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Sorority Life: Would You Do It All Over Again?

Lorena Zamarripa-Lovo

Universtity of Nebraska-Lincoln, lzamarripa-lovo@huskers.unl.edu

Sorority Life: Would You Do It All Over Again?

By

Lorena Zamarripa-Lovo

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Sorority Life: Would You Do It All Over Again?

Lorena Zamarripa-Lovo, M.A.
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Adviser: James Griesen

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe and compare the joining

experiences of women in Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities

at a Midwestern Predominantly White Institution (PWI). In this study, experience was

based on how the students learned about Greek life, the process of joining the sorority,

the expectations students had of their sororities, and whether or not the participants would

have joined the sorority if they had known what they knew about sorority life at the time

of their interviews. There were eleven participants who were interviewed as part of the

research. The participants were currently enrolled students who are in Traditional Greek

sororities and Latina-Based Greek sororities. Based on their interviews, the findings

provided direct answers to the research questions as the research questions were

incorporate as part of the interview protocol. The findings provided some evidence to

show how these sorority members learned about Greek Life in a similar manner, joined

for some of the same reasons, had expectations that were met, and learned and grew as a

person as part of joining the sorority. But more importantly gave an understanding that

sorority members may have a similar joining experience regardless of what sorority they

are joining. Also, the Strange and Banning theoretical framework was considered as part

of the research, which can be useful as college and universities assess their activities on

campus. Lastly, the research generated suggestions for future research we move forward

on learning more about sororities and how they fit into the campus life.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Appendices

Chapter 1

Introduction

One of the ways for getting involved in college is becoming a member of a Greek-letter organization. Students have experiences in fraternities and sororities that sometimes transform them for the rest of their lives. For these college students, being part of a fraternity or a sorority becomes an event that is important to their personal development. In many instances college students make decisions that sometimes lead to a life-long commitment (Cokley, Miller, Cunningham, Motoike, King, & Awad, 2001). Fraternities and sororities have been part of colleges and universities since 1776, when Phi Beta Kappa became the first Greek-letter fraternity (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008, p. 126). In the 1850s, the first Greek-letter societies for women were established (p. 127). For the purpose of this study, the focus will be only on sororities, both Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities. Since societies for women or sororities were founded, their purpose has been to address the needs of young women and to encourage the development of friendships among young in women in college (Callais, 2002, p. 3). Callais (2002) provided a definition for sorority, which is a "women's Greek letter fraternal organization that has a multi-part mission, including aspects such as sisterhood, academic enhancement, social, philanthropic/community service endeavors, and lifelong friendships" (p. 23).

Given the history and purpose of sororities, the researcher was interested in investigating the process of knowing about Greek Life, joining a sorority, meeting expectations of the new members, and asking if sorority members would have made the same decision given they had more information about Greek Life. With the interest in

mind and what literature was available, the researcher developed a qualitative study to address the purpose of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe and compare the Greek life experiences of women in Traditional Greek sororities and Latina-Based Greek sororities at a Midwestern Predominantly White Institution (PWI). In this study, experience was based on the process of joining the sorority, new member expectations, and whether or not the participants would join the sorority if they had to the opportunity to do it again. Also, for the purpose of this study, Traditional Greek Sororities were those Greek letter organizations that have been predominantly white throughout their history and Latina-Based Greek Sororities are those organizations that have a Latino heritage foundation.

Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the research the central question was: How do the Greek life experiences of women in Latina-Based Greek sororities compare with those in Traditional Greek sororities at a PWI? This central question contained other sub-questions that help to explain the phenomena, and which were required in order to understand and interpret the main research phenomenon as a whole. Therefore, the following research questions (RQ) were investigated:

RQ1: How did members first learn about Greek Life?

RQ2: Why did members decide to join their organization?

RQ3: Did the sorority meet their expectations?

RQ4: Would members join the sorority again if they had to do it over again?

Research Design

Based on the purpose of the study, the researcher was interested in

"*understanding the meaning people have constructed*" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13) in terms of

the joining experiences of Traditional Greek Sororities members and Latina-Based Greek

Sororities members. Having a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to have a

detailed account of the joining of the participants. With the participants sharing their

story, qualitative research empowers participants to have a voice and collaborate with the

researcher as the research progresses. Also, based on the Greek Life literature available,

having a qualitative approach allows sorority members to explain further the behaviors

that are observed or not observed as part of the current research.

For the purpose of this research, the qualitative approach chosen was

phenomenology. With a phenomenological approach, the data can provide an

understanding on the essence of the joining experience of sorority members. This

essence is basically the common experiences that the participants had in a certain area

(Creswell, 2007). As a way to find the essence, the collection of the data was conducted

through semi-constructed interviews.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

- Greek Life: ""Greek" is typically a commonly used term to describe the
  community of fraternities and sororities on a college campus. Greek does not,
  however, refer to the country of Greece or any specific involvement with students
  with a Greek origin" (Missouri University of Science and Technology, 2008).

