters gave a chance for the sorority to add a personal connection to an organizational value. Identification through members' personal stories was a powerful tool sororities used to induce identification in its members by adding a personal connection that links the organization and its members. People are more likely to be persuaded by a good story than by a good argument (Fisher, 1987). Therefore, members are more likely to be persuaded to become active alumnae members through these personal stories than if the stories were not included. Sororities used these stories (1) to link the organization to events or topics outside of the organizational realm, (2) to credit the organization in a member's success, and (3) to call upon members to help a sister in need, and in turn the organization.

The newsletters featured copious amounts of text highlighting member's lives, struggles and successes beyond direct organizational involvement. Examples of these stories include accounts of family members battling medical issues, such as PKU or autism, or sisters'

experiences living and working in Africa, working for NASA and wedding planning for celebrities. These stories showed members being successful and living the values of their sororities. When Kappa Alpha Theta included an article about a member whose son has autism, other mothers affected by the autism spectrum could identify with that specific member and her experiences. Because that member identifies herself as a “Theta,” the sorority encouraged other members to identify as “Thetas” because their experiences are similar to the member being discussed. The member becomes an embodiment of organizational values and other members can learn from the important values and actions of the organization through her experiences with autism.

The sororities also took this one step further than just forming the connection, the sororities tied themselves to their members’ experiences. Following many individual members’ stories, the sororities offered a discussion explaining how the sorority influenced the members’ lives. For example, Gamma Phi Beta took credit in helping Eva Marie Saint become an Academy Award winning actress because it was the connections she made through Gamma Phi that launched her career. The sororities took credit for the accomplishments of their members through these personal stories because it was through the sorority their accomplishments became possible. The sororities offered these perspectives to show individuals what membership means and what the organization can do for its members beyond the collegiate experience. Through these stories, the sorority was able to advocate for its benefits and activities in an indirect way. Rather than explicitly stating the benefits and activities themselves, the sororities were able to advocate for these services through a secondary source, the member’s story.

Sororities also used this identification through personal stories by calling on members to act for the organization, the cause discussed, or on behalf of the featured member. Frequently,



these stories were about threats or hardships lived by individual members. Through these stories, the sororities were able to give attention to the threats and then call upon other members to help. These calls of action were ways for the sorority sisters to complete the identification inducement process by completing the recommendations presented by the sorority. Often, these invitations provided members a chance to volunteer and make a difference in the sorority and communities in which they live. When the call for help came from a sister in need, rather than the organization itself, members may connect with the individual and may be more likely to donate their time or money. Using personal stories in contexts outside of the organization allowed sororities to induce identification in its members by using those stories as an embodiment of organizational values, a secondary source of organizational benefits and activities, and calling members to act.

### **Extension of the Typology**

Though the original typology was frequently used in this dataset, this study also found new ways the strategies were used. First, the common ground strategy added two new tactics: personal stories outside of the organization and position within the organization. Second, the use of nicknames and letters was found to be an important identification inducing tactic within the identifying symbols strategy. Lastly, identification through antithesis focused on industry wide issues rather than specific organizational enemies.

Within the common ground strategy, two new strategies were found. First, as discussed above, sororities used personal stories outside of the organization as an embodiment of organizational values, to connect events to the organization, and to give the organization credit for its helping members succeed. The second new tactic found was the sorority positioning members and locations within the organization. This tactic allowed member to identify with the

individuals discussed if they have similarities with that particular member. DiSanza & Bullis (1999) found that individuals are more likely to read stories if they know the person or location discussed in the organizational newsletters. Therefore, sorority members are also more likely to read articles about members they know or with whom they share commonalities, such as initiating chapter or position. By giving the background information on individuals, the sororities were creating connections and reasons for other members to read those articles making members more likely to be exposed to other identification inducement messages in the articles. The common ground strategy is an important strategy for identification inducement because it explicitly links the organization and the individual member by stating the shared bonds, connections, and values that make the organization unique and important in members' lives.

