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Gregory J. Golden
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, golden.unm@gmail.com

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Unfulfilled Expectations:

Impact of Formal Panhellenic Sorority Recruitment on Unmatched Potential New Members

by

Gregory Joseph Golden

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Major: Educational Administration

Under the Supervision of Professor Debra Mullen

Lincoln, Nebraska

March, 2014

Unfulfilled Expectations:

Impact of Formal Panhellenic Sorority Recruitment on Unmatched Potential New Members

Greg Golden, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2014

Adviser: Debra Mullen

Across hundreds of college campuses in North America, sorority organizations have rapidly expanded membership since their establishment in the late 18th century. In this time period, many collegiate undergraduate women have come to realize the perceived benefits of sorority membership and the positive impact affiliation can have for a college experience. However, for every woman who is afforded this experience, there are numerous others whose initial transition into college is defined by exclusion from these privileged organizations.

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process on former potential new members (PNMs) who do not receive an invitation for membership. Through a semi-structured interview protocol, qualitative interviews were conducted with five former PNMs. The findings indicated that immediately after the non-event, students reported both diminished self-esteem and increased anxiety. Despite these factors, participants eventually accepted their newly constructed roles following the transition. Discussion of coping strategies and unresolved

issues for the students are discussed, as well as implications for Student Affairs practice. Recommendations for future research are presented.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without a number of important people. I first would like to thank the faculty and staff (Deb, Corey, Linda and Linda) at UNL for encouraging me write on this topic. The voices of these participants would not have found ink and paper without your suggestions and guidance.

In particular I want to thank Dr. Deb Mullen. You are the beat to my drum. When I first arrived at this university, you welcomed me with warmth and guidance even after the circumstances that greeted me were less than appeasing when I first arrived. When I felt lost, you found me a job. When I felt unsure, you gave me an idea to run with. When I felt confused (which was fairly often) you humored the goofball inside, and then helped me find my way. Thank you for letting my voice come out in this paper. Without the autonomy you fostered, this thesis might have never been written. I owe a great deal of my career path and ambitions to your unwavering support. I love you for it.

I would like to thank "The Lindas," my wonderful supervisors. I appreciate that your complimentary supervisory styles allowed for my work experience to flourish. Thank you for the opportunity to work and learn under both of you. My professional development has blossomed under each of you. Without your support, this thesis would never have taken form.

To my family, especially my mother—I apologize for being such a "turd" while writing this paper. I appreciate your endless positivity and support, even when I was

short, unpleasant, and unresponsive to your relentless encouragement. I am confident that for every word I typed, a family member said a prayer to help this thesis get written.

Friends at a distance (especially Claire)- Thank you for your patience and understanding as I wrote this paper. Sorry for all the missed calls, texts and voicemails that ensued throughout my writing process. I promise to make it up to you in the future.

I would like to thank the delicious Honest Abe's restaurant for supplying me with endless ground beef, potatoes, bacon, lettuce, tomatoes, cheese and awesome sauce on a bun. Your savory flavors helped me endure the stress off writing this monster of a paper.

Friends in Lincoln- Thank you for your help debriefing and discussing some of these difficult subjects. You all have been a blessing to learn with throughout this Master's program. I can't wait to have family reunions for years to come as we cross paths at professional conferences, weddings, travel and future occupations. Relationships made Lincoln great—they will be the thing I miss most for years to come.

My participants- Thank you for entrusting me to tell your story. I hope this research opens the doors to hearing the voices of other unheard groups in higher education. I pray that my writing was able to do justice to your incredible stories. Thank you for the opportunity.

I'd like to thank God for getting me here. I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to pursue a Masters degree, and to have had the strength to complete it. "I can do all things through Christ."

Table of Contents

Chapter 1—Introduction 1

Problem Statement 3

Purpose of the Study 5

Research Questions 5

Definitions of Terms 6

Delimitations 10

Limitations 11

Researcher Experience/Bias 12

Chapter 2—Literature Review 14

History of Fraternity and Sorority Life 14

National Panhellenic Conference 17

Recruitment 18

Release Figures Methodology 20

Research Regarding Fraternity and Sorority Students 22

Literature on Panhellenic Sorority Recruitment 23

Student Development Theory: Events and Transitions 27

First-semester Experience 30

The Transition Process 31

Persistence Literature 33

Women's Identity Development 34

Chapter 3—Methodology 38

Purpose Statement 38
Research Questions 38
Rational for Qualitative Research Design 39
Rational for Case Study Research 40
Researcher Position 41
Epistemological Approach 42
Institutional Review Board (IRB) 42
Participants 43
Research Site 46
Data Collection 47
Interview Protocol 51
Data Analysis 53
Validation Strategies 54
Ethical Considerations 56
Chapter 4—Findings 59
Purpose Statement 59
Description of Participants 59
Amanda 59
Regina 60
Brittany 60
Camille 60
Tracey 61

Research Questions 61
Overview of Themes and Subthemes 62
Themes 62
Theme I: Buildup 63
Theme II: Immediate impact of the non-event 67
Damaged self-esteem, self-confidence, self-efficacy 68
Anxiety 71
Theme III: Resolution and acceptance of the situation 74
A different path 75
Unexpected benefits 77
Theme IV: Coping strategies and support 78
Structured and informal campus engagements and personal activities 79
Focusing on academic performance, major specific planning and career attainment 82
Utilization of relational support 84
Theme V: The deep unresolved 89
Lingering questions 90
Clarity of rules and knowledge of options would have provided justification 90
Chapter 5—Discussion 93
Purpose Statement and Analysis 93

Implications for Student Affairs 102

Future Research 106

Conclusion 108

References 110

List of Tables

Table 1 PNM Statistics 45

Table 2 Participants..... 46

Table 3 Themes and Sub themes..... 62

List of Appendices

Appendix A IRB Approval Letter 116

Appendix B Informed Consent Form 119

Appendix C Interview Protocol 122

Appendix D Recruitment Emails 124

Appendix E Peaks and Valleys Timeline 126

Appendix F Transcriptionist Confidentiality Statement 128

Chapter 1

Introduction

Regina had always been a great student. She was a bright woman who rarely had to study for tests in high school and made exceptional grades throughout her career. Although she grew up in a small town, she always made the most of her experiences by staying active in a debate club, dancing, and spending time with her friends and family. She had an outgoing personality and was the type of woman with whom anyone could connect.

Her family was supportive, encouraging her to go to college and continue to advance in her education. After making the decision to attend Midwestern University, like most other college students, Regina began to make plans to attend in the fall. In preparing her for university life, she began to contemplate participation in the sorority community at Midwestern University. With a mother that was an alumna, both of the university she would attend, and a sorority on campus, she became quite confident in her decision to become a member in the fall of 2013.

Conversations with her friends further validated her decisions to go through sorority recruitment, as she discovered that many of them were planning to do the same. Her friends in sororities even boosted her confidence, telling her “you're going to be like, the perfect candidate.”

Naturally, she began to prepare—filling out a detailed application packed with the amazing credentials and passions she had. After completing her application, she took a moment and thought to herself “I would be the perfect candidate.” Indeed, she was!

Over the summer, Regina spent a lot of time preparing for college and ultimately made it to campus in late August. She moved into her residence hall and settled in for the start of her participation in the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process. After a long week, persisting through all of the events and conversations, she was ready to "start all these new friendships" and suggested that life in a sorority "was something that she was…looking forward to."

Finally on the night before bid day, Regina did some narrowing down, and solidified her intentions and preferences to join a sorority. She thought to herself, "this [is] what I waited for, for so long and I'm finally going to be in a sorority." She had been building it up over the entire summer and throughout the entire week.

That same night, at the conclusion of the day, before she was preparing for bed, she received a phone call from an unfamiliar number. The voice on the other end murmured, "I'm sorry, but you won't be receiving an invitation." The unanticipated outcome was surprising and "shook" her. Despite all of the long days, conversations, preparations, her loveable personality, and outstanding credentials, she would not be a member of a sorority.

The image of the final events of sorority recruitment was a process that I was unfamiliar with prior to my work as a sorority advisor. In a field devoted to student success and supporting students through their collegiate experience, I could not help but feel a sense of failure when I heard Regina's story. Despite the fact that she was such an outstanding woman, who would advance the fraternal movement at Midwestern University's campus, she would not become a member of the Greek community.

As I began to reflect on the experience further, many questions about Regina and the other women in her situation haunted me. In my practice I have come to realize the countless benefits of being a member of a fraternity or sorority community, but what would be the impact for these women? How will this shape their first semester of college?

Problem Statement

Studies have found that engaged members of sorority and fraternity life boast both academic and social gains as a result of membership (Pike, 2000). On the other hand, many scholars have highlighted some of the detrimental effects that sorority recruitment can have on women. Scholars have examined how sorority recruitment can impact self-objectification as well as a woman's concept of body image (Rolnik, Engeln-Maddox & Miller, 2010). Most notable within the context of this study, was the work of Chapman, Hirt & Spruill (2008). These scholars found that sorority recruitment contributed to detrimental effects for self-esteem on those women that were not selected to membership in a sorority, following the recruitment process.

Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) defined a transition as "any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 33). Throughout the course of an individual's life, they will experience a number of transitions, whether classified as events or non-events, anticipated or unanticipated (Schlossberg, 2011). For many college students, like Regina, coming to college is one of the most significant transitions of their lives. It is complicated by many interweaving experiences. For women not selected to become members of sororities, the transition is

abrupt and may have a significant impact in their ability to cope with the transition. Schlossberg (1989) noted that "people in transition often feel marginal and that they do not matter" (p. 1).

A possible oversight of student affairs research can be to fixate on the development and experiences of dominant groups. Social justice orientation encourages practitioners to seek to explore the experiences of less dominant and marginalized populations. Traditional literature spanning disciplines related to fraternity and sorority populations has focused on the experiences of active and new members (both positive and negative dimensions of their development). Conversely, the literature examining former Potential New Members (PNM's) is narrow and reflects findings and experiences that reflect only the immediate effects of sorority recruitment. This former research is not viewed through a transition lens and lacks depth that can be explored through qualitative inquiry. Such a practice may enable me to explore the long-term impact and depth that is needed to better understand this phenomenon.

Ultimately, regardless of transition, "adults need to explore, understand, and cope with what is happening in their lives" (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995, p. 3). This study is thus beneficial in several ways. The results will use qualitative interviews to understand the complexities involved with this transition. It will enrich the literature—sharing the stories of these marginalized women. Their voices may address and shed light on the myriad of challenges and experiences that are coupled with being unmatched in the bid round and how that event shaped their first semester of college.

Their stories will contribute a unique perspective—hopefully shaping student affairs practice and the support practitioners provide to this population. In addition sharing their stories will enable the participants to make meaning of their experience and help other women with similar experiences to cope with this challenging transitional event.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process on former potential new members (PNM's) who were not matched in the bid round. Numerous studies have sought to explore the effects of sorority recruitment on self-efficacy, body image and other factors. Many of these studies only look at the immediate impact following sorority recruitment, and are quantitative. I am unaware of any qualitative studies that explored the impact following the completion of one semester of college.

Research Questions:

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of the sorority recruitment process on former potential new members (PNM's) who do not receive an invitation to membership. These women are also referred to as PNM's who were "unmatched in the bid round." The participants for my study were selected from a predominantly white, Midwest, land-grant, research institution, herein referred to as Midwestern University. I examined, through semi-structured interviews, how not being placed in a Panhellenic sorority, following the formal sorority recruitment process might impact the first-semester experience of collegiate women. The study explored whether any common

experiences existed among these women, what was helpful in allowing them to cope with the transition and what the impact of the event had on their overall experience following the first semester at Midwestern University.

To better illustrate the experiences of these women, interviews were conducted, utilizing a semi-structured interview protocol of open-ended questions. The primary research question was how did phenomenon of being unmatched in the bid round impact the overall first-semester experience of collegiate women? Additional subquestions that guided my research included:

- How do collegiate women who were unmatched in the bid round describe their experience with sorority recruitment?
- How do collegiate women who were unmatched in the bid round describe their transition into collegiate life following the event?
- What support structures do collegiate women who were unmatched in the bid round identify as helpful in their success following the first semester of college?
- What challenges, if any did the collegiate women who were unmatched in the bid round overcome during the transition?

Definition of Terms:

The circumstances that define participant experience and context of this research are situated within the phenomenon of formal sorority recruitment on a college campus. Because this phenomenon is unique, an extensive collection of terms was used in the presentation of this research. They are defined below:

Alumna/Alumnus (Plural Alumni)—word used to describe a member of a fraternity or sorority, who is no longer a member of an active undergraduate chapter.

Fraternity—An organized society of men or women bound together by friendship and dedicated to development of its members. Some sorority members will also refer to themselves as a fraternity as well.

Greek— "A term referring to a member of a fraternity or sorority; in addition can be used to describe a community of fraternities and sororities" (Roof, 2012, p. 4).

Greek-letter organization—An organization represented by a Greek-letter insignia, a common representation for fraternity and sorority members.

Initiated member—A person who has completed the initiating practice of becoming a full member of a Greek organization.

Interested Person—An individual interested in joining a fraternal organizations.

Multicultural Greek Council—An organization supporting historically and traditionally Latino and Multicultural fraternities and sororities.

National Panhellenic Conference (NPC)—The national governing council aimed at supporting, 26 National Panhellenic women's organizations.

National Pan-Hellenic Council— The national governing organization supporting a collection of nine historically African American, international Greek lettered fraternities and sororities.

New member—A term used to describe a person who has accepted an invitation to membership in a Greek Letter organization.

North American Inter-fraternity Conference—The association supporting historically

white men's fraternities in North America.

Sorority—An organized society of women bound together by friendship and dedicated to the development of its members (see also fraternity).

Sorority recruitment—The formal process describing the mechanism by which Panhellenic sororities attract and gain new members for their organizations.

In addition to some of the language above, there is also specific language utilized at Midwestern University which more clearly defines some common language used within the context of Panhellenic sorority recruitment. These terms are defined below:

Bid for membership—A formal offer of membership made to potential new members in the panhellenic recruitment process. Each woman can only receive one per year from a panhellenic organization.

Campus Total (also known as Total)—The total number of woman that can be in a chapter on a campus.

*Continuous Open Bidding (COB)—P*rocess of extending invitations to membership on an individual basis outside of the formal recruitment process; also referred to as informal recruitment.

Maximize Options—The act of both listing and preferencing all chapters who invite a woman to participate during preference and priority ranking decisions.

Membership Recruitment Acceptance Binding Agreement (MRABA)—"a binding agreement signed by Potential New Members on preference day and kept on file by the Office of Greek Affairs. By signing this document, the Potential New Member is committing to a number of binding agreements regarding their participation in

recruitment at the university where it is signed (Roof, 2012, p. 6).

*No Preference—W*hen a woman chooses voluntarily to withdrawal from the recruitment process; also used to describe the act of not listing a preference in priority ranking.

NPC Unanimous agreements—The agreements made unanimously by the 26 Panhellenic sorority organizations that foster cooperation among women's fraternities.

Playing Fair— "The action of a potential new member who maximizes her options throughout formal sorority recruitment and attends all parties to which she is invited to on preference day, and preferences each of those chapters on her preference card, or MRABA, at the conclusion of the day. Individuals who play fair can be guaranteed a bid to a chapter on bid day during formal sorority running recruitment (Roof, 2012, p. 6)."

Potential New Member (PNM)—A student who is seeking membership within a Greek letter organization, but has neither received a bid, nor committed to a chapter.

Preference—On the final day of sorority recruitment, the process by which potential new members establish a preferred list of chapters, in ranked order, before the bid day round.

Preferential Bidding System/Mutual Selection Process—The rank-ordering process that potential new members and sororities use to match potential new members to chapters (Roof, p. 7).

Priority ranking—The process by which new members establish a preferred list of chapters that suit their personal preferences.

Recruitment Guide (Rho Gamma or Rho Gam)—A temporarily, unaffiliated member

who both guides counsels and guides potential new members through the formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment process.

Release Figure Methodology (RFM)—Methodology by which formal sorority recruitment numbers are figured (please see the Release Figure Methodology section in chapter 2 for a more detailed description).

Single Intentional Preference—"The action of a potential new member choosing to only rank one chapter rather than maximizing their potential by ranking all of the chapters they have been invited to on that day on their Membership Recruitment Acceptance Binding Agreement" (Roof, 2012, p. 8).

Snap Bidding— "The process of recruiting women who participated but were not placed through formal sorority recruitment after Bid Matching ends, and before Bid Day activities have commenced" (Roof, 2012, p. 8).

Unmatched in the bid round—A woman who successfully persists through the formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment process, demonstrates a desire to be a member of a Panhellenic sorority, but does not receive an invitation to membership.

Withdraw—The act of voluntarily discontinuing participation in the formal sorority recruitment process.

Delimitations

This study was conducted at one large research institution in the Midwest. Participants were recruited from one pool of former potential new members, from one recruitment cycle. Participants were required to be over the age of 19, the age of majority, and must have been unmatched in the bid round of the formal sorority recruitment

process in the fall of 2013. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all interviews were completed within six months of the recruitment process. Of the 31 students meeting these criteria, 5 agreed to participate in the study. Finally, this study was based on a bounded group and did not explore the experiences of those who participated in new member intake processes for Inter-fraternity Conference, Multicultural Greek Council or National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations.

Limitations

This study was conducted on a specific population of women at Midwestern University. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, it is not intended to be generalizable to the experiences of other campus women who fit similar criteria or who experienced similar transitional events. These events, while common to many women across the country, can be interpreted and understood in a number of different ways.