- Traditional Greek Sororities: are those Greek letter organizations that have been predominantly white throughout their history.

- Latina-Based Greek Sororities: are those organizations that have a Latino heritage foundation.

- Sorority: is a "women's Greek letter fraternal organization that has a multi-part mission, including aspects such as sisterhood, academic enhancement, social, philanthropic/community service endeavors, and lifelong friendships" (Callais, 2002, p. 23).

Significance of Topic

Over the last couple of years, scholars "have raised important questions about the value of fraternities and sororities on college campuses" (Hughey, 2010, p. 655). These questions have been surfaced due to the behaviors connected with these fraternities and sororities. For instance, some of the behaviors are associated with abusing alcohol (Elkins, Helms & Pierson, 2003), performing poorly in classes, and hazing (Shonrock, 1998). Throughout the history of Greek-letter organizations, they have been facing the challenge of being able to close the gap between the high standards they espouse and the inappropriate behaviors in which their members participate (Shonrock, 1998). Some of the problems that Greek-letter organizations encounter are abusing alcohol, performing poorly in classes, and hazing (Shonrock, 1998). Even though, there have been some negatives that come from Greek-letter organizations, there are still some colleges and universities who still see the benefits of Greek life (Callais, 2002).

In attempts to maintain Greek-letter organizations, there have been numerous evaluations that yielded the development of new initiatives (Callais, 2002, p. 3). A

review of the literature on Greek life suggested there was definitely the need for research that allows Greek members to voice their experiences and explain how their membership provided them the opportunity to grow as a person. The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding and insight into the experiences of women in Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities in terms of how and why they joined a sorority and what they got out of it. This study was significant in that it gives voice to women in both Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities. Also, this study has contributed to the body of literature on sororities as the majority of the research on Greek-letter organizations tends to focus on "alcohol, sexual assault, and, to a lesser degree, hazing" (Molasso, 2005, p. 7). Since the focus of the current Greek Life literature seemed to be more on the negative side, the researcher was trying to shift the research to a more positive approach. This study adds to the literature base, since the data would provide an improved understanding of how sororities can be better served at colleges and universities, and guide a more positive future.

Overview

By conducting this thesis research, the researcher was seeking to give women in Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities a space to share their joining experiences. In Chapter Two the researcher provides a brief overview of the history of Greek Life, the existing literature on Greek Life and sororities, and the Strange and Banning (2001) theoretical framework used as part of the thesis research. In Chapter Three, the researcher explains the methodology used to gather the data from the participants with regard to their experiences of joining a sorority. In Chapter Four, the researcher discusses the themes discovered through data analysis. Lastly, in Chapter Five

the researcher discusses the summary of the findings of the study as how they relate to

the literature and Strange and Banning (2001) theoretical framework. The researcher also

considered the future implications for colleges and universities as Greek life continues to

be a part of higher education.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

For this literature review, the researcher reviewed the literature available on studies related to Greek Life, Traditional Sororities, and Latina-Based Sororities since the purpose of this thesis was to have an understanding of the joining experiences in Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities. The literature focused on other topics about Greek Life besides the ones that are usually associated with Greek Life such as behaviors associated with abusing alcohol (Elkins, Helms & Pierson, 2003), performing poorly in classes, and hazing (Shonrock, 1998). The researcher wanted to examine other topics that were related to Greek Life. Some of the areas the researcher concentrated on were associated with cognitive development (Pascarella, et al., 1996; Pike, 2000; Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt, 2006) and academic performance (Strayhorn & Colvin, 2006; Thompson, Oberle, & Lilley, 2011) of their members. Also, the researcher looked at how some studies have used the existing NSSE (National Survey for Student Engagement) database results to draw conclusions about students who are affiliated with Greek life (Hayek, Carini, O'Day, & Kuh, 2002).

To be even more specific, the research on Traditional Greek sororities addressed the issues of their preferential bidding system (Mongell, & Roth, 1991), sororities as a gender strategy (Handler, 1995), rehearsing for "rush" (Scheibel, Gibson, & Anderson, 2002), the experiences of sorority recruitment counselors (Witkowsky, 2010), the perceptions of sorority members and impact in the sense of self (Risman, 1982; Sarkissian, 2008), and the sorority rituals (Callais, 2002). There were a couple of studies

that addressed the idea of joining a Greek letter organization and concepts associated with joining such as: a gender strategy (Handler, 1995), joining Latina-Based Greek Sororities (Olivas, 1996; Layzer, 2000), the rituals associated when joining a sorority, (Callais, 2002), the adjustment of Latina Sorority members and non-members when they join the sororities (Garcia, 2005), comparison of African-American students and Latino students joining Greek Life (McCall, 2007) and joining a sorority/fraternity based on their value system (Stansfield Hunter, 2010, Burnett, Vaughan, & Moody, 1997).