The third new tactic fell within the identifying symbols strategy. Sororities frequently used their letters and nicknames to induce identification in their members. Letters are nicknames are distinct from the symbols identified by Cheney (1983b) because the letters and nicknames take on an embodiment of values that other symbols lack. Whether it was by the sorority letters – such as ΑΣΑ or ΔΓ – or shortening on the name to form the nickname – Gamma Phi or Theta – sororities used these monikers as a way to induce identification. Letters are an inherent, yet unique, aspect to the Greek system and this type of identifying symbols probably do not exist outside of this system. Therefore, in a broader sense, it is not the letters themselves, but the nicknames organizations use to induce identification in the organization. Letters and nicknames mean something different to members than the full name of the organization. Letters represent the integral values of the organization. These letters, and the values behind them, are revealed during the initiation ceremony as pledges become full members of the sorority. These values are something instilled in members and are part of the rituals of the sorority; therefore, non-members

are never fully aware of the values the letters represent. Letters individually represent things that organizational names do not. However, not every sorority goes by their letters alone. Some sororities shorten their full names into nicknames. These nicknames are passed on through the everyday talk of sorority members and become a form of identification themselves. The use of letters and nicknames induce identification because it reminds individuals of the values inherent in their sorority. Members express their identification through these letters and nicknames and the sororities use them to induce identification in their members.

Besides the three new tactics, the identification through antithesis strategy was used in a new way. Identification through antithesis was used to state an enemy against the Greek system as a whole. Contrary to previous research (see Cheney, 1983b; Boyd, 2004) there were no explicit mention of an enemy against the specific sorority or chapter. Rather sororities focused on the primary threat to the Greek system. Two articles from the sample focused on the effects of hazing on the perception of the Greek system and the harm hazing brings to Greek members. Though broken into individual chapters, Greek systems across the country often work together for the greater good of their school and communities. Therefore, it is no surprise sororities call upon individuals' Greek membership against a common enemy rather than focusing on a sorority-wide issue. Due to the dispersed membership of sorority sisters, it is hard to pinpoint one threat against the sorority as a whole when individual chapters and members have very unique situations, locations, and memberships. Hazing is a threat to everyone in the Greek system regardless of chapter affiliation, location, or position within the organization. Through the system wide antithesis of hazing, organizational members are induced to identify with the larger Greek system in which their individual sorority and chapter is a member.

The strategies were found to be used by sororities in new ways. First, two new tactics were added to the common ground strategy – personal stories outside of the organization and positioning within the organization. Second, a new tactic was added to identifying symbols – letters and nicknames. Third, the identification through antithesis strategy only focused on threats to the Greek system as a whole rather than focusing on a threat to the individual sorority.

### **Non-Employment Context**

This study extended the original typology (Cheney, 1983b) into a non-employment context. Sororities offer a unique perspective to this typology due to the type of organization a sorority inherently is. Sororities have a reverse-pay relationship with their members. Sorority sisters often live with other members for their first few years and then the frequency of communication between the organization and individual member declines as she becomes an alumna. Sororities are also highly selective organizations that offer life-long membership, much longer than the four years at college.

Sorority members have a reverse pay relationship with their sorority. Sorority sisters must pay dues to the organization in order to have an active membership. Active membership goes beyond paying dues however; active members also volunteer and give back to the sorority as advisors to chapters and national teams or hold active membership in a alumnae group. Another unique aspect to the sorority experience is that sorority sisters often live in their chapter houses. While living within the chapter house, members receive daily communication with the sorority and other sorority members. Once they leave the chapter and graduate, the frequency of communication is reduced however membership is a lifelong bond. Magazines are one of the only forms of communication members receive from their sorority after graduation.

The communal living experience influenced members' identification with the organization. These lived experiences influence the likelihood of members reading the organizational magazines and being persuaded by the identification inducements offered (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). Therefore, the communal living experiences influence the effectiveness of the identification inducements in sorority magazines. If the lived experiences are positive, the member is more likely to read the magazines; if it is a negative experience, the individual is less likely to read them. These lived experiences also need to be consistent with the experiences being communicated in the magazines in order for the member to identify with the organization and continually read the magazines (Fisher, 1987; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999).

Greek membership is a life-long membership. Recruitment, or rush, is a highly selective process where the sorority and individual member make sure the "fit" is there. Sorority chapters depend on recruiting the right type of women for their membership. If the sorority recruits an individual who does not fit with the values of the organization, her membership will be suspended. Members may be suspended for low grades, not participating in required events, and disciplinary actions for their behaviors. However, if a sister graduates from a chapter, she will always be an alumna of that sorority. This is different from other volunteer organizations where members can leave the organization at any time. Sorority sisters may be active or non-active (Kramer, 2011a), but they never end the membership to the sorority. Once a sister goes Greek, she will always be Greek. However, active members are more likely to read the magazines (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). A member only ends her membership in death, and even then, the sister becomes a member of chapter eternal. Though not part of the feature articles in this study, every sorority magazine includes a list of sisters who entered chapter eternal since the last printing of the magazine. The organizational newsletters sampled in this study go to both active

and non-active members. The ultimate goal of sorority newsletters is to get all alumnae members back into a reverse-paid relationship with the organization whether that is in terms of monetary donations, membership in alumnae groups, or becoming an active volunteer and giving back to the sorority.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