The sample of women consisted of predominantly Caucasian, 19-year-olds. These women were purposefully sampled. All desired to be members of the sorority community, yet they were unmatched in the bid round. Despite this reality, many of the women elected to single intentional preference, or chose not to maximize their options to join a sorority. It must be noted that this decision impacted their placement in the sorority community.

The researcher positionality and researcher bias can impact the findings of a qualitative study. As the primary instrument for data analysis, despite attempts to mitigate the effects of researcher interpretation and bias, it is still possible that my personal bias can be seen in the findings of this study.

Researcher Experience/Bias

As the primary investigator in this study, it should be first noted that I identify as a man, who identifies with heteronormativity. My perceptions of femininity and womanist identity may be slightly skewed. My positionality in society and in the research is one that is socially different from that of my participants. My interpretation of the impact and the issues that face these women will be viewed from a male social constructionist lens.

I am a member of a Greek organization and have been for five years. I have experiences and beliefs about the value of fraternity and sorority life that may bias my ability to understand the experiences of nonmembers. In addition, I served in a residential space as a live-in advisor for a fraternity. This experience also may have predisposed me to focus on the experiences of those in fraternity and sorority spaces. Such an experience may make outsiders less noticeable because they were not visible in the community with which I worked.

I serve as a Panhellenic advisor for the office of Fraternity and Sorority Life. I contest that both the organizational missions, purposes and involvement opportunities of sorority organizations boast emotional, social and cognitive gains for students who participate in them. Despite my advocacy for the fraternal movement, I recognize that while the current process for sorority recruitment is strong, there are women who fall through the cracks and are impacted by the formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment process. It is my desire to share the experiences of these women that slip through the cracks—allowing their voices to inform the phenomenon for others to understand. These

women's experiences in the first year deserve attention from the fraternity and sorority community and the advisors and other constituents.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Although the population featured in my study is not actually a part of the Greek community, it is important to understand the context in which fraternal organizations operate. The evolution of the fraternal movement has greatly impacted the process for recruiting and attracting new members for sororities. Therefore, without a detailed history of fraternal organizations, establishment of the Panhellenic Conference, and the evolution of the sorority recruitment process, the experience of the participants for my study is unsubstantiated. Furthermore, an explanation of these structures is critical for examining the experiences of women who desired membership in a sorority but were not offered an invitation to membership. Again, this phenomenon is also termed as being unmatched in the bid round of sorority recruitment.

History of Fraternity and Sorority Life

Fraternity and sorority organizations have existed for hundreds of years. Phi Beta Kappa, the first organization assuming a Greek letter name, holds roots as enduring as the United States of America (Baird, Anson & Marchesani, 1991). Founded in 1776, the Phi Beta Kappa and its members began a collegiate organizational movement that would create ripples for not only their own society but for many other Greek letter organizations. These ripples also supplied the foundation for the evolution of modern sorority organizations. According to Baird et al. (1991), Phi Beta Kappa was founded by members seeking "friendship and comradeship" and for "social and literary purposes" (p. 10). Baird et al. (1991) continued, citing numerous other social fraternal organizations

that were instituted for “similar aims and purposes” to that of Phi Beta Kappa. (p. 11). This trend would continue for years.

During the time period spanning from 1776 to 1821, numerous literary societies were founded under names like Adelphian, Erosophian, Hermosian, Philanethan and others (p. 5). Popular among the faculty at many of the universities, these organizations did not have the same social basis or the “Greek letters” of the organizations like Phi Beta Kappa and other similarly branded Greek-letter organizations (Baird, Anson, & Marchesani, 1991, p. 5). Greek-letter organizations like Phi Beta Kappa, these Greek letters “represent a motto known only to the members that briefly state the aims and purpose” of the organization (Guthrie, 2002, p. 252).

Many Greek-letter women’s organizations were established in a parallel fashion with men’s organizations. Regarding these groups, according to Callais (2002), “the first recorded founding of women’s society is Alpha Delta Pi Fraternity, which was founded as the Adelphian Society in 1851 at Wesleyan College” (p. 31). Shortly thereafter, Phi Mu fraternity for women was “founded as the Philamathian Society at Wesleyan College in 1852. Referred to as secret societies, Baird et al. (1991) suggested these organizations had no known “social advantages” (p. 5).

During the same time period, two additional organizations began to go by “Greek letter names.” According to Callais, (2002) “Pi Beta Phi came into being in 1867 as the first organization of college women established as a national college fraternity” (p. 31-32) and was shortly followed by Kappa Alpha Sorority (Roof, 2012). These organizations were secretive, were made up of Greek names, displayed badges of similar

significance, confined their membership to upper-class women, and named their chapters on the systems that preceded them (Baird et al., 1991). Many organizations of similar premises would follow.

Chapter expansion and creation took off for approximately twenty-five years but was stunted by the Civil war. In general during that time, Baird suggested that "collegiate activity was everywhere weakened and in the South was totally suspended" (p. 9). With much uncertainty about the future of collegiate affairs, most organizations from the Northeast did not successfully expand into the South—naturally many organizations emerged organically.

Baird et al. (1991) mentioned that the system has become "widespread" and has become the prominent factor in the social life of American students. As such Greek life is attracting the attention of publicists and educators" (p. 10). According to Roof (2012), the vast body of literature concerning fraternity and sorority related inquiry "can easily be seen via the extensive bibliography of Fraternity and Sorority Research from 1996-2010 collected by Dr. Charles Eberly, Professor of Student Affairs at Eastern Illinois University, which accounts for over 1,000 articles concerning Greek life" (p. 11-12).

With deep origins in history, Greek letter organizations have a historical significance on college campuses. This lineage is indicative of the roots Greek letter organizations have on college campuses and the importance they play in shaping some collegiate environments. The National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) is the governing body for historically female Greek organizations. The conference plays a critical role in regulating and developing the rigid rules, stipulations and processes that shape and

configure the formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment process on college campuses today. Highlighting the historical milestones and the purposes for the founding of the NPC sheds light on many of the reasons for the establishment and evolution of current recruitment practices that are still in place today.

National Panhellenic Conference

In May of 1902 the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) was established (Baird, 1977). At its first meeting, initial membership consisted of eight members: Alpha Phi, Delta Delta Delta, Delta Gamma, Gamma Phi Beta, Kappa Alpha Theta, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Pi Beta Phi and Alpha Phi. Collectively, each respective organization established an agreement that any proposal "binding upon members of the National Panhellenic Conference must have the unanimous approval of all members through their councils, conventions or chapters" (p. 37). At that time only two member organizations, Chi Omega and Alpha Chi Omega were unable to attend. Today the membership of (NPC) includes 26 national and international organizations, all of which are Greek-letter in name and purpose. The NPC umbrella organization offers undergraduates an experience in "respecting the rights of each other" (p. 38) an important lesson in fostering cooperation.

Today, respecting the rights of one another continues to be upheld by each member organization. Perhaps the most significant indication of this is the use of the NPC Unanimous Agreements. Fortified and adapted from their initial agreement in 1902, the unanimous agreements "are the principles, procedures and behavioral expectations considered to be so basic to ethical and harmonious intersorority life that they are binding

on every NPC member group" (National Panhellenic Conference, 2014, p. 29). While many of these unanimous agreements cover a variety of topics, perhaps the "most basic and urgent questions" center "as they always [have] around recruitment" (Adventure in Friendship, 2009, p. 4). As recruitment is the major focus of discussion and debate for these organizations, it also sets the context for an experience that is central to women who were unmatched in the bid round of Panhellenic sorority recruitment.

Recruitment

According to Scheibel, Gibson and Anderson (2002), fraternity and sorority organizations loose approximately a quarter of the membership in the organization annually. Whether they lose those members to attrition, graduation, or other factors, Handler (1995) suggested that the process of recruiting new members is an important process for the longevity and existence of sororities.

Despite the importance of recruitment to the existence of these organizations, Scheibel et al. (2002) suggested in their findings that the sorority recruitment process was a "mockery" that utilized rehearsed interaction with potential new members and phony conversation styles to portray a false image of the organizations to interested members. In an effort to avoid the evils that fueled the negative aspects and influences on the recruitment process, the National Panhellenic Conference developed a "highly structured process" to resolve some of these issues (Roof, 2012, p. 13).

This highly structured process established several key practices that continue to exist today in the formal Panhellenic recruitment process. According to a resource on the NPC website titled *Adventure in Friendship*

(www.npcwomen.org/resources/pdf/adventures%20in%20friendship.pdf, 2009), since its establishment the conference has had numerous notable milestones impacting Panhellenic recruitment. The first is the denouncement of double membership. By denouncing double membership, conference delegates voted to disallow the acceptance of multiple bids or offers to membership in multiple organizations that are a part of the conference. Next, the conference "established matriculation as a prerequisite to pledging" (p. 4). Following this change, as early as 1904, in a foreshadowing of the no-frills initiative of the 1990s, NPC went on record against the "rush evils" of undue expense and "elaborate parties" in the recruitment process (p. 4). Moreover, according to Mongell and Roth (1991), the conference members began discussing the use of preferential bidding in 1928. Preferential bidding is a concept that informs much of the process that is currently utilized.

Another factor showing its influence in the process today was established in 1983—the use of a Quota/total system (National Panhellenic Conference, 2013). Quota/total was affirmed to allow for parity among chapters, establishing both a maximum size for chapters (total) and a maximum size for recruitment classes (Quota) (National Panhellenic Conference, 2013). In addition, prior to 2003, "a formula now referred to as the law of averages (LOA) was agreed upon, which in most instances is used to determine the number of invitations issued by each chapter on a given campus" (National Panhellenic Conference, 2014, p. 123). In response to many unique challenges of LOA, however the Release Figures Methodology was developed in 2003.

Release Figures Methodology

Release Figures Methodology (RFM) is described as "a ground-breaking methodology for determining release figures" (Adventures in friendship, p. 10). Serving as both an innovative and helpful tool, RFM greatly has impacted the futures of both matched and unmatched PNM's. The procedure is grounded on a mathematical model to decide the number of invitations issued by each participating chapter in the recruitment process (NPC Women, 2013). The purpose of RFM has three basic premises:

1. To maximize the number of potential new members (PNMs) who ultimately affiliate with a women's fraternity or sorority through recruitment.

2. To allow each PNM to methodically investigate realistic options and ultimately match with a chapter for which she has a preference among those options.

3. To enable each chapter to invite a sufficient number of PNMs to each event round to match to quota at the conclusion of recruitment (p. 1).

As briefly noted earlier, prior to 2003, a formula known as the law of averages (LOA) was commonly utilized to determine the number of invitations that could be issued by each Panhellenic member chapter on a campus. With the development of RFM however, the LOA was able to evolve. The national Panhellenic Conference (2014) discussed RFM:

> There were initial benefits to the widespread implementation of this formula. However, over time the LOA premise proved to be flawed for the use of release figures. Under this approach, many Panhellenics lost chapters because the use of the formula made it impossible for the chapter with the lowest recruitment returns to achieve comparable size. Also,

> many potential new members were statistically eliminated from recruitment as chapters with the highest recruitment returns carried many more women than necessary to attain quota, often leaving a high number of potential new members unmatched after the bid-matching process (p. 123).

Use of RFM has posed multiple benefits to chapters, campuses and the PNM's who participate in the formal recruitment process. Overall, the process benefits PNM's significantly. Since the establishment of RFM, between 85 % and 95 % of PNM's who preference are matched with their first preference, and an overall increase in the number of new members has been realized (NPC Women, 2013). The benefit of this is by using RFM and the preferential bidding system, PNM's can be assured that if they maximize their options they will be guaranteed a bid. The reality however is that some women choose not to maximize their options. Some participate in non-maximizing behavior by preferencing less than the recommended number of options, or by single intentional preferencing.

On the Midwestern University campus, the number of women who receive bids is fairly consistent with the national average. Following the end of sorority recruitment, only around nine % of the women who preferenced were not placed. During the Recruitment cycle, approximately 26 of these women self-selected to be removed from bid matching, as they filed no preference on their MRABA. Of the remaining women who were not placed in a Midwest University Campus sorority, there were 35 PNM's who chose to not maximize their options during preference. Ultimately all of these

women, whether they are offered an invitation to membership or not are a product of an experience deeply engrained in the sorority recruitment process.

Research Regarding Fraternity and Sorority Students

Fraternity and sorority life has been deemed by many researchers to be a rich area with many intersections of a college student experience. Guthrie (2002) noted that students that are affiliated have been found to develop mature interpersonal relationships, develop leadership skills, teamwork, autonomy and personal identity as well as a healthy dosage of values clarification. In addition, students who affiliate with a fraternity or sorority are more likely to persist and graduate and are more likely to contribute to the university as alumni (Guthrie, 2002). In addition, Pike (2000) noted that engaged members of sorority and fraternity life can sometimes boast both academic and social gains as a result of membership in sororities and fraternities.

Despite a handful of studies citing positive aspects of fraternity and sorority life, the majority of studies regarding fraternity and sorority community members' focus on their propensity to use alcohol and the prevalence of hazing in their organizations (Roof, 2012). Research regarding these topics are among those most commonly explored and center on sorority and fraternity members alike. Studies pertaining specifically to women in sororities are uncommon, and research involving women participants of the sorority recruitment process are even more uncommon. Some of the literature on the experiences of women participating in the sorority recruitment process is valuable for understanding some of the impacts it can have on PNMs.

Literature on Panhellenic Sorority Recruitment

A handful of studies have researched Panhellenic sorority recruitment with various different objectives. Roof (2012) looked to examine what role personality plays in sorority recruitment persistence, while others like Scheibel, Gibson & Anderson (2002) emphasized an analysis of the various conversation styles utilized that are practiced and rehearsed in sorority recruitment. These studies, while relevant to the population, gauge elements that influence the sorority recruitment experience, but do not necessarily depict examples of the actual impact the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process can have on students who are engaged in various roles throughout the process.

The impacts are plentiful, and studies have shown different effects on a variety of unique participants involved in the sorority recruitment process—among those impacted are Recruitment Guides (Wikowsky, 2010), active members and PNM's. The majority of the literature in my review is focuses on the latter (PNM's). Many studies reviewed highlighted the experiences of all of these groups of women, not the exclusive experience of PNM's.

Many researchers captured a variety of impacts for the various subpopulations and roles in the recruitment process. One impact included how recruitment impacts women's perceptions of learning that occurred as a result of participation in the process (Jahansouz, 2012). Additional researchers examined the impact of recruitment on: perceptions of self-objectification and body image, psychosocial effects, and self-esteem (Rolnik, Engeln-maddox & Miller, 2010; Atlas & Morier, 1994; Chapman, Hirt, & Spruill, 2008).

To begin, Jahansouz (2012) explored female undergraduate students' perceptions of learning through their participation in the sorority recruitment process. The researcher found that female students learn simply by engaging in the sorority recruitment process. Viewed as an experiential learning event, Jahansouz (2012) found that both anticipated and unanticipated learning occurred as a result of a recruitment process, particularly if it featured specific learning outcomes. Jahansouz's (2012) study provides further evidence that the recruitment process can be an activity that impacts those involved. Jahansouz (2012), for justified reasons, however, elected to remove women that were unmatched in the bid round from her sample pool. Despite her justification, the act of removing PNM's who are unmatched in the bid round from the study further accentuates that the voices of women who are not selected to be members of sororities are often undermined or given little attention.

Rolnik et al. (2010) examined how self-objectification and body image are influenced or disturbed by the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process. Rolnik et al. (2010) found that in their repeated measures study, sorority recruitment participants demonstrated higher levels of both self-objectification and eating disorders at all points during the Panhellenic recruitment process. They also found that a woman's body mass index was an accurate forecaster of dropping out of the recruitment process. In other words, women who were less petite were less likely to persist through the sorority recruitment process. It should be noted however that the measures that they used to differentiate higher body mass indexes were still healthy levels. Roof (2012) analyzed the methodology suggesting, "this allowed them to make the claim that higher body mass

indexes were predictors; a claim that adds to the negative research in an almost unfair manner" (p. 18).

Chapman et al. (2008) looked at the experiences of women who withdrew from sorority recruitment (and women who persisted) by examining the impact of the event on self-esteem. Through the administration of pre-tests at the beginning of the recruitment process and post-tests immediately following the conclusion of sorority recruitment, the researchers' findings demonstrated that membership could act as a booster of self-esteem for women who were selected. Conversely, it was also the recruitment process that diminished self-esteem for women who were not offered an invitation to join. Robbins (2004) supported this notion suggesting that "for every girl who emerges from a sorority with improved self-esteem, there are numerous others whose confidence has been crushed" (p. 320).

The findings of Chapman et al. (2008) indicated that the sorority recruitment process has a significant impact on self-esteem. Chapman et al. (2008) did not remove participants who were unmatched in the bid round from their sample, but instead grouped these women in the sample of those that "withdrew" from the process. This practice may have skewed the results unfairly. The experiences of women who voluntarily or self-selected to withdrawal from recruitment could have sharply contrasted from the experience of those who were unmatched in the bid round.

Nonetheless, "the change in self-esteem among potential members displayed during sorority recruitment has significant implications for practitioners and suggests the need for more research" (Chapman et al., 2008, p. 45). While the findings of Chapman et

al. (2008) have implications for framing this study, the authors argued that for future studies, "it might be argued that the changes in self-esteem that occurred over the relatively short period of recruitment were not lasting changes and merely reflected short-term differences" (p. 47).