As students get involved with Greek Life, the Strange and Banning (2001) theoretical framework can be applied to understand the joining experiences of these students. This theoretical framework was taken into consideration as the thesis research was developed. The theoretical framework was mostly used in the development of the interview protocol and the analysis of the data. The Strange and Banning (2001) has four environmental components and they are: 1) Physical condition, design and layout; 2) Human aggregate; 3) Organizational structures related to their purposes and goals; and 4) Constructed environment, or the inhabitants' collective perceptions or constructions of the context and cultures of the setting (p. 5). Along with the four components, another model that was considered for this thesis especially during the analysis portion was the levels of the hierarchy of learning environment purposes, which are: Level 1: Safety and Inclusion (Sense of Security and Belonging; Level 2: Involvement (Participation, Engagement, Role-Taking); and Level 3: Community (Full membership). The four components and the hierarchy of learning environment purposes will be explained further later on this chapter.

Methods of the Literature Review

The researcher reviewed the literature that was available on Greek-letter organizations. The researcher did an overall search on Greek life as well as research on Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities with regard to their experiences on joining the sororities. The main search engines that were used were scholar.google.com, EBSCO, ERIC, Project Muse, and NASPA Journal. Some of the search terms were Greek life, sorority, Greek-Letter organizations, student engagement, Latin (a) sororities, and joining sororities. Another way that potential articles were found was by looking at the reference list of those articles that were found in order to expand the list of articles. Once an article was chosen as a useful article, the search engines above were used to find a copy of the article. Since the focus of the literature review was about existing literature on Greek life and more specifically sororities, useful articles were those that had the words Greek life or sororities on their title. Also, for the existing literature there was emphases on other areas of Greek life research besides the usual topics that one hear about Greek life such as alcohol and hazing (Shonrock, 1998).

When a preliminary list of potential articles was gathered, the researcher began reviewing the articles. In order to keep organized as suggested by one of the professors, the researcher used an excel sheet where the researcher listed the following headings: citation, key terms, title, author(s), year, purpose of study, research questions, location, theoretical framework, methods, participants, analysis, findings, limitations and implications. As the researcher was reading the articles, she filled in the categories. The researcher found that many articles did not have all the categories that she had listed;

however, knowing which categories the articles did include was helpful when analyzing the articles.

History of Greek Life

Fraternities and sororities have been part of colleges and universities since 1776, when Phi Beta Kappa became the first Greek-letter fraternity (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008, p. 126). Consequently, in the 1850s, the first Greek-letter societies for women were established (p. 127). The first women's society to be founded was Alpha Delta Pi Fraternity, which was originally founded as the Adelphean Society in 1851 at Wesleyan College (Callais, 2002, p. 31-32). After the founding of Alpha Delta Pi, in 1852 also at Wesleyan College, Phi Mu Fraternity was founded as the Philamathian Society (Callais, 2002, p. 31-32). When first founded, these two organizations were referred to as secret societies (Callais, 2002, p. 31-32). After these two organizations were founded, in 1867, the first national college fraternity was founded, Pi Beta Phi (Callais, 2002, p. 31-32). In 1870, Kappa Alpha Theta was the first Greek letter society for women (until that time women's organizations were referred to as societies, not using Greek letter names) (Callais, 2002, p. 31-32). The history of the Traditional Greek sorority movement established the relationship between the founding of sororities and the involvement of women in higher education (Callais, 2002, p. 31). Since societies for women or sororities were founded, their purpose has been to address the needs of young women and develop friendships with other young women in college (Callais, 2002, p. 3).

According to Juan Rodriguez, a founder and vice president of the board of directors of Sigma Lambda Beta said that in the 1800s Latino fraternities actually existed, but their members were elite and wealthy individuals from Latin America who attended

prestigious U.S. universities (p. 1 as cited in Bovell, 2009, p. 20). Therefore, the current movement of Latin sororities and fraternities did not start until the 1970s or even the 1980s. What is clear is that Latin-Based Greek organizations were not established until many years after Traditional Greek sororities and fraternities were established (Bovell, 2009). One of the main reasons why ethnic and minority fraternities and sororities were formed was because these groups have been traditionally oppressed in the area of academics. Just like Traditional Greek Sororities, Latin and Latina sororities are not exception (Bovell, 2009) as a group who has oppressed. Latin Greek organizations were formed as a way to *regain* and/or *preserve* their ethnic identity (Olivas, 1996, p. 11). This characteristic can be reflected on the "common practice of transforming Greek letter organization names into Spanish titles or have a mix of Spanish and Greek words that reflect cultural aspect" (Olivas, 1996, p. 11). The history of both Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities was important so that one can understand their role in current college life.