There are at least two limitations within this study that provide areas for future research on identification inducement strategies and tactics. The first limitation of this study reflects the type of data used. This thesis analyzed a sample of feature articles in sorority newsletters; therefore, this study focused on the text of the magazines and the text of a certain type of article. There may be identification inducements in other articles of the magazines or in the pictures, colors, and visual elements of the magazines. The data also reflects the perspective of the leadership of the organization because all articles were written by active members and approved by the leadership of the sorority and the editors of the magazine (who are on the staff of the national sorority). Members themselves and organizational outsiders may offer different perspectives. This study does not allow us to know if inducements offered were successful in encouraging member identification with the organization. The second limitation to this study is the organizations sampled. By focusing on sororities within the Greek system we are limited to a specific type of article and specific types of identification inducement. Other types of organizations may use the strategies and tactics in different ways than sororities use them.

These limitations offer directions for future research. First, research can focus on other perspectives in the magazines themselves and in the type of organization selected. Future researchers should analyze the pictures and visual elements of these magazines for identification inducements because there may be things I missed, such as the visual elements, when looking at

the text alone. Rather than use the sentence as the unit of analysis, researchers could use a different unit of analysis, such as the article as a whole or organization as a whole, to see how identification inducement strategies and tactics are used industry wide or cross industries. However, as discussed in the methods section, too large of a unit of analysis can have issues of reliability (Tangpong, 2011); therefore, training the coders would be key to ensure reliability would be reached. Second, researchers can focus on other perspectives from the organization. Getting perspectives from other members and non-members could prove to be a fruitful area of research to understand the intricacies of identification inducement. Third, future research should use the strategies and tactics found in this study to see if the same tactics could be found in other organizational contexts. Other organizations with the reverse “paid” relationship (e.g. professional organizations and unions) may be interesting contexts in which to study organizational identification inducement due to the hybrid nature of employment, non-employment, and unemployment contexts these organizations face. Other organizations with lifelong membership – such as religious and educational institutions, Boy or Girl Scouts, and pageant organizations like Miss America – may be fruitful organizational contexts to extend our understanding of identification inducement strategies and tactics in these types of organizations.

### **Conclusion**

This study found the importance of personal connections when inducing member identification in a sorority context. These connections allowed members to relate to another member, location, or context and therefore provide a link between the organization and the individual. By using personal stories of members, organizations can subtly induce identification in their members. Organizations can also continue to use nicknames to help members identify with those organizations. The nicknames, and in the case of the Greek system, letters, mean

something different to members than the organization's name; therefore, organization can use these nicknames to form a group feeling within their members. Nicknames draw upon members' personal experiences in the sorority to keep them identified with the organization. As more and more students attend college and join Greek organizations, it is important for these organizations to keep members identified and active in their organizations to keep the organization running.



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**APPENDIX: LIST OF SAMPLED ARTICLES**

<b>Sorority</b>	<b>Article</b>	<b>Number of Pages</b>
Alpha Sigma Alpha	Alpha Sigma Alpha Bring Help and Hope to the Joplin Community	4
Alpha Sigma Alpha	2012 Convention: Celebrating Our Journey	4
Alpha Sigma Alpha	Volunteer Thank You	2
Alpha Sigma Alpha	Theta Tau Chapter Installed on March 31, 2012	2
Alpha Sigma Alpha	Partners for the Long Run	3
Gamma Phi Beta	On the Go!	1
Gamma Phi Beta	Interfraternity: Celebrate the Scholar	1
Gamma Phi Beta	Building Strong Girls	2
Gamma Phi Beta	Shine On	7
Gamma Phi Beta	Hazing Can't be Taken Lightly Anymore	1
Delta Gamma	Eva Marie Saint	6
Delta Gamma	Motivated to do More	3
Delta Gamma	Vital Friendships	3
Delta Gamma	Moving Forward, Giving Back	12
Delta Gamma	This is Sisterhood	3
Kappa Alpha Theta	Remembering the Past	8
Kappa Alpha Theta	A Bright New Link	1
	Continued...	

<b>Sorority</b>	<b>Article</b>	<b>Number of Pages</b>
Kappa Alpha Theta	Snapshots	4
Kappa Alpha Theta	Social Nature	5
Kappa Alpha Theta	Benjamin's Hope	2
Sigma Alpha	A Bright New Link	6
Sigma Alpha	Advancing Sorority Together	2
Sigma Alpha	Welcome Back Theta Omicron	2
Sigma Alpha	Leading by Example	2
Sigma Alpha	Different Path, Same Dream	2