Atlas and Morier (1994) wanted to measure some type of similar impact over a longer period of time. The authors examined characteristics of women who went through sorority recruitment and found that women in sororities were (a) perceived as more attractive, (b) came from higher income brackets, (c) were more willing to try to fit in in party situations and (d) were more likely to use alcohol than women who did not go through recruitment. Participants completed several questionnaires during the first week of school and after the second and seventh month to assess the impact of social group acceptance or rejection through certain psycho-social measures. The researchers found that women who were excluded from participation in sororities experienced negative outcomes over the course of the study. Perhaps the most significant being sadness—especially in the short-term. Depression levels did not have a significant change either from those levels at the beginning of the school year, suggesting that these women who experienced rejection might be vulnerable to other negative experiences in their first-semester.

Atlas and Morier's (1994) study is particularly important because it is one of the research studies that actually examined the experience of women who did not receive a bid and experienced "rejection." The rejection of sorority recruitment negatively

impacted them. Although it does not look at impact in other areas of the first semester experience, the research offers insights into the phenomena I hope to explore in my study.

This review of the literature yielded a narrow view of women's experiences with sorority recruitment. Research concentrated on gauging the impact of sorority recruitment on targeted participants quantitatively—excluding the possibility for personal story and voice to emerge in the data. In addition, with the exception of Atlas and Morrier (1994), Jahansouz (2010) and Chapman et al. (2010) most other studies pertaining to fraternity and sorority life focused exclusively on students who are affiliated. The research on the women who desired to join a sorority, but were not offered an invitation to join, needs to be expanded. In an effort to get a better idea of how the experiences of these women may have been impacted by this event, the literature that defines events and transitions must first be explored. Through the use of student development theory, these paradigms are examined.

Student Development Theory: Events and Transitions

According to Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton and Renn (2010), "student development theory provides a lens through which to view students and helps educators put student behavior in context rather than being perplexed by it" (p. 26). One such context in which student development has been examined is through the analysis of transitions and events (or non-events). One of the pioneer theorists exploring transitions was Schlossberg (1995) who defined a transition as "any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles" (p. 27).

She presented a transition model that analyzed how individuals adapted to transitions. Schlossberg asserted that "adaptation was affected by the interaction of three sets of variables: the individual's perception of the transition, characteristics of the pre-transition and post-transition environments, and characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition" (Evans, et al., 2010, p. 213). A description of this model is particularly helpful in understanding the transition experienced by women who were unmatched in the bid round of sorority recruitment, particularly in the semester following sorority recruitment.

Schlossberg (1995) asserted that transitions are impactful for adults in that they allow people to generate meaning from their experiences in transitions. These same theories and implications are relevant for students in college as well. Three guiding precepts to studying transition work were:

- Adults continuously experience transitions.
- Adults' reactions to transitions depend on the type of transition, their perceptions of the transition, the context in which it occurs, and its impact on their lives.
- A transition has no end point; rather, a transition is a process over time that includes phases of assimilation and continuous appraisal as people move in, through, and out of it (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012, p. 59).

Despite these three principles, knowing that each individual's journey and interpretation of their experiences is different, Schlossberg suggested that a transition must be analyzed through an understanding of the type, context and impact of the transition.

Schlossberg et al. (1995) thus identified three different types of transitions: anticipated (those that are expected and occur), unanticipated (those that are not predictable, but occur) and non events—"the nonoccurrence of anticipated events" (Schlossberg, Waters & Goodman, 1995, p. 28). For many of the women in my study, analysis of the type of transition is in most cases the analysis of a non-event (the expected invitation to membership in a sorority, which did not occur). Non-event transitions have the potential to alter the way one sees herself and the way one behaves, Schlossberg et al. (1995) classified nonevents into four divisions: (1) personal – related to an individual's aspirations; (2) ripple – "referred to the unfulfilled expectations of someone close to us" (p. 30); (3) resultant – precipitated by an event; and (4) delayed – events that might still occur. For women who are unmatched in the bid round, depending on the interpretation of the experience, any one of these classifications is probable. It is however likely that resultant and delayed non-events are perhaps the most relevant to their experience.

Following analysis of the type, Schlossberg (1995) looked at context, which was merely the relationship of the individual to their perceived transition, and the setting where the transition might have occurred. Impact is ultimately the most important however. According to Schlossberg, et al. (1995), "it is not the event or non-event that is important, but it's impact," which they defined as "the degree to which the transition alters one's daily life" (p. 33).

There are three major parts to the transition: approaching transitions (transition identification and transition process), taking stock of coping resources (the 4 S system);

and taking charge (strengthening resources) (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Put simply the three are defined as follows:

- Approaching transitions- "identifies the nature of the transition and provides an understanding of which perspective is best for dealing with it." It also identifies, how "the transition has changed individual roles, relationships, routines and assumptions" (p. 26).
- Taking stock of coping resources- "provides a way to identify the potential resources someone has to cope with the transition" (p. 27) These are Situation, Self, Support and Strategies. Also referred to as "assets and liabilities" (p. 47).
- Taking charge- describes how the individual has utilized new strategies.

It was anticipated that many of the participants would note elements of their experience that are firmly uprooted in the literature regarding transitions. This model is supported in a number of other contexts. Analysis of transitions is extensive, covering the utility of Schlossberg's theory with application to people experiencing job loss, death, and even divorce. While the theory was intended for adults, the theory is important for looking at transitions of emerging adults and college students. There is no research that I am aware of tying the overall transition to experiences with sorority recruitment in the first semester.

First semester experience

In an effort to learn more about the transition of the women who are unmatched in the sorority recruitment process, I first looked at research covering students' transition experiences in the first semester. Friedlander, Reid, Supak and Cribble (2007) looked at

the impact of three factors and how they each impact a student's adjustment into the university. Among these domains, the researchers suggested that with regard to a transition, very few are more critical to examine than students' academic, social, and emotional adjustment. Academic adjustment referred to how well students adjust to academic effort and success at meeting specific requirements. Social adjustment on the other hand, referred to how students find belonging and meaning through social interactions. Finally, emotional adjustment described how students adjust to managing basic emotions. All of these factors felt particularly relevant within the context of my study given the previous research regarding self-esteem and social acceptance.

Ultimately, Friedlander, Reid, Supak and Cribble's (2007) quantitative study found that increased self-esteem, increased social support, and decreased stress all had a positive impact on adjustment to the transition of a university for participants. Each of these three factors may also add depth to Schlossberg's (1995) recommendations for analyzing transitions, through the "4 S" system.

The Transition Process

It is also important to look at the process by which students adjust in the first semester. The research of Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) examined the experiences of students in their first semester through the use of an image known as the W-Curve Hypothesis model.

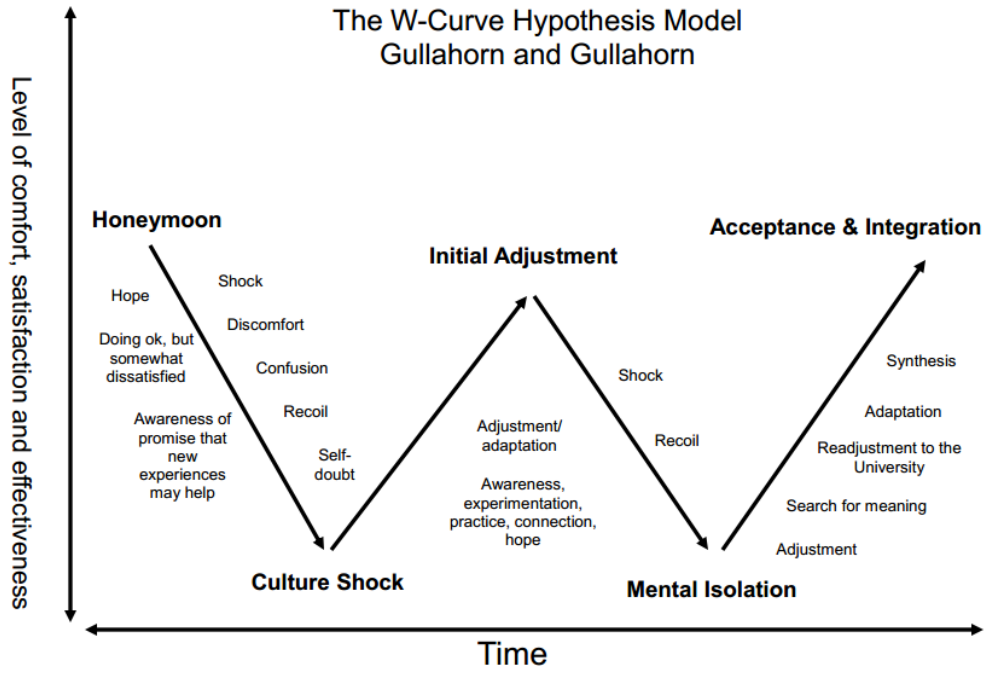
Through their work on the W-curve, the Gullahorn and Gullahorn noted that many students begin their collegiate experience on a new campus in a "*honeymoon*" phase, characterized by feeling enthusiastic and excited about getting a fresh start. The

process continues, characterizing subsequent experiences of students with *culture shock, initial adjustment, mental isolation and acceptance & integration,* respectively. In the model, culture shock is best illustrated by a perceived low point for students in their semester. They find that their expectations are different from past experiences, as a new set of surroundings starts to become difficult to adjust to. Ultimately, the initial excitement has worn off.

Initial adjustment is characterized as the second, or middle high point in the semester. In the initial adjustment portion of the model, "physical adjustments occur" and students feel more "at home" on campus. The authors suggest that perhaps the "gap between home and university values still may exist."

Fourth in the process comes mental isolation, characterized by the second low point in the W-curve. In this snapshot of the model, despite students' adjustment to the physical environment, they find getting to know others is challenging. They feel marginalized and that others do not feel as they do, or they may feel alone or not a part of certain cliques. It is a low point for most students in the W curve.

Finally, the hope is that students experience a final highpoint or the last peak in the W-curve, *acceptance and integration*. At this point, students start to feel better about their situation. The have begun to adjust and feel more at home, as if they are an actual part of their new community. Their values feel reconciled and they feel at ease about their role. A complete visual of the model with all of the peaks can be seen below:



(Source: Hoffenburger, K., Mosier, R., & Stokes, B. (1999). Transition experience. In J.H. Schuh (Ed.), Educational programming and student learning in college and university residence halls. Columbus, OH: ACUHO-I)

The W-curve hypothesis model has been used and adapted by other researchers such as Hoffenberger, Mosier and Stokes (1999). In their research, they adapted the W-curve Hypothesis model for use with specific populations (international students, female students and transfer students). This adaptation suggests that the Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) model may have utility for other targeted groups of students, including women who are unmatched in the bid round.

Persistence Literature

Although this is not a retention study, much of the other literature on first-semester experience is targeted at examining what helps students to persist. Looking at some of the literature on persistence and departure in the first-semester of college, Tinto

(1993) noted that many students who do not feel as though they belong in college, depart. Building off of the research from scholars like Tinto, academics like Elkins, Braxton and James (2000) have expanded to find that "the factor of support had the greatest influence on the persistence/departure decision" of students.

When viewed as a transition, the events following the progression of being unmatched in the bid round of sorority recruitment has potential to be an impactful experience. Ossana, Helms and Leonard (1992) noted that as women develop they need a support system of other women with similar interests. In addition the authors noted that a sorority may provide the system of support to help women develop their womanist identity. While a sorority might be a useful way to find this supportive community for development of collegiate women, this community was not accessible to the women in my study. This led me to ask questions surrounding how women in college tend to develop. The following section reviews some of the possible trajectories a woman might take in finding her path in the first semester.

Women's identity development

Student development theory provides a critical lens from which scholars and practitioners can look at student experiences. It helps improve practice in a variety of fields (including sorority life) and spaces where students are the central participants. Many researchers have used identity as a construct to explain how students develop. Psychosocial theorists like Erikson and Marcia paved the way for many researchers, but the work of Josselson was perhaps the most significant in examining the identity development of female college students (Evans et al., 2010).

Josselson (1987) suggested that "we learn who we are by discovering our differences from others, by finding out how we may distinguish ourselves from those we feel most like" (p, 11). This account provides governance for much of her work on women's identity development. Guided by the work of Marcia (1980), Josselson began her research, recognizing that the literature on identity development was dominated by the experiences of male students (Evans et al., 2010). In her research, Josselson chose to specify her population and focused on the development of female college students. Her research supported a unique identity model for women, consisting of four major identity statuses: *Guardian, Pathmaker, Searcher and Drifter* (Josselson, 1996).

For women who might be deemed *guardians*, these women are individuals who are firmly uprooted and tend to hold onto what is familiar and emotionally comfortable. These women tend to be those that will do nearly anything to "preserve their ways of thinking, responding and valuing" what had always been near and dear to their identities. (Josselson, 1996, p. 45).

Women who are *Pathmakers* are individuals who make an identity for themselves, through autonomy. They are women who have a "capacity to integrate aspects of themselves with their growing understanding of their world as they were both finding and creating it" (p. 72). This might describe women who had found resolve with their experience as an unmatched PNM following sorority recruitment.

The *Searchers* are individuals who are deemed to be in some sort of identity crisis. Unsure about where they stand, these women struggle with "how and where they

might find a place for themselves in the world, who they would connect themselves to and how…" (p. 107).

Finally, *Drifters* are women who were described as neither heavily involved in "exploration or commitment in regard to identity" (p. 145). Consumed by the present, many of these women give up on the idea of committing "themselves to beliefs or goals" (p. 146).

Regardless of a woman's identity status (*Guardian, Pathmaker, Searcher, or Drifter*) development is a complex process impacted by a number of different factors. In the sorority recruitment process these sentiments resonate throughout as women grapple with attempting to find how sorority chapters might reflect or contrast their own values, beliefs and attitudes. Josselson (1987) emphasized how a social role can impact identity development, and that identity can be formed through identification with people we feel are important. Further, she suggested that women tend to form their identity around the "kind of person" they "want to be" (Josselson, 1973, p. 47). Sorority recruitment facilitates a process whereby women create a mental picture of who they want to become in college.

Miller (1976) suggested "…indeed women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then maintain affiliations and relationships" (Miller, 1976, p. 83). This sentiment has been visible in scholarship where academics identify reasons that women choose to participate in sorority recruitment. According to Fouts (2010), the primary reasons students participate in recruitment are related to friends

and family influence. This further emphasizes the role that previous and new relationships play in a student's transition.

When women are unmatched in the bid round of sorority recruitment, many of these conceptions and visions are likely turned upside-down as the relationships they thought they would create become damaged or are perceived as damaged due to their inability to participate as a member of the community.

Ultimately, during the early stages of their development, woman will likely be in need of a tremendous amount of "support and encouragement from the environment" (Osana, et al., 1992, p. 406).

The research study sought to give voice to these women who are traditionally neglected or forgotten after bid day. The research posited that they are vulnerable following the transition. Research on transitions would indicate that much of this is due to their anticipation of a certain event that never occurs (an offer to join the sorority community). Many studies indicate that self-esteem is impacted by this non-event and other similar transitions. In spite of this transition, these women are still tasked with persistence in the first semester and must manage their development without many of the resources they anticipated they would have. This research hopes to look at how this experience impacted these women, what support they found, and how their lives in the first semester took shape.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process on former potential new members (PNM's) who were not matched in the bid round.

Research Questions:

The primary research question in this research was, what is the impact of the sorority recruitment process on former potential new members (PNM's) who are unmatched in the bid round? The subquestions were:

- How do collegiate women who are not matched in the bid round of the formal recruitment process describe their experience with sorority recruitment?
- How do collegiate women who are not matched in the bid round of the formal recruitment process describe their transition into collegiate life following the event?
- What support structures do collegiate women who were unmatched in the bid round of the formal recruitment process identify as helpful in their success following the first semester of college?
- What challenges if any do collegiate women who were unmatched in the bid round of the formal recruitment process overcome during the transition?

Rational for Qualitative research design

In order to address this research question, a qualitative research design was selected. Qualitative inquiry allows participants to describe their experiences. Maxwell (2013) supported this notion, proposing that in qualitative inquiry the focus is "not with generalization, but with developing an adequate description, interpretation and explanation" of the experiences of the women who are a part of the study (Maxwell, 2013, p. 79). Thus in framing research questions, Maxwell (2013) urged researchers to focus the research on the case and situation of the individuals in the study, "not as a sample from some much larger population" (p. 79).

After an extensive review of the literature, it appeared that the experience I sought to analyze was the experiences of what Schlossberg et al. (1995) described as a specific non-event, or nonoccurrence of an anticipated event. Allowing this research to inform my design, there were several additional subquestions that my research sought to understand. Each of these sub questions, were able to uncover elements of how the student approached the transition, how they took stock of resources (Situation, Self, Support and Strategies) and how they took charge, or managed to cope with the transition. These are the three major parts of every transition. The

Most of the interviews were conducted in the spring semester, within six months of the event. It has been noted that numerous studies discount the experiences of these women in research. While a small number of studies have examined the effects of this event immediately after, none looked beyond the short-term impact.

I sought personalized stories and experiences that include "richly descriptive" data to shed light on the participants' lives (Merriam, 2009, p.16). While common

themes may emerge, the focus of the research was on "individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of" the unique experience (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). In the case of this study, the meaning that women constructed in the semester following sorority recruitment, as it connects (or does not connect) to the sorority recruitment process provided the context for meaning making. Therefore a qualitative research design seemed appropriate to capture the rich, thick, personal voices of the marginalized women.