Existing Literature for Greek Life/Sororities

The existing literature on Greek life was based on the research conducted within the field of student affairs. The literature on student affairs addresses the following topics about fraternities and sororities: alcohol, students of color/NPHC, psycho-social development, sexual assault education, homogeneity, adjustment issues, recruitment, advising professionals, gay men, athletes as members, hazing, gambling, and eating disorders (Molasso, 1995, p. 4). Besides these topics, other topics were cognitive development (Pascarella, Edison, Whitt, Nora, Hagedorn & Terenzini, 1996; Pike, 2000; Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt, 2006) and academic performance (Thompson, Oberle, &

Lilley, 2011) of students that are part of fraternities and sororities. To be even more specific, the research on Traditional Greek sororities addressed the issues of their preferential bidding system (Mongell, & Roth, 1991), sororities as a gender strategy (Handler, 1995), rehearsing for "rush" (Scheibel, Gibson, & Anderson, 2002), the experiences of sorority recruitment counselors (Witkowsky, 2010), the perceptions of sorority members and impact in the sense of self (Risman, 1982; Sarkissian, 2008), and the sorority rituals (Callais, 2002). There were a couple of studies that addressed the idea of joining a Greek letter organization and concepts associated with joining such as joining as a gender strategy (Handler, 1995), joining Latina-Based Greek Sororities (Olivas, 1996; Layzer, 2000), the rituals associated when joining a sorority, (Callais, 2002), the adjustment of Latina Sorority members and non-members (Garcia, 2005), comparison of groups joining Greek Life (McCall, 2007), and joining a sorority/fraternity based on their value system (Stansfield Hunter, 2010, Burnett, Vaughan, & Moody, 1997). One of the studies that is comparable to this thesis was the one that McCall III (2007) conducted.

Overall Topics on Greek Life

Student Affairs is one of the fields where research of fraternities and sororities takes place. The *NASPA Journal* and the *Journal of College Student Development (JCSD)* are considered as primary because this is where the research on "the preparation of student affairs professionals, theoretical development in our field and analysis of contemporary issues on college and university campuses occurred" (Molasso, 2005, p. 2). Molasso (2005) conducted a study where he analyzed the JCSD and the NASPA Journal regarding 184 articles, which contained key words that were related to Greek-letter

organizations (e.g. fraternity, sorority, Greek, fraternities/sororities). He concluded that

much more work is needed about the Greek community because "over the last decade,

only 2% of those articles published in *JCSD* and 3% of *NASPA Journal* articles focused

primarily on the fraternity/sorority community" (p. 5). The articles that were reviewed

addressed topics such as alcohol, students of color/NPHC, psycho-social development,

sexual assault education, homogeneity, adjustment issues, recruitment, advising

professionals, gay men, athletes as members, hazing, gambling, and eating disorders

(p. 4). These are the topics that are more often seen in Greek life research; however,

what are other areas of research that address Greek life and sororities? Knowing about

other topics related to Greek life is beneficial because some may rely on stereotypes that

might not be true. Also, for the purpose of this thesis research, the researcher was

interested in other topics about Greek life besides the ones mentioned by Molasso (2005).

Student Engagement and Greek Life.

According to Astin (1999), student involvement refers to "the amount of physical

and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518).

Thus, students who are highly involved dedicate time to their studies, participate in

student organizations such as sororities and fraternities, and interact with those around

them such as faculty and students (Astin, 1999). The National Survey for Student

Engagement instrument (NSSE) "assesses the extent to which students at hundreds of

four-year colleges and universities are participating in educational practices that are

strongly associated with high levels of learning and personal development" (Kuh, 2001,

p. 12). When the students take the NSSE, they answer a questionnaire about what they

put into and get out of their college experience (Kuh, 2000b, p. 2). One of those areas in

which students are investing their time is being a member of a Greek organization. Some studies have used the existing NSSE database results to draw conclusions about students who are affiliated with Greek life. For example, Hayek, Carini, O'Day, & Kuh (2002) used the NSSE database to assess the levels of engagement and educationally effective practices of members of Greek-letter organizations and those students who were not members. The findings of the study suggested that students who belong to Greek letter organizations are sometimes better in terms of their level of engagement due to the amount of efforts they put inside and outside the classroom (Hayek, et al., 2002). However, one of the limitations of this study is their focus on freshman and seniors only. Thus, the findings will probably not be applicable to sophomore and juniors, which this limitation will be present in the other studies that used NSSE as a way to gather their results.

Along the lines of Hayek, et al. (2002), Pike (2003) was extending his work from 2000], with the focus being on the relationships among membership in a fraternity or sorority, student engagement, and educational outcomes. Unlike, Hayek, et al. (2002), Pike (2003) extended the findings on engagement by stating that Greek students, who were seniors, tended to be more involved than those seniors who were not part of the Greek system. Another study using NSSE as its basis was the one conducted by Bureau, Ryan, Ahren, Shoup, & Torres, (2011) whom were set to explore indicators of student learning among senior members of social fraternities and sororities. Their findings were consistent with previous studies (Hayek, et al., 2002; Pike, 2003) in the sense that "fraternity/sorority member's self-reported higher levels of engagement than non-members, fraternity/sorority members are potentially highly engaged in learning" (p. 13).