Rational for Case Study Research

The design of this study followed a case study model, an "in-depth exploration of a bounded system . . .based on extensive data collection" (Creswell, 2002, p. 485). The population from which the sample was taken was bounded by participation in the sorority recruitment process at Midwestern University in the 2013 school year. In addition, the population was bounded by the common experience of being unmatched in the bid round following the conclusion of sorority recruitment. All women in the sample were of the age of majority and were interviewed within six months of participation in the sorority recruitment process.

In case study design, the researcher is "less concerned about identifying shared patterns of behavior that are exhibited by the group," but rather, is more concerned with how individuals might respond to a particular event, or program (Creswell, 2002, p. 484).

In this research design, the program or event was sorority recruitment, and no invitation to membership—thus I wanted to explore how individuals responded to this event.

Creswell (2002) further explained that a case study might utilize multiple forms of data collection. This informed my decision to utilize the peaks and valleys timeline as a supplementary form of data (Weichman, 2013; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963).

Researcher Position

As an advisor for the fraternity and sorority community at Midwestern University, I have had experience working with fraternity and sorority students. I believe in the benefit of being a member of a Greek-letter organization. I am an alumnus of a Greek organization and have served as a residential live-in advisor in the Greek community. In addition, I believe that the Panhellenic recruitment process, release figures methodology and mutual selection framework are useful in creating parity among chapters, connecting PNM's to those chapters. The process offers equitable access to recruit and meet potential new members from multiple vantage points. I posit this process is an effective and beneficial way of meeting these objectives. As the primary research instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Creswell, 2014), my views of this process may impact the way that I interpret the experiences of the women who participated.

In addition, I am a self-identifying male (who also identifies with heteronormativity), studying the experiences of female participants. This will be accompanied by challenges. I may have demonstrated bias in my interpretation of the data and may have been faced with challenges regarding my decision to explore an exclusively female activity. My heteronormative position may have impacted my ability

to comprehend and understand the experiences of these women through a lens that was congruent with the perspective they were shared from. Further, my position may have impacted the participants' willingness to share certain aspects of the experiences

Epistemological Approach

Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge according to Mertens (2010). I approached this research with two assumptions: (a) "reality is socially constructed" (p. 16) and (b) "there is an interactive link between researcher[s] and participant[s]" (p. 11). The second assumption served as my guiding precept in the research process. I interpreted the complicated experiences of the participants, and attempted to tell the story of the women in a way that highlighted their actual first-hand experience (Mertens, 2010). This is most commonly referred to as an epistemology known as constructivism.

Through constructivism, it is the attempt to tell of the experiences accurately, but the research process can be influenced by the researcher's own personal values. Despite this, I sought to develop themes that reflected the women's actual experiences.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

Before beginning the research, I completed the Consortium for IRB Training Initiative in Human Subjects Protections (CITI) to obtain certification in research involving human subjects. Endorsement from Midwestern University's IRB was also received prior to initiating research and data collection (Appendix A). In the participant recruitment email (Appendix D) and informed consent document (Appendix B), all of my participants were provided with the IRB approval notice, case number, and information

about how to contact the IRB should they feel apprehension at any point during or after their participation in the study.

Participants

The fundamental guidelines in the selection of participants was purposeful sampling, where the researcher "intentionally selects individuals...to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2002, p. 194). In addition, to purposeful, the sample was also maximal, in that I obtained a sample of women who differed on a wide spectrum, and had adapted to different, yet similar conditions (Creswell, 2014). The sample represented a variety of activities, academic standings, hometowns, ages and backgrounds, despite their common experience (being unmatched in the bid round) with sorority recruitment.

This purposeful sampling method yielded women who participated in the formal sorority recruitment process at Midwestern University. These women persisted to the final day of sorority recruitment and were identified as individuals who desired to be a member of the sorority community. Finally, all of the participants were not offered an invitation to membership in the formal sorority recruitment process (unmatched in the bid round).

Through utilization of the mycampusdirector.com website, the office of Fraternity and Sorority Life at Midwestern University acted as a "gatekeeper," granting me permission and the needed clearance to access both the site and participants' recruitment information (Creswell, 2002). The office is able to track participant activity in the sorority recruitment process. Of the 1051 women who created profiles on the

mycampusdirector.com platform, 676 persisted to the final day of recruitment. Of those 676, 615 received an invitation to membership. With this information, the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life was able to identify 61 women who did not receive an invitation to join a sorority. The names, and contact information for each of these 61 women was provided to me by the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life at Midwestern University.

Because the sorority recruitment process is based on a mutual-selection process, some PNM's voluntarily decide to file "no preference," indicating a conscious decision to not be a part of the sorority community. These women who filed "no preference" were excluded from the potential participants for my study. Of the 61 unmatched PNM's, 30 filed no preference. In addition, three women joined a sorority through Continuous Open Recruitment. After deducting these three women, only 28 women were not offered an invitation to membership, despite their conscious decision and desire to be a member of a Greek-letter organization. These 28 women made up the potential participants for my study (See Table 1).

Table 1

PNM Data

Total number of PNM's participating in recruitment	1051
Total number of PNM's who persisted to the Preference day (the final day of recruitment)	676
Total number of PNM's who received an invitation to membership	615
Total number of PNM's who did not receive an invitation to membership	61
Total number of PNM's who filed no Preference	30
Total number of PNM's who joined a sorority in COR	3
Population: Total number of PNM's who preferenced at least one sorority, indicating their desire to be a member of the sorority community (Total number of women who were unmatched in the bid round)	28

After identifying the potential population, snowball recruiting efforts were utilized to increase participation (Mertens, 2010), as several of the women in the study either knew of or were personal friends of other women who would be eligible for the study.

Table 2

Participants

Interview	Pseudonym	Academic Standing
1	Amanda	Sophomore
2	Brittany	Freshman
3	Camille	Sophomore
4	Regina	Freshman
5	Tracey	Freshman

The participants of this research were representative of the demographics of the research site. Of the participants, all self-identified as Caucassian and female. Their academic standings were two sophomores, and three freshmen. The three freshmen were in-state students; the sophomores were out-of state students. One of the sophomores was a transfer student from a similar geographical area. All were of the age of majority.

Research Site

The site for this research was Midwestern University, a midsized land-grant research institution located in the mid-western United States. The institution served approximately 19,000 undergraduate and 6,000 graduate students with a majority of students who identify as Caucasian. Because the participants of this study are not members of the sorority community at Midwestern University the fraternity and sorority community is not the site of the study, nor are its members the focus. However, fraternity

and sorority life are an instrumental part of campus culture and ecology. Nearly 4,000 students identify with a Greek Letter affiliation at Midwestern University.

The participants of the study had no Greek affiliations but had experiences that were representative of the eclectic opportunities at the university. All were enrolled at the institution, further justifying its designation as the research site.

Data collection was conducted in a private quiet room in a public space in the on-campus library. Participants determined the time and date of the interview.

Data Collection

Data Collection was gathered primarily through the use of interviews, a method that is supported for case study research (Creswell, 2002). I asked the participants a series of "open-ended questions," and "recorded their answers," (p. 203). Open-ended questions were a powerful way of collecting "detailed personal information" that can sometimes be highly personalized or of great depth (Creswell, 2002 p. 202). In addition, open-ended questions were able to "elicit views and opinions of the participant" (Creswell, 2014), especially when the researcher cannot directly observe the participants in the context of the study. Sorority recruitment had already occurred and the semester following had come to a close, therefore, a semi-structured interview protocol enabled me to gather information that was recalled from their experiences.

Although a semi-structured interview protocol was used (Appendix C), I followed the tenet of Rubin and Rubin (2005) who suggested "the researcher is responding to and then asking further questions about what he or she hears from the interviewees rather than relying on predetermined questions" (p. vii). Thus some of my follow-up questions varied

in an effort to preserve empathy and engage the participants in a discussion of their experiences.

The recruitment process yielded responses from approximately eight individuals, only five of which were qualified to participate in the study. Three of the potential participants ultimately joined a sorority in the Continuous Open Bidding process, or informal recruitment process (as previously noted).

The interviews were completed in January and February, in the second (2014) semester immediately following their participation in sorority recruitment (within six months of their participation in Panhellenic sorority recruitment). The timeline allowed a historical recall of their experiences in the semester immediately following the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process (Creswell, 2014). The interviews communicated multiple snapshots of how the event impacted their experiences.

While it would have been advantageous to interview the women at multiple points in the semester (particularly immediately following the sorority recruitment process), many of the women described their feelings after the event as highly personal and emotional. It is my perception that all of the women were able to accurately articulate their feelings and thoughts both immediately after and throughout the semester following in our second semester interview. With ample time to experience the semester, many of the women may have had more time to reflect on the actual impact of the event and thus, more accurately portrayed their experiences after the fact. Therefore, requesting that participants recall their experiences could be deemed advantageous. Conducting interviews with the participants in the middle of the transition (while their adjustment

was actually occurring), may impacted their ability to comprehend and communicate their experience accurately.

An important characteristic of case study research is the use of several types of data collection (Merriam, 2009). As an additional data source, I utilized a technique adapted from Weichman (2013) and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963). Weichman (2013) described his "Peaks and Valleys" timeline:

> Prior to each interview, I asked the participants to draw, on a provided sheet, their first year in a linear fashion, with points of perceived success or positive general emotion being represented by the peaks of mountains and the points of perceived challenge and stress being represented by valleys between these mountains. This offered my participants another way to identify challenges that occurred in their first year of college. The visual for coming up out of valleys to reach the peaks was a visual to assist the participants in determining what helped them through and out of the valleys they encountered during their first year; a point that facilitated discussion within guiding question two of the interview protocol (p. 28).

According to Weichman (2013) "The simplicity of the technique allowed participants to highlight the most important "highs and lows" of the experience over the course of a semester (p. 28).

While I did utilize Weichman's (2013) peaks and valleys timeline, I explored the work of Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) to inform my interpretation of the timelines the participants actually drew. Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) model showed on the

vertical scale, perceived level of comfort, satisfaction and effectiveness. I asked my participants to use the same perceived levels to correlate with their experience following the conclusion of sorority recruitment (Appendix E). Along the horizontal axis, similar to Weichman's (2013) model, time allowed the experiences to be plotted in a linear fashion. Finally, after the participants plotted perceived high and low points in their semester, I requested that they label the perceived high and low points to effectively articulate their experiences through a means of data collection other than interviews. This data was particularly helpful in analyzing the data and led to some interesting conclusions about the data that I will allude to in Chapters four and five. The timeline was utilized as a reference for the participants throughout the interview itself and was an effective way for them to accurately depict their experiences in a brief snap shot as opposed to an elaborate description of a complex experience. This enabled me to view the data in a different way and also aided in triangulation of the data.

The peaks and valleys timeline is what Creswell (2014) referred to as a type of data collection in qualitative inquiry that would "go beyond typical observations and interviews" (p. 190). This peaks and valleys timeline was a data collection method that effectively "stretch[ed] the imagination about possibilities" in the collection process (p. 214).

Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. This limited the burden on the participants, yet allowed them ample time to share of their experiences and engage in a rich response to each of the questions in our conversation. In addition to the peaks and valleys timeline, I also took elaborate field notes during the interviews. These notes

enabled me to capture relevant non-verbal cues from the participants, observations about the interview, and some of the signature highlights that the participants shared (Creswell, 2014). According to Miles and Huberman, (1994) the use of field notes can "stimulate the field-worker to remember things" (p. 51). These notes were particularly helpful in capturing some of the nonverbal communication of participants as it is unlikely to capture such important cues in transcriptions of the recorded interview communication. In addition, they enabled me to look for yet another form of data where I could "look for regularly occurring phrases" (p. 58). Following the completion of the interviews, a brief review of those field notes was completed. I later summarized those field notes to aid me in deferred analysis of the data.

Following the completion of all of the interviews, the data were transcribed from audiotape by a paid transcriptionist, who agreed to a confidentiality agreement. A copy of this agreement is included in Appendix F.

These data collection methods were helpful in triangulation of the data. Because directly observing the participants would be inherently impossible, I believe my data collection approaches gave me a comprehensive look into the experiences of the participants, utilizing the variety of data collection methods necessary for case study research.

Interview Protocol

The following questions represent the semi-structured interview protocol from my interviews with the participants of the research study:

Consider using the following graph to draw your first semester experience in a linear fashion. High peaks on the graph would indicate high points in the semester and low "valleys" might indicate perceived lower points in your experience this previous semester.

- What connections if any did any of these peaks or valleys have to your experience in sorority recruitment?

What impact did your participation in the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process have on your college experience?

- In the short-term?
- Currently (3-4 months out)?

If positive, what do you believe were some of the factors that contributed most to your positive experience?

If negative, what do you believe were some of the factors that contributed most to your negative experience?

Following the conclusion of the sorority recruitment process what additional support would have benefitted you?

What involvements or support groups have you found on campus in your first semester of college?

- How did they support you if at all following the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process?

Data Analysis

In my data analysis process, I first prepared the data for analysis by transcribing the interviews, scanning the material, typing my field notes, arranging the peaks and valleys timelines and configuring them into usable formats (Creswell, 2014). I then took the data, and made an initial run through, highlighting words or phrases which stood out, and seemed significant. I also wrote in the margins of the transcripts to record my initial thoughts about some of the data to try to create some ideal categories for the data. Immediately following, I began to "bracket chunks" of words and terms of similar meaning and category. Creswell (2014) describes this a common protocol to begin coding. None of my codes were predetermined. I tried to let the codes emerge directly from the responses of the participants through en vivo quotes and ideas.

One critical component in case study research is an accurate and detailed description of the setting for the case study. Through the literature review, I elaborated on the context of the transition that I hoped to analyze. Despite this, I pulled no direct codes from the literature (Creswell, 2014). Again, this was to allow the data to "display the perspectives from individuals and be supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence" (p. 200). I then numbered each transcript (1-5), and read through them in numerical order, searching for possible codes that might emerge from the data. Upon completion I noted possible codes and revisited the same transcripts once more, only this time I read them in reverse numerical order so that no transcript carried a stronger weight than any other in the coding process.

After tentative codes were developed from the data, I engaged in a process called axial coding, which is a process that relates codes to one another. This can be achieved

through the relating of concepts and categories from the coding round and utilizes both forward and backward reasoning (Merriam, 2009).

Finally, I synthesized many of the codes into common themes, and created a Microsoft excel spreadsheet, to organize the en vivo quotes from the transcripts that corresponded with the appropriate themes that emerged after the axial coding process. Following this process, I and engaged in a detailed discussion about several of these themes. Each included subthemes and data from all data sources when applicable, including the field notes and peaks and valleys timelines. Some reflected previous literature regarding transitions, particularly how students took stake in the 4 S's. Although this literature did not impact my coding or thematic findings that emerged from the data, many of the themes reflected previous literature for other populations and samples.

Validation Strategies

Creswell (2014) highlighted eight different validation strategies to improve the accuracy in the reporting of data: triangulate different data sources, use member checking, use a rich, thick description, clarify the bias of the researcher, present negative or discrepant information, use peer debriefing, use an external auditor and spend prolonged time in the field (p. 201-202). Several of these strategies were utilized in my research.

One of the characteristics of case study design is the use of multiple data sources. I did make use of multiple data sources in an effort to triangulate the data, and create multiple avenues to support and inform the findings. These data sources also helped me

"build a coherent justification for themes" in the research (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). These were, field notes, qualitative interviews and the Peaks and Valleys timeline that I adapted (Weichman, 2013, Gullahorn & Gullahorn).

Member checks were also utilized in this research. Following the rough draft of the results section, I sent the tentative findings to participants for them to verify my interpretation of the data. I offered an opportunity for participants to comment back on the findings and provide feedback to refine and clarify the way I chose to convey the research in the report.

In addition, I also utilized a "rich" and "thick" description of the findings to accurately convey the themes and stories of the participants. This allows for readers to accurately picture the experiences of the participants. I utilized quotes directly from the data that highlighted emotion, moments of significance, and powerful language.

I took part in regular journaling to help aid in my reflexivity throughout the research process. This allowed me to balance my personal bias, and reflect on the impact of my position in the research. Through building of self-awareness, I mitigated the impact this bias had on the findings themselves, and on the data I gathered throughout the research process.

To add triangulation to the research, I also made use of several peer debriefers and an external auditor. Peer debriefs helped me think through conclusions I drew from the research, and allowed me to more clearly articulate the experiences as well as search for subjective underpinnings. Many of these individuals were familiar with the fraternity and sorority profession and were able to provide insight that helped the "research

resonate with people other than" myself (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). Dissimilar from my peer debriefers who I frequently spoke of my research with, an external auditor reviewed the findings to look over the "accuracy of transcription, the relationship between the research questions and my interpretation of the raw data" to substantiate or refine my interpretation of the findings in their validity (p. 202). I was intentional about selecting an auditor who had familiarity with the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process, and who held identities similar to my participants, in an attempt to counter my male position in the research.

Finally, I have spent a substantial amount of time in the field of fraternity and sorority life as a professional. This time is something Creswell (2014) noted to be useful in validating the research further, because it creates familiarity of the case study through yet another lens. I was present for the event of sorority recruitment, and I have spent extensive time at the research site.

Ethical Considerations

As the primary instrument for the data collection in this study, there were several ethical considerations that I had to consider. As a result, I had to make efforts to alleviate any conflicts of an ethical code. My research had no known risks associated with it. Participants were of the age of majority and were granted an opportunity to review an informed consent document that was approved by Midwestern University's IRB.

The informed consent information was reviewed at the beginning of each interview to ensure the participant recognized their ability to discontinue participation at any time. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, though participation was

incentivized with compensation totaling a value of no more than twenty dollars. Unexpected by the researcher, ultimately, the discussion of the case in questions did expose some stimulating topics and therefore triggered emotional responses for some women. If as a result of their participation in this study any participant were to decide they needed psychological, personal, or professional support, they were directed to the on-campus resource promoting Counseling and Psycholgical Service on the Midwestern University campus.

Each participant selected their own pseudonym to protect their anonymity when I reported the findings. Further exploration into one of these pseudonyms was later found to be the middle name of the participant and was therefore changed to eliminate any chance of her responses being connected to her identity. In addition, a Pseudonym was given to the university site where data was collected to further protect the anonymity of these participants.

All research documents associated with this research, including audiotapes, transcripts, coding memos and drafts of the final research report were kept on the researcher's personal computer in password-protected files. The researcher was the only person with access to all participant and initial research related information, with exception of the transcriptionist who agreed to the confidentiality contract (Appendix F). Audio recordings were delivered through password protected files and private access. In addition, all written transcriptions excluded the use of real personal names and organizational names that might be destructive to anonymity of the participants and chapters in the sorority community.

Participants could access their own transcripts for the purpose of the aforementioned member checks, prior to the destruction of those 8 documents (4 audio recordings of interviews and 4 written transcripts of those interviews) at the completion of the research. Peer and auditor examinations of coding only used pseudonyms to guard participant anonymity.

Chapter 4

Findings

Purpose Statement:

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of the formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment process on former potential new members (PNM's) who were not matched in the bid round.

Description of Participants

Five students from Midwestern University participated in this study. Participants were women who participated in the formal Panhellenic Sorority Recruitment Process in the Fall semester of 2013. Participants were recruited through e-mail communication with assistance from the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life at Midwestern University. The participants were impacted by their participation in the formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment process in different and similar ways. In this chapter, the researcher will discuss how the non-event impacted the experiences of the participants in the semester after the 2013 formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment cycle.

Participants selected pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. The five participants are described briefly.

Amanda. Amanda was a sophomore student who transferred from an out-of-state institution at the end of her first year of college. She played a sport in her first year and decided to transfer to Midwestern University largely due to the vibrant fraternity and sorority community. In the semester following sorority recruitment she was highly involved—participating in the adventure club at Midwestern University, her community

church, and her residence hall floor. Overall she was very pleased with her experience in the semester following the non-event. She had a family member that was a former member of a Greek organization.

Regina. Regina was a freshman woman from a small town in a rural area. She was an in-state student who attended the university and was not sure what she initially wanted to study initially. She loved to dance and had a close connection with her family and community back home. She was a bubbly personality who enjoyed spending time with friends. She lived in the residence halls on campus and had a family member that was a former member of a Greek organization.

Brittany. Brittany was a freshman woman from a small town in a rural area. She was an in-state student who initially came to the institution thinking she would be a pre-med major. She did some soul-searching and contemplated changing her major in the semester following the formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment process. She was an extremely articulate woman who mentioned she traditionally had a lot of close friends who were men. She lived in the residence halls on campus and had a family member that was a former member of a Greek organization.

Camille. Camille was an outgoing woman who was an out-of-state student. She grew up in the suburbs of a metropolitan city, and was a sophomore at Midwestern University. She was a Music Education major, and spent a frequent amount of her time either working, or water skiing with the on campus water ski club. She had no family members who were a part of a Greek organization

Tracey. Tracey was a freshmen woman from a mid-sized town. She was an in-state student who came to the university in hopes of pursuing a degree in business administration. She had a positive outlook on life, and enjoyed frequently going to the campus recreation center. She lived in the residence halls on campus and had a family member that was a former member of a Greek organization.

Research Questions

There was one primary research question and four sub questions that guided this research. The primary question was: What is the impact of the formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment process on former potential new members (PNM's) who are unmatched in the bid round? The sub questions that complimented the grand question were:

- How do collegiate women who are not matched in the bid round of the formal recruitment process describe their experience with sorority recruitment?
- How do collegiate women who are not matched in the bid round of the formal recruitment process describe their transition into collegiate life following the non-event?
- What support structures do collegiate women who were unmatched in the bid round of the formal recruitment process identify as helpful in their success following the first semester of college?
- What challenges if any do collegiate women who were unmatched in the bid round of the formal recruitment process overcome during the transition?

Overview of themes and Subthemes

In this chapter, a review of themes and subthemes that emerged from the data are described. These themes were drawn from an interview, a peaks and valleys timeline, and field notes for each of the five participants in the study. The focus of the interviews was to understand how the non-event (being unmatched in the bid round) impacted the experience of the participants in the semester following. The themes reflected a distinctive collection of experiences, triggered by a unique set of circumstances that likely differed from the experiences of women who were matched in the bid round of Panhellenic sorority recruitment. The themes are briefly summarized in the following table:

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes

Theme I: "Build up." This describes participants' built up expectations brought on by the preparation process, validation from others and participation in the formal sorority recruitment process at Midwestern University.
Theme II: Immediate impact of the non-event. This describes the participants' experiences immediately after the conclusion of sorority recruitment, where they were unmatched in the bid round. Ultimately these women started out the semester on a significantly low point in the semester. • Sub theme: ***Damaged Self-Esteem/self-confidence/self-efficacy.*** Women frequently questioned their own self-worth, value and ability to adequately do other things. This was directly related to their experience with Panhellenic sorority recruitment. • Sub theme: ***Anxiety***. Participants described increased anxiety in a number of different arenas that were triggered by the event. Participants experienced anxiety related to missing home, academics, social-life and other forms of anxiety. All of these varieties of anxiety were elevated and impacted them in the short-term.
Theme III: *Resolution and acceptance of the situation*. All participants came to the conclusion that they would succeed in college without a sorority. • Subtheme**: *A different path.*** The participants realized that the path they

initially thought they would take was merely an option. Their experience would simply include a different set of activities that did not require participation in a sorority. • Subtheme**: *Unexpected benefits*.** Participants came to realize some perceived benefits that helped them to rationalize their path as a good one, and ultimately grew to accept and be comfortable with the idea that they were not going to be a member of a sorority.
Theme IV: Coping strategies and support. these were strategies that students utilized that ultimately eased their transition following the non-event. • Subtheme: ***Structured and informal campus engagements and personal activities.*** This included getting involved, working, hobbies and activities, and faith structures • Subtheme: ***Focusing on academic performance, major specific planning and career attainment.*** This included a heavy focus on locking into studies and finding ways to get good grades, or improve academic satisfaction and academic related experiences. • Subtheme: ***Utilization of relational support.*** Participants found that relationships were a helpful coping strategy. These included all personal relationships that the women noted were of significant importance or value in helping them in the transition following the non-event.
Theme V: The deep unresolved: Many of the participants had issues "deep" in the experience that were unresolved. No matter how comfortable they were, there were certain things that they had not found complete harmony with. • Subtheme: ***Lingering Questions:*** Although solidified in their role and comfortable with who they were, many of the participants could not help but wonder what could have been, or what life would have been like as a member of a sorority. • Subtheme: ***Clarity of rules and knowledge of options would have provided justification:*** The women mentioned that even though they had come to feel resolved in their role, they were still confused about some of the rules. Participants also included concepts that they felt needed further clarification.

Theme I: Buildup. When participants spoke of their experience with the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process, each woman noted that the experience was impactful in some way. There was a common theme for the participants that amplified this impact.

This common theme or factor was the ongoing "buildup" and hype that transpired throughout the participants' recruitment preparations and the formalized process that they took part in. The idea of buildup referred to the actual compilation of anticipation that took place prior to the non-event, where the women were ultimately unmatched in the bid round. This building up of anticipation was something noted by all of the participants in some capacity leading up to the non-event.

Regina depicted this theme in a detailed recollection of filling out her application and communicating with friends, even as early as the summer:

> It was just something that I didn't even know about (clears throat) then the whole process of like having to apply and then having to say all of these things that you did in high school like, I got to layout like everything. I mean, I thought I had the perfect application and I would be like the perfect candidate. Even my friends that are in sororities told me that 'you're going to be fine, you're going to be like the perfect candidate. Any sorority that you want will want you.` And, just all of that. And that all just builds through the entire summer leading up to sorority recruitment.

Camille recalled conversations early on with friends who were in sororities. These women suggested to her, "oh if you're friendly, you will get into one."

Tracey also recalled some buildup prior to the commencement of the recruitment week, brought on by family:

> Through the process I was really excited about rush, because my dad was actually in a fraternity and he is the one that wanted me, really wanted me to rush…he thought it was a really good um I don't know…a good foundation I guess for college.

Similar to Tracey, Brittany mentioned her parents and recruitment buildup:

> My mom was in a sorority when she was here, and in college, so she definitely like, that's why I decided to recruit, because, I got to know all of her experiences and what had benefited her and how it benefited her.

This conversation with parents and friends contributed to an elevated perception of the benefits of going through recruitment, and established a personal expectation for the women.

Amanda discussed her anticipation of the event insisting that she "was looking forward to it for many, many months." In fact, Amanda even mentioned in our interview that joining a sorority was one of the primary reasons she elected to transfer to Midwestern University.

Aside from the buildup that occurred in the months and weeks leading up to the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process, the actual events throughout the week triggered some additional build up of anticipation and high expectations for the participants. In her Peaks and Valleys timeline, Brittany noted the events prior to bid day as exceedingly high in comfort and satisfaction. In her own words she described, "the excitement [of] meet[ing] new friends…in a new environment" as a perceived high-point in the semester. Regina was able to add an anecdote to further describe this excitement and the newness as well:

> It's like the first week of anything you do at school, so it's like your whole exposure (transition) to college like a little bit. I mean obviously college is completely different, but that's what your first impression of college is like Rush week I think. And so, all of that like building up to rush and then rush is just like a lot of energy and like loud noises.

Camille contributed, suggesting that the energy and conversations were enjoyable for her. She mentioned that "rush week was really fun, like I really enjoyed it." Adding further depth to the process and her experience she described why in further detail:

> You have like 10 minutes to talk to somebody and they have that same amount of time to decide whether they like you enough to invite you back the next day. But, I don't know, I'm a fan of making small talk, so it was fun…

After descriptions of the week in general were given, Regina moved on to describe the final day of the recruitment process—the high point of the week for many women:

> All of that like building up was kind of like it peaks on the Friday of rush week, and you're just like this is like what I waited for, for so long and I'm finally going to be in a sorority.

This experience was described by Camille as particularly impactful in building an expectation as well. She stated, on, "The last day of like formal recruitment—it's just like in the last hour they do these formal ceremonies and stuff. Basically it feels as though you are already in the house."

Despite this build up, multiple women noted that at the conclusion of the bid round, they didn't receive the outcome they were expecting, which made the situation even more challenging:

> I had it built up, this image of what my first semester would be like in college, and it just didn't fulfill that. And so like all the way from the beginning, it just wasn't what I anticipated, or expected… you just like get a call that night and I'm sure they had to call a whole bunch of other girls, so they were like, "I'm sorry, but you won't be receiving an invitation (Regina).

Tracey concluded, "I was really excited when I went into it… And then when (pause) it's just like you don't get it, it's sad. "Brittany agreed, explaining that bid day ultimately fell on her birthday and that the excitement and anticipation of the new environment she had described earlier was short-lived because it, "was not how I expected it to turn out."

The method in which the women ultimately find out about the non-event takes place through a phone call. All of the participants mentioned this phone call. Amanda first, suggested "the phone call was maybe a little harsh. It was just like 'you won't be getting a bid card tomorrow.' Camille's experience further validated Amanda's description of her own experience:

> So I got a call, the night before that I didn't get into a house at all. So like really, until that point, it wasn't a negative experience. I really like the houses and was really excited about it. It was just that call, it was like, 'well, just so you know, you didn't get into any [chapters]. ` And I was like, 'Alright` [stated in a tone of disappointment].

Regina captivated all of the buildup, between the summer, the formal events, the newness of college and the phone call, suggesting, "I think just the building up of it. You just like build it up in your head…that's what makes it so hard if you don't get in. She continued, sharing that "you just think about it so much that it feels like it's going to be true and then it's not."

This experience was particularly prevalent for participants. Every woman conveyed that the anticipation, which was built up throughout sorority recruitment and all of its processes, established an expectation that they would receive an invitation. That expectation never came to fruition.

Theme II: Immediate impact of the non-event. This second theme, described the participants' experiences immediately after the conclusions of sorority recruitment, where they were unmatched in the bid round. Being unmatched created the basis of a non-event. This non-event was impactful immediately in multiple ways for participants.

Most notably it impacted the women in two ways: (1) damaged the women's self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy, and (2) it triggered anxiety.

Often times, participants did not differentiate self-esteem issues and anxiety brought on by the non-event occurred simultaneously. Therefore in some instances, it was challenging to differentiate these subthemes. Thinking about them separately however, helped to focus on the unique impacts of the non-event.

Damaged self-esteem, self-confidence, self-efficacy. For many women, being unmatched was disappointing to say the least. As a result of the anticipation of being selected, many women's concept of self was crushed.

Most women began by suggesting that they were extremely sad. Amanda's words brought the impending emotion to life. "Right after I was sad...Um, just really sad, bummed out, felt like there was like nothing else I could do." These feelings of helplessness were not uncommon among other participants, but the idea of sadness prevailed in every woman's experience. In Brittany's experience she commented that she "tried to put on a happy face, but I was still…upset." Tracey also described feeling down, when she shared that the "low of rush was just emotional " and that her semester "started low because of rush."

This idea of starting low was also reflected in the womens' Peaks and Valleys timelines. Also, every participant specifically noted an initial low point in their semester directly associated with their experience immediately following sorority recruitment. In the interviews, the participants' voices provided a description of what they felt during

that initial low point. The participants' stories varied in depth. For many it was perceived as challenging and even uncomfortable to recall the experience. Regina recalled:

> Like the whole day I was just like crying and I was a mess because it was just really hard for me…I think the same thing happened on Sunday and on Monday, because I had to see everyone, like everyone wearing their bid-day shirts. So, I guess that whole week, that was just one of the worst weekends I have had. Because it was just like completely, like—I hadn't even started the semester and it was already like the opposite of what I expected coming in.

Tracey, also mentioned that her semester specifically "started off low because of rush." She described some of the justification behind her low point, saying, "my aunts were in sororities. I felt like you know I felt like they were a little disappointed and so I was disappointed in myself." She described herself to a degree as somewhat "depressed" and recalled, the event damaged her self confidence. Tracy recalled sorority recruitment, "downed my self-confidence enough to be depressed for a while…" Camille shared a similar sentiment suggesting that the non-event "just like destroys your self-esteem..."

Amanda attempted to articulate that she could not rationalize why she was not selected, and that ultimately it impacted her emotionally. She shared that:

> I was confused because I feel like I did everything right. Like I was so nice, outgoing, happy, and I've been plenty involved and then I still didn't get in. And it can make you feel like you're not good enough for a certain house or something- but really every girl is worth so much. And so, I just feel like, um, it's just a hard process . . .when I didn't get in I was just really devastated and really shocked.

Camille later shared how the non-event makes a woman question her own self-concept: "everyday is just like, well uhh, they didn't like me enough to invite me back?" In fact, this idea was evident in multiple participants' experiences. Regina also shared questions that surged within her, as she questioned whether she should have gone through

recruitment at all: “I thought, did I make the right decision?" adding to Regina’s question, Tracey shared a similar yet more deflating sentiment asking herself, “Why didn’t they like me?” She continued:

> It is kind of a self-confidence downer. Because you are just like what did I do wrong? What did I say wrong? Did I not wear the right clothes? I mean I thought they liked me, all that…there were tears shed.

Despite tears as she told her story, Tracey persisted, attempting to draw further meaning from her experience:

> Like, I cried a lot during rush because I don’t know the girls are all I don’t know I feel like all the girls in sororities are super gorgeous. Like it was like. What does this mean? Am I not pretty enough and am I not skinny enough. You know all this stuff. I am sorry. [sounds of tearing up] You know. Raw emotions…it really hurt.

Amanda’s experience was not too different. She asked herself questions too—comparing herself with the women that were matched:

> ‘Why would they want them and not me?` Like, ‘I’m this way and they’re this way.` I was like ‘what do they see in her?` And like once it was all over, and like on bid day you see who gets into what house…I’m like, ‘Really?’ and ‘she got into that house and like they dropped me.’

For her, the experience was so trying, she even questioned her decision to transfer to the university: “I transferred here to be a part of like the Greek life…I was like, well I’ll just transfer again and go somewhere else." Camille was the only other participant who mentioned that being unmatched made her also consider transferring: “Honestly at first I was so upset, like really upset ...I honestly, considered transferring schools, because I was just like I don’t know if this is the right place for me"

The experiences of the women indicated a lot of confusion about who they were, and what their value was going to be in their new environment. The descriptive words

used to communicate the emotions immediately after were fairly consistent—the experience was detrimental to the way participants felt about themselves. The non-event damaged their self-esteem.

Anxiety. In addition to diminished self-esteem immediately following the non-event, many participants experienced anxiety early in the semester. Some of this anxiety was a direct result of being unmatched in the bid round. The anxiety was broadly defined, but appeared to be related to either social, academic, or other factors depending on the person.

For Brittany, social anxiety was a prevalent impact from the non-event:

> I think sorority recruitment definitely had an impact on my ability to make friends in college. Um, I'm not the most outgoing person and I tend to hang out with guys more than girls. And so, I was kind of expecting, uh, sorority recruitment to help me with the making friends process.

Tracey agreed, suggesting that if she had been a part of a sorority her social life would have benefitted:

> I only made a few friends and you don't always see those friends all of the time of course your schedules don't always and you know. I was like if I was in a sorority I would have you know a lot more girlfriends and people to talk to.