The studies in this section give an insight into college life in that

fraternity/sorority members tend to be some of the most engaged students on campus

(Hayek et al., 2002; Pike, 2003). However, their involvement could be beyond being part

of the sorority (e.g., student government, honorary societies, cultural organizations), thus

it is impossible to say that their involvement is a positive or negative impact based on

their Greek life involvement (Bureau, et al., 2011). Using NSSE as a foundation could be

helpful when looking at experiences of freshman and seniors. However, sophomores and

juniors are also part of colleges and universities, and their experiences are as important.

Also, these studies have based their information on the results from large-scale surveys.

The results from the surveys do not get to the experience of students as they vary per

group and institutions.

Academic Performance and Cognitive Development.

Other topics that addressed Greek-letter organizations were cognitive

development (Pascarella, et al., 1996; Pike, 2000; Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt, 2006)

and academic performance (Strayhorn & Colvin, 2006; Thompson, Oberle, & Lilley,

2011) of their members. Pascarella, Edison, Whitt, Nora, Hagedorn & Terenzini (1996)

conducted a quantitative multi-institutional study that addresses the cognitive effects of

fraternity/sorority affiliation. The study assessed the affects of Greek affiliation based on

standardized measures of reading comprehension, mathematics, and critical thinking.

The findings showed that Greek-affiliated men had significantly lower end-of-first-year

scores than their non-Greek counterparts (Pascarella et al., 1996). On the other hand,

women also had lower end-of-first-year than non-Greek women, but only reading

comprehension and composite achievement were significant. One of the limitations of

this study was that the sample consisted only of first-year students (Pascarella et al., 1996). The findings may be reflecting on the fact that joining a fraternity or sorority in the first year may detract from being successful because it is during the first year when students adjust to the academic demands. Thus, becoming a member of a fraternity or sorority may reduce the time given to academics instead of involvement (Pascarella et al., 1996)

Similar to Pascarella et al. (1996), Pike (2000) conducted a quantitative study to "examine the relationships among students' backgrounds, membership in a fraternity or sorority, involvement, and cognitive development using a causal model of college effects" (Pike, 2000, p. 119). Unlike Pascarella et al., 1996, the relationships between college experiences and cognitive development may vary depending on which dimension of cognitive development is being examined. For example, "gains in students' general abilities were directly related to their levels of academic and social involvement" (Pike, 2000, p. 134). Thus, when examining cognitive development, it is important to understand what dimension of cognitive development is being analyzed as part of the study. A limitation of this study, in comparison to Pascarella et al. (1996), Pike (2000) only gathered data from one institution instead of a multi-institutional approach.

In 2006, Pascarella, Flowers & Whitt revisited the research of Pascarella et al. (1996). Using the same quantitative study design and instrument, Pascarella et al. (2006) expanded their data collection to include students during three consecutive years 1992-1995. The standard measures of cognitive development were still somewhat negative, they were significantly smaller, but could not be determined if the changes were due to Greek membership (Pascarella et al., 2006). Having a longitudinal study about the

cognitive development in Greek and non-Greek members offered a validation of the findings found in Pascarella et al. (1996).

Another topic related to Greek-letter organizations is academic performance of students who are Greek affiliated. Thompson, Oberle, & Lilley (2011) through a quantitative method, explored the idea of whether "Greek affiliation helps students academically and whether self-efficacy plays a role in their academic performance" (p. 749). Although, Greek affiliated students had lower GPAs (Grade Point Average) and test scores, their learning efforts, test efforts ratings, and self-efficacy were higher (Thomson, Oberle, & Lilley 2011). One of the limitations of this study was that there were more women than men as well as more non-Greek members than Greek members (Thomson, Oberle, & Lilley 2011). In terms of academic performance of Greek students, authors have used the analysis of grades, credit hours earned and retention (DeBard, Lake, & Binder, 2006; Debard & Sacks, 2010). For instance, Debard & Sacks, (2010) conducted a quantitative study that involved the analysis of grades, credit hours earned and retention to figure out the effect of fraternity/sorority membership on academic performance (Debard & Sacks, 2010). The findings for this study established that there is a significant difference between new members' first semester grade point averages for the fall and the spring. Also, the total number of hours earned during the first year of college favors those who have spring membership. The retention rate is higher for spring members due to having the first semester to settle "into a campus environment before going through recruitment which has a beneficial results with regard to first-year academic achievement" (Debard & Sacks, 2010, p. 19).

Traditional Sorority Organizational Practices.