Building off of their experiences, Brittany summarized her own: "I didn't know what I was going to do, I didn't know how I was going to make friends. I didn't know what I was going to do on campus." Interestingly, Amanda's experience was similar. She also suggested that not being in a sorority foiled her plans of how she thought she would make social connections: "I had to try a lot harder on my own to make friends. Like being in a sorority was just kinda gonna be my easy way to have friends because you have to be friends with each other."

This was amplified when times got tough for the women, or when they were experiencing other stressors. Tracey recalled instances where this was true, " if I were in a sorority I would have friends to be with right now. That was kind of, I would say, but that only kind of happened…earlier on in the semester"

For many women, it seemed that there was no escape from this anxiety, simply because of the sheer visibility of fraternity and sorority life in the university community. Camille recalled the continued reminder of the non-event, "Especially when you see like so many people at Midwestern are in Greek Life. Like you always see everyone wearing their sweatshirts." Regina contributed that while she was struggling to make friends early on in the semester with new groups of people, women in sororities did not appear to be, "Having to see everyone else be really happy that they were in a sorority and like enjoying themselves was like really hard for me."

Aside from the initial anxiety about addressing how a woman was going to make friends, participants also recalled how it was frustrating that the friends they made in recruitment (with women that were in or became a part of sororities) did not endure:

> It was nice to meet all those people, but like after rush, those people don't like keep up. Like if you see them walking past you on the street, some of them don't say hi, like they just kind of forget you. I might say, well 'I know that girl, she rushed me, ` but she doesn't remember me, really." (Regina)

For other women, like Brittany, this sort of thing was also disappointing or frustrating, "once bid day came and hit, um, people that I was friends with, that ended up being in sororities just kind of left." The women had anticipated that at least they would be able to maintain those relationships, and once they realized this was not the case, they became

uneasy. It ultimately contributed to further social anxiety, by reinforcing that because they were unmatched, they no longer could associate with women who did match.

An additional insight that brought along angst immediately after, was that this type of experience with recruitment directly impacted women in the classroom, bringing on anxiety in an unexpected space. Brittany shared:

> And so, I was—definitely had a harder time making friends. And then that transferred over to classes, like people—they know either--others in classes, and I'd be trying to find people to study with in classes and what not.

She continued, "Most of the people in my classes had links through their sororities and they weren't—they just sat in their little clusters of people they already know. And it was hard for me to find somewhere that I could fit in." In my field notes, I noted that this seemed particularly challenging to share, suggesting the experience may have been negatively resonant for Brittany.

Interestingly, Regina agreed, "like the first week of classes kind of I would like always notice girls with sorority stuff on and like always pay attention to that [in class], and then umm, I just kind of had to stop, because I knew that I was just upsetting myself " Tracey agreed, synthesizing that some of the anxiety she had in class could have been mitigated if only she had been matched in the bid round:

> They could help me with finals and all that because they have study rooms and they have them um oh what do they call it they have packets like binders with tests from last from previous students and things like that.

Ultimately, anxiety was triggered by a number of other factors. One factor noted by Tracey and other participants was that they "missed home" or "family." Several participants spoke about missing family even when they were just a short distance away.

Quotes from some of the participants synthesized how anxiety with being unmatched coupled with several other anxieties:

> You are leaving your family you know along with rush it is all just kind of like it is all thrown in your face and you are like, ‘ok I am not a part of a house. I just left my family. You know what do I do now? ` (Tracey).

Ultimately, Regina believed being matched to a sorority could have helped:

> I think some days when I would have like a really rough day like, when I didn’t do as good as I wanted to on a test, or like I just had a lot of homework, or like stuff to do—like if I was missing home or missing, my parents or something, then I would sometimes think like, oh ‘I really wish I was in a sorority so I could like talk to my sisters about this or talk to the house mom about this.`

Anxiety was present in many different areas during the immediate transition into college for participants. Their peaks and valleys timelines reflected this. Participants noted that the lowest point in their entire semester was always associated with “bid day” and “recruitment.” The participants’ experiences in the short-term reflected a somewhat negative experience—reporting perceived lower levels of comfort, satisfaction, and effectiveness that the timeline inquired about. As their quotations indicated, many of the early impacts they experienced in their adjustment were in some fashion amplified by being unmatched in the bid round.

Theme III: Resolution and acceptance of the situation. Eventually all of the participants shared that they felt they had (at least to a degree) come to accept and feel comfortable with the way the first semester following the non-event unfolded. Despite the rocky start to the semester following Panhellenic sorority recruitment, the women seemed to be doing relatively well. Their experiences had some striking similarities in the short-term, and ultimately acceptance did not come about until later in the semester. The

Peaks and Valley's timelines depicted a progressive increase in level of comfort, satisfaction and effectiveness as time progressed (with some brief dips for various personal reasons). Put simply, the road to acceptance looked very different for each woman (supported both through peaks and valleys timelines and participants' stories). This phrase underscores the primary premise of their process of acceptance—they came to the realization that their path was "just a different path" than the sorority experience they were anticipating they would have. Secondly, along the road to acceptance, it helped when some participants realized unexpected benefits that helped them rationalize and accept their satisfaction with not being matched.

A different path. Amanda described her first semester in a way that fully encapsulates this first subtheme in resolution and acceptance, "…you just like have to look elsewhere…it's *just a different path*, but it doesn't mean that it's not a good one." She expanded, "There are plenty of other ways to get involved and you can still meet a lot of people. And you can still have friends that are in the Greek [system}." Several other participants echoed Amanda's analysis. For example, because a sorority was not part of her experience, Camille concluded, "It like forced me to do other things, and put myself out there more than I maybe would have otherwise." She added: "I realized it wasn't the fact that it was a sorority that I really wanted to be a part of, it was just that I wanted to be a part of something." Similarly, Tracey contributed to the same idea, "you don't need to be in a sorority to make friends—you know to make it through college. You can do it on your own with the help of the [other] friends that you make and stuff like that." Tracey suggested that eventually she could be comfortable, "I got situated and got

comfortable in college and then I realized that I didn't need to be in a house to be comfortable." Further, Regina concisely indicated, "I know now that it's okay that I didn't get in."

For other participants, they may not have been explicit in saying that a sorority wasn't part of their path, but they realized some other important lessons about getting through the semester. Ultimately it too, was just a different path. As it related to being unmatched in the bid round:

> Everything doesn't necessarily turn out the way you expect it to, but the outcomes will umm, eventually like, you will find what you are supposed to do. And people...you will find the right people that will help support you through college and your future. (Brittany)

> I learned that you know you can't have everything that you want in life. And when you know when life knocks you down you can't stay down...and you can get yourself back up and you don't need, you don't always need what you think you need. What you think you want I guess. (Tracey)

With resonations of something that almost sounded like a cliché Rolling Stone song, the women concluded that they did not get what they initially wanted, but they found what they needed, in other ways.

On their "different path" some found something they felt was comparable to a sorority, and in many cases they felt it was better for them. Amanda for example offered, "I wanted like to be a part of Greek life to meet people but I did completely fine without it, probably better." Camille also concluded, "you can be busy and have activities and get a lot of the same social benefits. It doesn't have to be a sorority. And some of them can be a lot more fun than a sorority, and cheaper too (Laughs)." Camille continued: "everything worked out so well for me afterwards." Amanda referenced how she found a

different path and was satisfied because it lead her to finding resolve as time progressed, "I think it made me stronger and like tougher cause it is a hard process. And at least I have that closure and I know in the first time, first place I didn't."

Unexpected benefits. Some participants pointed to benefits that they had realized—benefits which helped them further resolve that being unmatched in the bid round was in fact, a good thing. One of these benefits was feeling free from having to adhere to some of the perceived stereotypes that frequently stigmatize sorority women:

> I've noticed now that a lot of the chapters now, that like go out. And I'm really glad that I have the ability to stay in and study if I need to as opposed to going out every night, so that's definitely one thing that I do not umm, necessarily miss. (Brittany).

Similarly, Regina suggested:

> I don't want to talk bad about them, but a lot of them are known for like that house, they go out and party every weekend, I don't know, it's just like not who I am, not like at all. So, just kind of that stereotype, it's kind of nice to not, now I'm realizing that it's kind of nice that I'm not associated with that I guess.

Amanda, alluded to another behavior that is commonly stereotyped in sororities:

> You're not sure if they're really your friends cause they wanna be your friend. Like you're just their friend cause you're in the same sorority. Like, the friends I have or am going to have I know it's because it's for me.

The women ultimately felt resolve in knowing that they did not fit these stereotypes, and used it as further justification for their acceptance of how their lives in the first semester turned out.

In addition to the benefit of feeling as though they did not have to assimilate to stereotypical sorority behavior, there were additional benefits the women mentioned:

> I'm also realizing that that would have been a lot of money. If I would have gotten into a sorority, it would have been a lot of money [and] that I would have

> just had more debt. Like, they do Monday night dinners, they have all of these requirements. (Regina)

Regina continued in another section, synthesizing her thoughts:

> I mean, it's money that I've saved, it's things that—it's time slots that I have open to go do stuff with my friends and to go to movies…I don't know it feels like a blessing in disguise I guess.

Tracey agreed with Regina's point about how not being a part of a sorority granted her more time, "it gave me more time to focus on what I want to do." After alluding to how other activities could be deemed more fun than a sorority, Camille briefly touched on cost as well, suggesting that other activities could be "cheaper [than a sorority] too."

In general, the peaks and valleys timeline was instrumental in selecting the theme of acceptance and resolve. Participants consistently denoted that after they hit the low point of recruitment, they, as Regina suggested, "got better." In other words after the low point of being unmatched, the way participants described and illustrated, their experience progressively began to improve. At no point on any woman's timeline did she return to a perceived low point that equaled or was reduced to their experience with sorority recruitment. This acted as an indication that the women truly felt that with time "life goes on" as Brittany suggested.

Theme IV: Coping strategies and support. While some of these were alluded to in other sections, participants mentioned that in order to get to a point where they could adequately accept their experiences, they took stock in certain resources and strategies. In some cases, participants described what was helpful about the strategies and resources. These strategies included but were not limited to: (1) Structured and Informal Campus

Engagements and Personal Activities, (2) Focusing on Academic Performance and Major Specific Planning, and (3) Utilization of Relational Support.

Structured and informal campus engagements and personal activities.

Participants who reported partaking in activities that they found to be both personally significant and that they felt invested in, were perceived as the most comfortable and confident in their adjustment to the non-event. Camille for example, indicated that she found a number of different Campus engagements and personal activities that were able to help her feel supported, ”I joined the waterski team, and I got two awesome jobs this semester. So, that was exciting." Camille continued:

> We practiced three or four days a week and then we had tournaments we would go to on the weekends, so I would be more busy and met a ton of new people and like I still kind of hang out with some of them, and like last year I really hung out with like two people and it was kind of a nice way for me to like branch out. And It was a ton of fun too (laughs).

In addition to her role on the waterski team, Camille discussed how when initially looking for ways to feel supported she was deliberate in searching for something special after the non-event:

> I was just like, okay, I’m not transferring, so I need to meet people and like make friends. So I like went and looked up a bunch of clubs online and like tried to find one that I thought would be a lot of fun, and I ended up joining the waterski team! So, I think that was the biggest thing that helped me.

Camille noted that she liked to have a "nice mix of school, fun and activities. Essentially if she was "busy and didn't notice" the impact of sorority recruitment as much, she felt better about her transition.

Amanda had an experience that was not unlike Camille. She was also engaged in a number of meaningful activities and stressed that because of the non-event she sought out opportunities to connect:

> It [sorority recruitment] pushed me to get out there on my own. I met a lot of new people and made friends and got involved in things that I love and want to put my time and effort towards.

Amanda persisted emphasizing that these engagements and others, like an intramural team and her residence hall floor were helpful because they enabled her to start "just meeting a lot of new people" thus, "making a lot more friends." In addition to the formal organizations, both Amanda and Camille mentioned that they enjoy staying busy and liked having a number of engagements to serve their needs.

The other three participants, also had a variety of engagements and personal activities that helped them feel supported following the non-event. Many of these were informal, but several that they each mentioned were structured. It was noted however that the investment they each had in these structured engagements was notably less than the other two participants. Brittany for example, was a part of a student organization called "med-life" and the Midwestern University Student Alumni Association. Describing her involvement with med-life in her own words she stated, "I'm in med-life, which I'm not that active in right now." When describing her involvement with the Student Alumni Association, she similarly mentioned, "I don't do much with that."

Regina discussed that she was also engaged with a number of activities, but conveyed that she was "not really in like as many activities as I would like to be in." She noted that it makes her content and that she always really happy when she keeps thing

simple. She commented, “well, I don’t feel like I do that much, I kind of just like to chill with my friends." She highlighted that she enjoyed going to the movies, like “Catching Fire”, and catching “football games” in the fall. In addition, with regard to the honors program she was engaged with, or the volunteering she did judging her high school debate team, each was an undertaking that was a positive coping strategy for her.

Finally, Tracey noted her participation in structured campus engagements:

> I didn’t really get involved. I am kind of punching myself for that. Because you know since I did sing I was debating trying out for that, they are called the [group name]…the accapella group. But I didn’t and I am kind of wishing I would have.

On another note however, Tracey did mention that she “exercises daily” at the campus recreation center. She said that during high points in her semester she could attribute some of it to “going to the rec daily.”

Even though Brittany, Tracey and Regina’s degree of investment in structured campus engagements was minimal or in some cases non-existent, participants still found that participation in these was helpful in allowing them to adjust to the non-event. Brittany noted that even with a minimal degree of involvement, the simple reality that she at least had the option was helpful, “It’s just nice to know that there are groups I can join and contribute to, even though I’m not in a sorority, now.” Regina contributed, suggesting that having the honors program and peer mentor program is “nice to keep your mind off of it.” And that “It’s helpful to have something else to do...so, that was kind of fun.” Finally, Tracey saw benefits in having a structured activity as simple as going to the Recreation Center for her coping process, “I work out daily and I think that helps because it releases endorphins and all that.”

Participants continually realized throughout the course of the semester that there were certain structured (and informal) activities and engagements that could help them with their transition. Ultimately, many of the students mentioned activities that they had either recently been invited to be a part of, or were planning on applying for, “There are also other clubs and activities that I’m gonna be applying for, like coming up soon, that I can help, so like...[the on campus mentoring program]... And then internships and just like jobs coming up for the summer....and R.A” (Amanda). Regarding a volunteer opportunity she would like to pursue in the future Regina shared, "but that seems like something that would be a really great opportunity to get to know a really close-knit group of people and umm, work with kids...because I love working with kids, so, that would be fun.” Camille also had a number of opportunities on the horizon, one of which was an on campus job that she was excited about:

> I wasn’t really sure what I wanted to do next summer, so one of my friends that I met on the water ski team was an NSE leader two years ago and she talked about how much fun it was, so I applied for that ...I ended up getting it! So, that was really exciting too!

These were simply one avenue some of the participants took to cope through and ease the transition following the non-event. There were a number of other ways participants managed the transition.

Focusing on academic performance, major specific planning and career attainment. Some of the participants found that a heavy focus on studies and finding ways to get good grades, or improve academic satisfaction and academically related experiences was also a helpful coping strategy.

Camille, mentioned what was helpful for her, “the biggest thing that just helped me through it was like, one being busy, classes starting right up and stuff.” She was afforded an incredible opportunity to advance her academic interests, when she received a job that was related to her major. She discussed how it could help advance her future career:

> I’m a Music Ed. major, so one of my professors was telling me about how they got an endowment for three years to start a youth choir, and they were looking for somebody that would be available to be there for all three years. So, I applied for that, and got an interview and ended up getting it. So, it is just an awesome opportunity, it will look awesome on a resume and it’s really fun.

Brittany discussed how opportunities that would advance her academic interests were impactful, “it’s a nice umm, group to connect with in like the community, from like a health aspect, because I’m thinking of going pre-med still. So, that's nice to make connections with that---with people who have similar [academic] interests.” Ultimately, these types of activities that were academic focused, and looked specifically at advancing students’ careers and major related goals were helpful for some.

Many students also benefitted from focusing on academically related performance. Several students described highpoints in their Peaks and Valley’s timelines to be associated with their performance in the classroom. Brittany in particular had several high points associated with academic success: ”[I experienced] excitement because I figured out how to study… uh I got better grades than umm, I had in the past and so those were definitely great." She also mentioned meeting with an advisor about changing her major: “[my] advisor helped me cause I’m trying to figure out to change my major” While this brought on a significant amount of stress for her, once it was resolved,

it was very helpful in moving her through her transition. Brittany also continued to mention the importance of finding people who could help her succeed in class. Different from other relational support, these people were strategically needed to help her succeed academically. She noted high points with some of these people: "I had professors that I could not understand anything that they were teaching. And so I made, uh, friends that helped me learn to study, and figure out what I was doing in that class."

Regina also noted academic related needs: "I visited the office, the Career Center." But above all, she suggested what really helped her was: "taking general classes… and [doing] well right off the bat." In a somewhat reflective answer she suggested that if she were to do it over again, or were to make a suggestion to another person, what would have been helpful was to: "Just focus on academics and work really hard at that." She said: take classes that they are really going to enjoy, umm, that might be towards their major or might be something fun to do." She concluded, by explaining what her plans were and how she thought it would benefit her, "I think I'm going to be a lot happier with my [second] semester, because I'm taking classes that I'm going to like." Tracey also mentioned something that was occurring when academics were going well, "[The] end of the semester was pretty good because I ended up with good grades…I was ahead in my studies or on time in my studies." Making academic needs a priority or at least a focus was identified as being helpful to the participants.

Utilization of relational support. Across the board, one coping strategy that every participant mentioned and cited as helpful was relationships. Relationships were unique

for each person, but were most heavily concentrated into three basic groups: (1) Family, (2) Friends, and (3) various other notable relationships.

The first significant group was family. Regina shared, " I just like paid attention to the good things and realized I had good things with my … my family." She continued, "I had like Face-timed my family and like my dogs and talked to them"

Specific family members became more relevant as women began discussing their relationships in greater detail and how those individuals helped them through the non-event. Amanda, mentioned her relationship with her brother. She suggested he was extremely helpful following the non-event:

> And he was the president of his fraternity, here at Lincoln. And so that was obviously one of the reasons why I wanted to be in one cuz I was like my brother's in one, I wanna be in one. It's kind of a family thing. Um, he I wanted to like be in a good house like on on campus. Good house, so um. 'Like to make him proud and just like be like I got into a good house too, cuz he was in a good house. Um. And he really enjoyed his like Greek experience. So I wanted to be apart of that too. And so we would talk about it like I would talk to him about it all the time in the summer, and be like okay what about this house, what about this house. I was like what do I need to do during recruitment week. Um he like helped me fill out my application and then when I didn't in, like he was one of the first per--people that I called. I was just like crying. And then he actually came around and said things like, he's like actually he's like I'm kin-- I'm glad he's like it's a good thing you didn't get in one. He's like I figured it'd be a big distraction for you anyway. Um, he's like I didn't want you getting off course with things like your faith and with your relig-with your school work. And h-he's like even though, he's like even though I was in mine or he was in his that sometimes his best friends weren't even in his fraternity. That his best friends were in other clubs, and stuff.

Regina also discussed her brother, "...my brother came up for the [college football] game actually and that was super fun."

While brothers were particularly helpful to some women, other participants mainly mentioned their parents. Brittany, discussed her interactions with her mom, "And

so, she was supportive during all of that and then she is still supportive in college, because she's like great." Regina agreed, saying her mom was also supportive: "my mom helped me through it the most."

Family was particularly helpful in controlling the damage immediately after the non-event, "[I] called my mom the night before and was like really upset. So, she actually came to MU on the Saturday and brought my dog to spend time with me so that was really nice" (Regina). Brittany had a similar story to Regina, "my mom came up and just like tried to hang out with me. We went shopping just to like keep my mind off of it. Tracey also mentioned a parent, but instead relied upon her father for the fall out immediately after: "He said you know I am proud of you either way. You know [you] are doing really well either way, you don't need to be in a sorority to achieve… good things." She continued, discussing her dad's helpfulness and support, "He just let me know he said Tracey you know whatever you choose to do in life, I am going to be proud of you for…they still accepted me."

Camille also mentioned that her mom, who was not in a sorority was also supportive, "my mom just kind of talked me through it…it helped that my mom was not in a sorority and is not very pro sorority." This indicated that regardless of parental approval of the recruitment process or not, they were supportive regardless following the emotional non-event. Participants relied upon family throughout the semester, not exclusively in the short-term after the non-event.

Friends were the second group that consistently provided relational support to the participants. Brittany shared about how her closest friends were pillars of support for her,

"Because we were [a] little bit the mess the first two or three days. So they were just there to keep us sane, and then help us the rest of the semester with cla-classes and everything." When asked to elaborate on which specific friends, and what roles they might have had in her life, Brittany embellished, "Just like my top friends." These were people that she felt she had previously established relationships with, as opposed to newer friends.

Interestingly, many participants found friends to be helpful, but the most helpful friends mentioned were those that could relate to the experience of the women. Amanda stated:

> Um, and then actually when I didn't get in, one of my friends, she like she talked to me about it and stuff and she had similar experience cause she just, she graduated now, but she had [a] similar experience and so just like talking to her was nice and was helpful she like helped me get through it and everything.

Brittany shared the same sentiment, "my friend [blank] actually went through recruitment with me, and we both ended up not being receiving bids. And, so that was definitely, um, helpful to have somebody going through the same situation as I was." She continued:

> Cause we were both going through college totally different than what we expected. So we got to know—like the different aspects of this is not what we expected. Here's how we're gonna change this, and figure out what we're gonna do now.

On a related note, Camille also highlighted a relationship with someone who had endured the same experience, "It helped that my friend and I both didn't get in. So it helped dramatically to have somebody there to vent to about how unfair it is." This subject of having someone who had undergone the same experience was common for other participants too, and many times that person was their roommate. Tracey discussed how

her roommate who went through a similar experience was able to help her feel supported, “my roommate and I are pretty close. She also went through rush and didn’t join." Further elaborating, she later commented: "my roommate and I were both in the same boat so I would say we kind of had each other since of course we were with each other all the time."

Regina discussed her relationship with her roommate in general, who was a woman who did not share in the common experience of the non-event, “I have a really good relationship with my roommate and her best friend from high school is also here. They were both from [out of state]." She elaborated, "that relationship, it is very comfortable to be in our room and stuff, and I know there are a lot of people who don’t have that in their first year of college." Regina was correct when she mentioned that some students don’t feel the luxury of having a roommate whom they could garner support from in the semester following the non-event. Brittany for example, struggled with having a roommate that received a bid from a sorority, “my roommate did receive a bid, so that was a little bit challenging." Interestingly, the women who did comment that their roommate was helpful, also identified that their roommates were not in a sorority, or went through the same non-event.

Finally, participants mentioned other supportive people that were not necessarily close friends, roommates or family. Two participants also identified their Rho Gamma (Recruitment Guide) as a person that offered relational support Tracey indicated, “I guess my Rho Gam did, you know tell me that it is nothing and ‘don’t bring it upon yourself’.” Similarly, Amanda said that she and her Rho Gamma became friends.

Brittany and Regina both mentioned an advisor of some sort. They suggested that an advisor either helped them with school related questions, or helped them seek out different resources on campus. These included academic advisement and career advisement as indicated previously.

Ultimately, relational support helped ease the transition and to boost the morale of the participants following the non-event and throughout the semester: "They talked to me about like…how there is always next year and you are a really great person, and don't let it get you down that much type of thing" (Regina). Brittany suggested that relationships were helpful for them to "just be[ing] there for support and encouragement." Amanda contributed further:

> Just like feeling appreciated, and like people were actually like people actually liked me, like friends liked me and stuff. And it was like, it' s like yeah even though the Greek people didn't want me in their house there were still other people that like want me to be their friend. So that's just like a reassurance.

Relational support was a significant coping strategy that eased the negative impacts of the transition.

Theme V: The deep unresolved. The deep unresolved, this referred to participants' experiences that were "deep" into, or in the later weeks of their semester. While they for the most part had accepted their situation, several participants acknowledged that there were elements of the experience that they had not found complete harmony with. Three subthemes formed the basis of the deep unresolved: (1) Lingering questions, (2) Clarity of rules, options and justification, and (3) Persisting academic challenges.

Lingering questions. Although solidified in their roles on campus and comfortable with who they had become, some of the women could not help wondering, what could have been, or what life could have been like in a sorority. Tracey spoke the most frequently and freely about this:

> In the long run I still kinda in the back of my head what if you were…you know there is still always in the back of your head what if I were a [Omit sorority name} who would I have met? Did I miss opportunities? There is just that what if question.

Amanda, despite having a very comfortable role on campus, also mentioned a similar experience, "Like Honestly, I'm ok with everything, but looking back, I like wonder…" Finally Camille, who also had a vibrant sophomore year, shared a sentiment. But it was raised in more of a question of mystery as opposed to regret, "it ended up for the best, but still it's just like, 'I wish I could have done that?'"

Clarity of rules and knowledge of options would have provided justification. The participants recalled that despite their resolve in their role, they were still confused about rules and their understanding about what led them to be unmatched. The participants cited, both examples of things that would have been helpful to know, as well as some suggestions for concepts that needed further clarification.

One thing the women felt unresolved about, was general rules in the formal sorority recruitment process. Brittany reflected on her experience and the ambiguity of rules she wanted clarity for:

> I think that's like another factor I guess, that makes it really hard, is knowing and understanding all of these specific little rules and like, they don't tell you a lot until after, but like a lot of the house have different sets of rules, or like they tell you they do.

Tracey agreed when she suggested that for some of the complex rules, a better "explanation maybe would have been reassuring." Camille also said that she thought Midwestern University had strange rules, that she assumed were unique only to their campus, "MU has like weird rules, if you preference all of the houses that you went to you automatically get into one of them." Building off of some of these ideas, Regina reflected again, suggesting certain terminology was unfamiliar and therefore hard to be informed about:

> And so they don't tell you some rules. And then, I don't know, It just felt like that all week. All of the girls were just like asking all of these questions, like 'what's playing fair?' and 'Why do you have to go to all of the parties and stuff?` There are just a lot of rules that are confusing.

One further ambiguity that the participants still had no resolve from was the Continuous Open Recruitment (COR or COB) process. Brittany reflected on something she needed with regard to a COR explanation:

> Someone to explain what I could do in the future to join a sorority [would have been helpful], because I know that there is umm, open recruitment but there wasn't much information provided about that initially. And, knowing about it probably would have helped me, make a decision in that aspect.

Amanda had a similar recollection of COR as she discussed a previous conversation that she had with a chapter member:

> She started kind of explaining about 'Well there are certain houses that will take people, if you wanna come, and be in those houses.' But, um, they just, I was really confused, like I didn't think they did a good job of explaining it.

She continued: " I wanted to know like well what houses are they gonna be, but they like wouldn't tell me. I was like well if it's this house, then I not gonna come. That kinda thing. " Camille shared a story of her COR experience as well, which ultimately slowed

her transition by building up her hopes and expectations that the non-event was not permanent:

> I actually got a call from like one of my favorite houses that they were adding three more spots and that they were doing open recruitment [COB] and they invited me to come to something. This was towards the beginning of the year, it was like a couple of weeks after. And so, I like went and never received any more information about it. And so, I like e-mailed the girl that had emailed me about it and was like if I haven't heard anything does that mean that I just like don't get invited back? And she said, 'everyone gets invited back for a second thing. We will let you know when that happens. ` And I was thinking okay. Then, I hadn't heard anything in a couple weeks and so I e-mailed her again and she was like 'oh sorry the spots have been filled. ` I was like really?!

She synthesized meaning from the experience wishing they (the sorority) had been more transparent: "I wish that people had really told you, you might not get in (at the very beginning)."

Clearly there were many unresolved questions that impacted the women's overall experience after the non-event. Participants felt clarification of these rules, processes and an ample justification of their release would have been beneficial.

Overall, the impact of the non-event became clear through the stories of the participants. Each individual's story was unique, yet their experiences shared some commonalities. The impact was most significant in the short-term, but did carry over in other facets of the participants' lives over the course of the semester.

Chapter 5

Discussions

Purpose Statement and Analysis:

The primary purpose of this case study was to explore the impact of the formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment process on former potential new members (PNM's) who were not matched in the bid round. The experiences of the participants of this case study were both complex and personal; yet, the themes that emerged from their shared experience in the context of sorority recruitment were somewhat simple. These are not themes that should be generalized to other students or contexts. The themes essentially described the experiences of women who sought a positive collegiate experience. This was not unlike many other students in higher education, only their experience began with a low-point of gloom that most students never have to experience. Ultimately what these women found was something that sharply contrasted from what they expected. This contrast in expectation had an impact on the participants in the semester following.

For the participants of this study, all sought to be a member of a Panhellenic sorority. Each formed unique personal motivations for wanting to join. Their participation in the recruitment process was an indication of their commitment to fulfilling their intentions and aims for an enjoyable collegiate experience—a journey that they believed would be realized through membership in a sorority.

The participants of this study sought membership in sororities for reasons that did not stray far from the ordinary. They held assumptions about membership in sororities that would afford them with a variety of social, academic, and various other advantages

that forge the quintessential collegiate experience (Fouts, 2010; Pike, 2000). In essence their assumptions socially constructed a reality about sorority life in the young women's lives—it was the most important gateway into the best collegiate experience possible. For any motivated student, it is not uncommon that these assumptions create a common draw for participation in the sorority recruitment process.

In congruence with these core assumptions and anticipated benefits from sorority membership, participants established expectations both months before and throughout the sorority recruitment process. Validation from friends and family, mental preparations developed through formal applications and planning, and complete immersion in the week of activities contributed to the "buildup" of these high expectations. Participants recalled how they felt as though they were already a part of a sorority throughout the process, before decisions regarding membership were finalized.

Participants noted how the recruitment week was a significant builder of expectations, and participation in the conversations, and processes was the culmination of creating those expectations. Scheibel, Gibson and Anderson's (2002), noted the conversations in this process are rehearsed and inauthentic. The use of such mockery reproduces "the hierarchic divisions and social tensions between organizational members and non-members" (p. 231). Further, "mockery may serve to engender a "positive" attitude toward the impending organizational activities" (231). Many of my participants described the recruitment activities as overwhelming at times, but overall their sentiments were that recruitment was fun. The conversations, validation and process throughout sorority recruitment lead to the establishment of expectations and anticipation about how

great sorority life would be. At no point did any participant contemplate the possibility of having their socially reinforced expectations unfulfilled.

Shocked and devastated—these sentiments were uniform of the participants and were a direct result of undelivered expectations. Ultimately the women described their experience with the recruitment process in a way that reflected the establishment of conditions necessary for a non-event to occur (Schlossberg, 1995) and invoked an additional transition to supplement their natural transition into the semester. The buildup preceding this non-event was a significant theme for the participants in that it ultimately amplified the impact of the non-event.

The devastation of all of the participants of this study was striking. It suggests that the women assigned tremendous value to the organizations from whom they did not receive invitations to join. The process of joining a sorority is ultimately a mutual-selection process, but the competitive dimension to the process and theme of selection breeds an inherent belief in the idea that these organizations are highly selective and therefore elitist. Naturally, participants socially constructed value in sororities, as they perceived them to be comprised of members who were exceptional. The participants noted how women in sororities are consistently "gorgeous" and "smart" and have impeccable social lives in the context of the collegiate environment. These findings reflected research done by Rolnik, Engeln-Maddox and Miller (2010), who looked at perceptions of self-objectification and body image. A woman (like Tracey) who was excluded from this process, could not help but question her own value within these same constructs:

> Like I said I was—my self-confidence was really, really hurt. Like, I cried a lot during rush because, I don't know—the girls are all, I don't know… I feel like all the girls in sororities are super gorgeous. Like it was like. What does this mean? Am I not pretty enough? Am I not skinny enough? You know all this stuff. I am sorry.

While the reality is that the highly coveted social organizations and the exclusive process did not intentionally exclude these women, intent of the system that held the power was insignificant to the marginalized. Because participants held sororities in high esteem, the non-event created a significant impact for the participants. After assigning tremendous, personal value to a social group that they believed they were worthy of joining, (amplified by buildup) exclusion from this activity was damaging for them. Further, the ability of the organizations to unintentionally exclude individuals from participation further reinforces the power and privilege that these historically significant organizations possess. Following the conclusion of sorority recruitment these organizations continue to thrive without the slightest of a stumble, while unmatched PNM's are not afforded the same luxury.

Immediately following the non-event the participants felt emotionally crushed. All participants reported diminished self-esteem, and/or self-confidence. This finding was consistent with the findings of Chapman, Hirt and Spruill (2008) and Atlas and Morrier (1994) as anticipated, but was supplemented with rich thick description of participants' experiences.

This reported knock to self was complemented by significant anxiety that was directly attributed to the non-event, something previous literature was unable to attribute or connect to. When analyzing the impact of these event-triggered tribulations,

participants' immediate experiences were muddled further by the general transition of starting a new semester in college. For some of the participants, it was the first time they would be away from home. They were forced to juggle the challenges associated with making new friends, missing family and significant academic-related challenges amidst their transition following the non-event.

Unfortunately, the participants were not afforded the opportunity to hit pause on the other experiences in their lives. For example, participants mentioned the high visibility of sorority membership in every facet of campus life, including classes. Therefore, participants were forced to simultaneously manage the difficulties brought on by these distinct confounding transitional challenges, all in isolation, without the support that a sorority would have afforded. Further, unlike their peers who were starting out their semester on a high-point as they managed the coping process through their own transition (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1967), unmatched PNM's are forced to manage the same transition, only they must do so with a deflated view of themselves. Essentially participants were tasked with resurrecting a new conception of what their first-semester experience would entail, while doing so from a mental/emotional place of defeat and personal pessimism.

I identify this as perhaps the most vulnerable point in an unmatched woman's experience, where she is vulnerable to influences that can inhibit persistence and she may potentially be managing the transition without adequate support. Elkins, Braxton and James (2000) and Tinto (1993) noted that students who do not feel supported and that they do not belong in the environment are vulnerable to departure. Two participants in

this study mentioned that they felt susceptible to pressures to transfer. This highlighted the critical necessity for support for these students. Had they not found adequate support, perhaps their futures would have looked tremendously different.

The most defining moment or series of moments for these students was when they overcame some of these early challenges and ultimately came to realize resolution and acceptance of their situation. Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) research reflected the findings of this study, where their participants also reached a point of acceptance in their first-semester transitions. This theme of acceptance was particularly important in the experience of my participants. After managing the simultaneous and confounding transitions, when coupled with non-event triggered anxiety and a significant deflation of their self-esteem, it was reassuring to know that these women could persevere and find resolution despite the cards being stacked against them.