Besides the research listed above which addressed some of the overall Greek life research, there was some research that was more specific to Traditional Greek sororities and Latina-Based Greek sororities. Just like other organizations there needs to be new members to replace those that leave (Scheibel, Gibson, & Anderson, 2002, p. 219). As part of becoming part of a sorority, some Traditional Greek sororities used two types of rush: formal rush and continuous open bidding (Mongell & Roth, 1991, p. 443). When formal rush happens, the sororities use what is called "preferential bidding system" (PBS). This is a basic centralized procedure used to match students to sororities on college campuses (Mongell & Roth, 1991). The research about sororities that the researcher looked at was about how the sorority affiliation influences its members. Risman (1982) conducted an ethnographic study to "analyze the day-to-day operation of the sorority system as it affects each member's ideas about herself and her perspective on the world around her" (p. 232). Using observations and in-depth interviews, Risman found that sororities serve as an environment where girls are learning to be women. The Greek system functions as a primary reference group for the members since it is in college that parents might not be in control of their lives. Also, the sorority environment encourages the mechanisms for traditional gender role socialization (Risman, 1982). Handler (1995) suggested an idea similar to Risman (1982) by arguing that women use sororities as a gender strategy that aids them with their identity development during college:

> First, by joining a sorority, women engage, individually and collectively, in
> constructing themselves as women. Notions of womanhood are very much shaped

and bound by the sorority's needs and purpose and the sorority's relationships to
Greek life and campus culture. Second, sororities are a strategy for dealing with
the complexities of gender(ed) relations-both among women and between women
and men (p. 237).

Handler's statement emphasizes how female college students participate in rush and
pledging to a sorority as a way to address their identity development and gender
approaches in college (Handler, 1995). This identity development that Handler referred
to was only limited to members of a white sorority; thus her argument might not be
applicable to other groups (e.g. Latina, Asian, and African-American sororities)

Another area where there has been some research is the concept of identity
development of women who are part of sororities. Sarkissian (2008) explored through
qualitative research the sorority members' perceptions of the sources of impact during
college on their sense of self. The findings validated the idea that student involvement,
establishing relationships, experiences involving crisis and commitment are important in
the identity development for women (Sarkissian, 2008). Same as Handler (1995),
Sarkissian (2008) only focus on Traditional Greek sororities, which is the same limitation
as Handler's study of just knowing the experience of the members in this type of
sororities and probably not applicable to other members of other sororities such as
Latina-Based Greek Sororities.

In order for women in sororities to develop their gender and identity, they need to
become members through a process called rush (Scheibel, Gibson, & Anderson, 2002).
Also, not only the women who are looking to become part of sororities have gender and
identity development experiences (Witkowsky, 2010). Those who participate as

recruitment counselors (Witkowsky, 2010), who are helping women through recruitment and rush, have certain experiences and research about their experience has been conducted. Rush is a recruitment that is usually rehearsed by women who are part of the sorority as preparation of the potential interaction with prospective members (Scheibel, Gibson & Anderson, 2002). This rehearsal is like a mockery and the study found "that sorority members use mockery in three forms of rehearsal including, demonstrations, question-and-answer sequences, and improvised conversations within "rotation groups" (Scheibel, Gibson & Anderson, 2002). There are some women who are chosen to be recruitment counselors (Witkowsky, 2010). In an ethnographic case study, Witkowsky (2010) described the experience of Traditional Greek sorority recruitment counselors during formal rush. Their experiences included challenges of sorority members with disaffiliation, struggling between neutrality and loyalty, and the Disney World effect. Also, they experience a sense of wanting to give back to the sorority and the development of leadership skills during their experience as recruitment counselors (Witkowsky, 2010). Once, again the population of this study was conducted with members of Traditional Greek sororities, thus there is a gap to see how other groups (e.g. Latina, Asian, African-American) develop their gender and identity or even how they "rush" if they have such a process within their organizations.

Joining Sororities

The Literature specific to the purpose of this research is lacking because research about Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek sororities is virtually non-existent. There were a couple of studies that addressed the idea of joining a Greek letter organization and concepts associated with joining such as joining as a gender strategy

(Handler, 1995), ethnic development influenced by being part of a Latina-Based Greek sorority (Nuñez, 2004), joining Latina-Based Greek Sororities (Olivas, 1996; Layzer, 2000), the rituals associated when joining a sorority, (Callais, 2002), the adjustment of Latina Sorority members and non-members (Garcia, 2005), comparison of groups joining Greek Life (McCall, 2007), and joining a sorority/fraternity based on their value system (Stansfield Hunter, 2010, Burnett, Vaughan, & Moody, 1997). One of the studies that was conducted is comparable to this thesis is the one that McCall III (2007) conducted.