This was indicative, that despite the assumption that fraternity and sorority life were the dominant activity and social pathway that students take, it is not the only path to a satisfying and rewarding collegiate experience. The participants naturally corrected their own misperceptions that the exclusive sorority community was the ultimate measure of value for a woman. Consistent with the research of Osanna (1992) and Miller (1976) participants, found other ways to independently seek out and cultivate meaningful relationships and activities. This was reassuring, considering that early on much of their conception of self and assignment of value was attributed to being unmatched by a sorority. This meant that the women realized they were adequate and adept, despite the non-event.

This unexpected realization was liberating for participants. It seemed to allow them to test the limits of social stereotype and breakthrough the restrictive roles and stigmas that are frequently placed on sorority women—by realizing that they were free to write their own story in college. This acceptance is reassuring. It speaks to the resilience of these incredible women, and that they could move beyond the restriction of roles to define their identity (Josselson, 1987). After placing such incredible value in the role of membership in their own self-esteem and worth early on, the participants paradoxically acknowledged that sorority membership was actually restrictive to their potential and non-essential to the collegiate experience.

Participants did not point exclusively to their own tenacity to enable them to find acceptance, in fact, they pointed to several critical support factors. Consistent with Schlossberg's (1995) research regarding transitions, participants took stock of coping resources to help manage their transition(s). Among these resources, the participants took stock mostly of coping strategies and social support (relational support).

In the form of coping strategies, participants tended to focus on getting involved, working, or on other hobbies and activities. These were suggested to be helpful tools in keeping participants busy and keeping their minds off of the fact that they were not in a sorority. It also served as an avenue that appeared to allow them to find a different path, ultimately realizing that a sorority was not the exclusive means of social satisfaction. This was also consistent with the positive factors associated with involvements as noted by Astin (1993).

Ultimately however, by taking stock in these types of resources, it appeared participants were able to alter the "post-transition environments" (Schlossberg, 1995) by making it more conducive to their adjustment. Participants initially mentioned that they were uncertain how they would satisfy certain needs that they expected sorority membership would meet. It seemed the majority of coping resources participants identified were a direct solution for some of the social and academic anxieties that they mentioned following the non-event. Participants identified structured and informal campus engagements and personal activities as helpful in meeting needs and demands of social belonging and boosting their self-esteem. Similarly, focusing on academic performance, major specific planning and career attainment were coping resources that were adopted in direct response to managing the academic anxiety of participants.

Despite all of the participants' acceptance of their roles, two of the five participants appeared to be visibly more confident in the path they had chosen. Both were the sophomores and communicated that they had found activities that appeared to be consistent with what Astin (1993) described as meaningful involvements. The reflections of the sophomore participants were integrated in deeper engagement in these types of experiences, and their stories conveyed confidence in who they had become, to a more significant degree than the other three participants.

Perhaps the most significant and cross-functional coping strategy was the utilization of relational support. Consistent with the research by Schlossberg (1995) who identified social support as one of the factors that aided in transition coping abilities, relational support (family, friends, campus professionals and other relational support) was

identified as helpful in supporting participants through the transition. Participants seemed to identify this coping strategy as a source of positive affirmation, and a resource for helping them restore self-efficacy, worth and value periodically through out the semester after these dimensions of their identity had been damaged. It appeared that as a result of their relationships, participants were able to raise their self-esteem and make connections with people that could help reduce their anxiety. Relational support also helped participants to find new roles on campus, discover new pathways to success, succeed academically and restore their faith in their overall collegiate experience.

It appeared that participants had a number of unresolved issues deep in their experience. While these unresolved issues carried a minimal influence in the late weeks of the semester, they were suggestive that the non-event was still impactful late in the semester. Participants still wondered what life would be like had they been in a sorority. This does not mean that they viewed their different path as an inferior one, but it reinforced the prevalence of sororities at Midwestern University, and that their presence was still occasionally sensed.

How could the participants, while fully integrated into their new roles, still feel the draw to wonder about the experience of being in a sorority? This raised questions as to what degree the women actually felt integrated and if the impact was more significant than they reported. Was the draw they were feeling superficial, or was it resonant of a deeper intrinsic pull towards sorority life? This idea that sorority presence was systemically significant enough to impose on the decisions of integrated women, further

reinforced the perceived value that the campus community and our collective society placed on sorority membership.

The participants mentioned they felt unresolved about the clarity of rules and options associated with Panhellenic sorority recruitment. Indeed, the process of Panhellenic sorority recruitment is extremely complex, and is engrained in over a century of context, history and adjustments (Adventure in Friendship, 2009). The participants essentially found that the complicated rules made it difficult for them to make informed decisions throughout sorority recruitment, and into the semester during possible COR. This deep unresolved understanding of the recruitment seemed to foster an illusion of a non-transparent process. Participants seemed to have a hard time finding comfort with the idea that they placed their experience in the hands of a group that was never forthcoming in providing them with answers and justifications as to why they were unmatched. This lack of understanding and ambiguity of both process and procedure may not have enabled women to come to complete resolve with their integration. How could the participants fully feel resolve and acceptance, if they were never provided with an adequate justification of their release? The participants' recollection of the procedures and guidelines made me question their actual acceptance of their circumstances and their role.

Implications for Student Affairs

The data paints an illustration of a process that screams of acceptance and happiness for the majority, but a defeating and catastrophic impact for the participants of this study. The implications for practice in a profession which predicates itself on attending to the needs of the marginalized are numerous and significant. It should be

recalled that the evolution of the Release Figure Methodology has significantly increased the number of PNM's that are matched in the bid round, and that steps have been made to correct some of the prior faults of an inherently flawed system. Despite these corrections, there are still adjustments that need to be made if the sorority recruitment process hopes to serve the needs of all women, equally.

This study has implications for evaluating the timing of panhellenic membership recruitment. There is no denying that holding a fall recruitment benefits women who are matched. It allows new members to fully integrate with a chapter at the beginning of the semester, thus exposing them to the assistance of a structured social group and a meaningful involvement from the onset of their experience (Astin, 1993). Conversely, a deferred membership recruitment cycle would impose benefits to all potential new members. Whereas a fall recruitment cycle leaves unmatched women vulnerable to diminished self-esteem and anxiety brought on by being unmatched, a deferred recruitment model would allow PNM's to establish preexisting roles and support structures that may enable them to manage the transition of a non-event more smoothly. A fall membership recruitment period, as this study indicated, forces unmatched women to grapple with a transition (the newness of the college environment) and the non-event simultaneously.

Implications also extend to establishing mechanisms that allow PNM's manage their expectations throughout the recruitment process. Many PNM's at Midwestern University had never contemplated the idea that they might be unmatched in the bid round. As a result they held high expectations that were built up, maintained and

ultimately left unfulfilled. This amplified the impact of being unmatched. By utilizing strategies like pre and post-event reflection throughout the week, perhaps professionals can create the intentional circumstances that enable PNM's to reflect on the possibility of having their expectations unfulfilled. Jahansouz (2010) implemented such reflections for PNM's in formal panhellenic recruitment and found tremendous success.

Additionally, the study has implications for the communication of rules and options to PNM's during the recruitment process. Because many of the participants noted ambiguity in the rules and choices, this indicated that campus professionals must be intentional in communicating these guidelines and procedures throughout the recruitment process. This can be accomplished by adequately training recruitment guides to accurately convey rules and dispose myths about the membership recruitment.

Not only, must professionals entrust their recruitment guides to provide timely feedback throughout the priority ranking and preferencing rounds, but they can also alleviate some of the post-non-event anxiety by providing the unmatched with adequate information about Continuous Open Recruitment activities and explanations of their options. Perhaps personalized meetings or question and answer sessions should be scheduled immediately following the non-event. Such resources can help to build understanding of the next steps after a woman has been unmatched, and can provide them with an additional resource following membership recruitment.

In addition, proper recording of chapter activities, and structured COR can alleviate any potential woes, from failed communication or unclear expectations in the unstructured recruitment period following the formal process. Stemming from this,

fraternity and sorority life professionals can do mid-semester check-ins to offer additional support to those impacted by the non-event.

Participants consistently noted that relational support coming from women who had gone through a similar experience, was helpful. Perhaps the forming of post-recruitment support groups would be a helpful resource for the unmatched. Such a support group would help them establish relationships with women who endured the non-event, are undergoing the same transitions, and are seeking support. Although such a group could be unfairly stigmatized, the benefits of a collection of women could be advantageous in helping women cope with the transition. Additionally, roommate pairings should be carefully examined, as this relationship posits limitless potential in exposing women to a positive coping resource, or a potentially harmful one.

In general, the fact that structured and informal campus engagements and personal activities were identified by participants as helpful coping resources, maximizing the exposure to and the adoption of these activities is essential for helping these women avoid possible departure behaviors. Establishment of and exposure to these coping resources early on is likely to relieve some of the initial anxiety and self-esteem distress that transpires immediately following the non-event. Further, such resources may also enable students to find acceptance earlier in the semester following the non-event. Their acceptance could reduce the likelihood of departure and can facilitate persistence.

Finally, the implications for practice may have roots that are deeply engrained in countering the culture of elitism associated with Greek membership. Communicating a message to incoming students and prospective Greek students that fraternity and sorority

life are not the exclusive path to a positive experience in college might facilitate the beginnings of this institutional change. While campus professionals should promote these meaningful activities and at the same time communicate a balanced message about these organizations.

Perhaps collaborative recruitment efforts between Greek Affairs and Student Activities departments could aim to capture the importance of being a part of some social group at a university, as opposed to specific recruitment efforts that further reinforce the exclusiveness of fraternity and sorority membership. Presenting prospective Greek members with an array of Greek and non-Greek options may more accurately portray the image of these organizations, thus reducing prospective members' perceived social dependence on fraternity and sorority life. Communicating this message would not only aim to correct the elitist lens that exists in society, but also may contribute to a more positive perception among non-Greek members.

It should be noted that while seemingly advantageous, such an effort would face scrutiny in the fraternity and sorority community as membership recruitment is the life-blood of these organizations. Such an effort would request that these privileged organizations strive to reduce their position of power, an undertaking many are unlikely to pursue.

Future Research

The results of this study added to a growing body of literature regarding the impact of sorority recruitment on participants. Dissimilarly however, it explored the impact on women who were unmatched in the bid round, through epistemological

assumptions that reality is socially constructed and that a qualitative voice was the only way to accurately understand their experience. This study focused exclusively on the experience of unmatched PNM's at Midwestern University.

Future research could expand exploration of the non-event's impact on the immediate semester experience of unmatched women at other institutions. Additionally, all participants identified as white females. Future research could be expanded to include more racial and ethnic diversity. This research could be replicated longitudinally to track impact beyond the immediate semester. Such research could assess the draw of the lingering questions and participants commitment to the different path they chose. This research could explore if women felt a significant lingering draw to sorority life that was so enticing that they might participate in recruitment again later on. In addition, periodic interviews tracking impact at multiple points over the course of the semester could be executed to add depth as opposed to one extensive interview recalling impact over the duration of the semester. Perhaps future research might encourage participant to use a journal to connect their actual feelings in real time throughout the course of the study.

While there has been previous literature exploring the impact of the non-event on unmatched PNM's quantitatively, these methods could be expanded. Periodic Likert scale surveys might evaluate participant's adjustment, resiliency and various other factors over the course of the semester, both longitudinally and in the short-term. This data could then be paired with qualitative approaches and mixed methods to explore a more comprehensive analysis of the experience.

Assessing a complex and highly personal experience like impact cannot be adequately conveyed without personal stories and voices. However, quantifying participant experiences may create the opportunity for comparative data. A quantitative measure of unmatched participant experience could be used to evaluate the impact in different contexts, including campuses, recruitment cycles and other ecological factors.

Conclusion

The formal Panhellenic recruitment process holds roots that date back for over a century. It poses potential benefits to participants in a number of different roles—chapters, campus professionals, advisors, and matched PNM's are among these. This study highlighted the experiences of participants who endured a vulnerable transition. It told the story of women who placed their college experience in the hands of the formal Panhellenic recruitment process and the prospect of being mutually selected. Unfortunately, they were not selected, and the impact was significant.

Many proponents of the formal Panhellenic sorority recruitment process will contest that being unmatched was preventable. These women's exclusion from the membership was a product of the participants' choice to not maximize their options. If they had only maximized their options, the process could have ensured them a place in the community. In reality, these women exercised the only decision that they could control, and their withdrawal from one organization did not lessen the impact of being unmatched by two, or even one other. Through a perception of subjective decision making and hidden, ambiguous rules, the participants placed a portion of the most significant transition of their lives in the hands of statistics and the Release Figures

Methodology. These women played their odds and lost…temporarily. Their self-esteem was crushed…in the short-term. The non-event brought on anxiety…momentarily and it caused them to view themselves as a complete failure, although they did nothing to be labeled as such.

Despite the short-term impact, these women did win over the course of the semester. The unmatched PNM's overcame one of the most seemingly self-deprecating events in their lives during a period where they were particularly vulnerable. Yet they found their path. These participants are some of the most resilient and worthy individuals I have ever met. With time they found their self-confidence, and found a way to succeed. The impact of the non-event was temporary, and fleeting. Their stories will not be.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

Gregory Golden
Department of Educational Administration

Debra Mullen
Department of Educational Administration
239 MABL, UNL, 68588-0234

IRB Number: 20140114030 EX
Project ID: 14030
Project Title: Impact of Non-selection: Women's First Semester Experience Following Panhellenic Sorority Recruitment

Dear Gregory:

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

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Exemption Determination: 01/08/2014.

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

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the

research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

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

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

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Title: Impact of Panhellenic Sorority Recruitment Non-selection on the First Year of College IRB# 14030

Purpose:
This research project will be to explore the impact of the sorority recruitment process on former potential new members (PNM's) who do not receive an invitation to membership. You are invited to participate in this study because you are a UNL student over the age of 19, and you are listed as a woman who intended to join a Panhellenic sorority, but did not receive an invitation to membership.

Procedures:
Participation in this study will require approximately 45 minutes. You will be asked to participate in one audio-taped interview lasting between 30-45 minutes. The interview will be conducted in a quiet, private space at your convenience.

Benefits:
This study will give participants the opportunity to reflect on their first semester of college. This may allow them to make greater meaning of their experience and to share their experience with others anonymously.

Compensation:
A $20.00 gift certificate will be offered to participants from the location of their choosing.

Risks and/or Discomforts:
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Confidentiality:
Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept confidential. The data will be stored in a password protected computer and in a password protected storage database. The data will only be seen by the principal investigator during the study and a transcriptionist who has agreed to a confidentiality agreement. All data will be discarded one year after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published as a master's thesis, in scientific journals or presented at professional conferences but the data will be unidentifiable.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:
You may ask any questions concerning this research by contacting the investigator listed below. If you would like to speak to someone else, please contact Research Compliance Services Office at (402) 472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

☐ Check to consent to be audio-recorded during interviews

Signature of Participant:

_____
_____
Signature of Research Participant

Date

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)

Greg Golden, Graduate Assistant, Principal Investigator. Golden.unm@gmail.com or Cell: (505) 793-4566

Debra Mullen, Phd, Associate Dean, College of Education and Human Sciences. dmullen1@unl.edu or (402) 472-5426

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

What impact did your participation in the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process have on your college experience?

- In the short-term?
- Currently (3-4 months out)?

If it might help you, consider using the following graph to draw your first semester experience in a linear fashion. High peaks on the graph would indicate high points in the semester and low "valleys" might indicate perceived lower points in your experience this previous semester.

- What connections if any did any of these peaks or valleys have to your experience in sorority recruitment?

If positive, what do you believe were some of the factors that contributed most to your positive experience?
Or…
If negative, what do you believe were some of the factors that contributed most to your negative experience?
Following the conclusion of the sorority recruitment process what additional support would have benefitted you?

What involvements or support groups have you found on campus in your first semester of college?

- How did they support you if at all following the Panhellenic sorority recruitment process?

Appendix D

Recruitment Emails

Dear Student:

I am conducting a research study on the impact of the sorority recruitment process on former potential new members (PNM's) who do not receive an invitation to membership. Participation will entail an interview and will take approximately 45 minutes of your time in total. Participants of this study will receive a $20 gift card from the store of their choosing. If you are interested in participating, please reply to this e-mail by [date].

Further instructions will follow in a separate email. There are no known risks involved in this research.

If you have any questions, please e-mail or call.

Greg Golden, Graduate Assistant, Principal Investigator.
Golden.unm@gmail.com or Cell: (505) 793-4566
Or my advisor
Debra Mullen, Phd, Associate Dean, College of Education and Human Sciences.
dmullen1@unl.eduor (402) 472-5426

Regards,
[Greg Golden]

Appendix E

Peaks And Valleys Timeline

First Semester Experience Timeline

Peaks and Valley's (Weichman, 2012, p. 88) W-Curve Hypothesis (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1999, p.1)

Please use this timeline to note periods in the first semester which represented "peaks" in your experience or perceived "high points" and "valley's or perceived "low points" in your experience in the first semester. Let the intersecting lines indicate the beginning of the semester.

Level of comfort, satisfaction and effectiveness

Time

Appendix F

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Statement

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Statement

I Nicole Lofty (name of transcriptionist) agree to hold all information contained on audio recorded tapes/ and in interviews received from Greg Golden, primary investigator for, Impact of Panhellenic Sorority Recruitment Non-selection on the First Year of College in confidence with regard to the individual and institutions involved in the research study. I understand that to violate this agreement would constitute a serious and unethical infringement on the informant's right to privacy.
I also certify that I have completed the CITI Limited Research Worker training in Human Research Protections.

Signature of Transcriptionist Date 2-14-2014

Signature of Principle Investigator Date 2-14-2014