In terms of Traditional Greek sororities, the areas of research have been about joining as a gender strategy (Handler, 1995) and the usage of rituals as part of joining (Callais, 2002). Other studies have focused on Latina-based sororities (Olivas, 1996; Layzer, 2000, Nuñez, 2004). For example, Olivas (1996) conducted a qualitative study to "identify the cultural behaviors and group norms that serve to enhance academic achievement and reinforce personal growth among members of a Latina sorority" (Olivas, 1996). She found that as a whole the sorority served as a sanctuary to its Latina members because they felt they were shielded from hostile forces, including those who viewed them as inferior (Olivas, 1996).

Similar to Olivas (1996), Layzer (2000) conducted an ethnographic case study of a Latina sorority during the first three semesters of its existence on campus and analyzed the reasons why Latinas formed or joined a Latina sorority (Layzer, 2000). The study found that "by founding or joining a sorority, the individuals [needed to believe] believed that the path to success was through what appeared to be adoption of dominant cultural values (Layzer, 2000, p. 39). On the other hand, Garcia (2005) looked at the adjustment of Latina students, but Garcia (2005) had participants who were part of the sorority and

those who were not. This comparison provided a different understanding on the benefits

of Latina-Based Greek sororities for students. The study provided "evidence that Latina

sorority members report higher levels of social adjustment and goal-commitment

institutional adjustment than non-sorority members" (Garcia, 2005, p. 134).

A study that was closely related to the thesis was one conducted by Fred McCall

III titled "Experiences of Historically Black and Traditionally Latino Fraternity and

Sorority Members at a Predominately White Institution". The purpose of this thesis was

to "examine African-American and Latino student's experiences with collegiate

fraternities and sororities" (McCall III, 2007, p. 3). Although, the basis of McCall's

thesis was like the study being proposed, some of the interview questions and the

populations being studied are different. Compare to McCall's research, the thesis

research being conducted include questions that focus on the process of learning, joining,

meeting expectations, and wanting to join a sorority based on what the participants had

learned. The participants were from Traditional Greek sororities and Latina-Based Greek

sororities unlike McCall III who focused on African-American and Latino students who

are members of fraternities and sororities (McCall III, 2007). Thus, this thesis research

emphasized the joining process between two specific sororities, those of Traditional

Greek sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities.

Existing Literature Summary

All the research presented in this existing literature section ranged from having

few participants to having multi-institutional participants. For the most part, the methods

of the research that was conducted tried to accommodate massive responses to the

surveys and interviews found in the NSSE (Hayek, et al., 2002; Pike, 2003, Bureau, et al.,

2011). By using the NSSE, the studies are limiting the research to only freshman and seniors in colleges and universities. Also, the survey does not allow to get feedback or a context into why the students are responding the way they are. On the other hand, the qualitative data allowed the researcher to understand certain behaviors of students in Greek life such as gender strategy (Handler, 1995), rehearsing for "rush" (Scheibel, Gibson, & Anderson, 2002), the experiences of sorority recruitment counselors (Witkowsky, 2010), the perceptions of sorority members and impact in the sense of self (Risman, 1982; Sarkissian, 2008), and the sorority rituals (Callais, 2002).

Overall, the authors of the research seemed to agree that fraternities and sororities are "powerful socializing agents" (Strange, 1986 as cited in Pike, 2003, p. 379). Even when the socialization might be positive or negative, the outcome may depend on the environment and culture of the institution where the Greek system operates (Pike, 2003). Thus, it is important for institutions to assess the Greek system with regard to the values and educational practices of the institutions (Pike, 2003). Given the literature and new initiatives in Greek life, there was definitely the need for research that allows for Greek members to have a voice about their experiences and how they have given them the opportunity to grow as a person. One of the ways that colleges and universities can assess the environment of students is through the usage of a theoretical framework proposed by Strange and Banning (2001).

Theoretical Framework

Given the purpose of this study, which was to better understand the experiences of women in Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities in terms of the process of joining the sorority and what comes out of it, this topic was relevant to the

higher education environment because the members experiences can potentially be explained by the Strange and Banning (2001) environmental components. When considering the theoretical framework for this study, the four main environmental components defined by Strange and Banning (2001) were the most appropriate for analysis of the data that has been gathered. The goal of the study was to look at human behavior, rather than the behavior of students that are involved in a Greek organization on campus, so environment is a key element. Moos (1986) stated that the "arrangement of environments is perhaps the most powerful technique we have for influencing human behavior. From one point of view, every institution in our society sets up conditions that it hopes will maximize certain types of behavior and certain directions of personal growth" (p. 4). Keeping the importance of environments in mind, Strange and Banning (2001) discuss four key components of human environments, which are:

1. Physical condition, design, and layout

2. Human aggregate or the characteristics of the people who inhabit them

3. Organizational structures related to their purposes and goals

4. Constructed environment, or the inhabitants' collective perceptions or constructions of the context and cultures of the setting (p. 5).

Understanding the definitions of each of these components was critical for the development of the instrument and the analysis of the data in this study. The physical condition is referred to as "the social implications of use of physical space" (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 21). On a campus, this could be considered layout of sidewalks, buildings, and amenities. The human aggregate is more focused on the individuals and the idea that environments are ultimately transmitted through people (p. 35). The

organizational environment is the structure of the organization, which might be

communicated through an organization's mission or purpose. Finally, constructed

environments refer to perceptual or socially constructed models of the environment (p.

85). This theoretical framework suggests four areas that can provide some insight about

any area of colleges and universities, but for the purpose of this study, the environment

would be that of women who are a part of sororities. Along with the four components,

the levels of the hierarchy of learning environment purposes presented by Strange &

Banning, 2001) were considered as part of this study (See Figure #2).

Figure #2

.1. A Hierarchy of Learning Environment Purposes

Level 3
Community
(Full Membership)

Level 2
Involvement
(Participation, Engagement,
Role-Taking)

Level 1
Safety and Inclusion
(Sense of Security and Belonging)
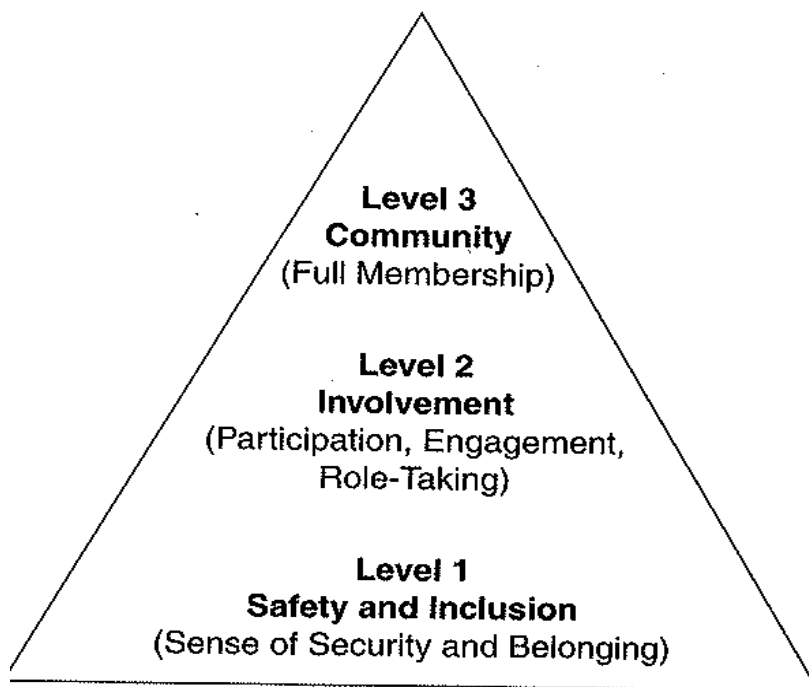
Having the Strange and Banning (2001) four environments and the hierarchy of learning environments can be useful as an assessment. This type of assessment of the environment in colleges and universities and how students learn about their environment can help with the engagement of students. One of the components of student engagement is the idea of allocating the human and other resources in order to "organize learning opportunities and services to encourage students to participate in and benefit from such activities" (e.g. fraternities and sororities) (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009,p. 412-413). Thus, assessing and then organizing the opportunities can be beneficial as college and universities continue to have Greek life.

Future Research

Given the existing research on Greek life and sororities, there is a need to ask other questions about the experiences of students in these organizations. For instance, if scholars are raising "important questions about the value of fraternities and sororities on college campuses" (Hughey, 2010, p. 655) due to behaviors such as: abusing alcohol (Elkins, Helms & Pierson, 2003), performing poorly in classes, and hazing (Shonrock, 1998). Then why not have the research focused on why students are engaging on these types of behaviors by conducting interviews with the students. Instead of using databases and surveys to see the trends such as NSSE (Kuh, 2000b), why not have interviews with students and ask them what is going on. Even more so, how about asking the basic question of why students are deciding to join Greek letter organizations in the first place. There are many activities in colleges and universities that students can participate in, but why are students choosing to join Greek life? Are Greek organizations meeting their expectations? What have they learned from them as members? What kind of

opportunities are the organizations providing to students? Are opportunities positive or negative? Are these organizations serving their original purpose of having a "multi-part mission, including aspects such as sisterhood [brotherhood], academic enhancement, social, philanthropic/community service endeavors, and lifelong friendships? (Callais, 2002, p. 23). Thus, the researcher began this thesis research, which concentrated on describing the experiences of women in Traditional Sororities and Latina-Based Sororities in terms of joining their organizations.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

Given the literature presented in Chapter Two, the researcher has established the need to understand the experiences of women in Greek Sororities. Although there is a wide array of research about Greek Life, the literature has been focused on the fraternities and sororities in terms of alcohol, students of color/NPHC, psycho-social development, sexual assault education, homogeneity, adjustment issues, recruitment, advising professionals, gay men, athletes as members, hazing, gambling, and eating disorders (Molasso, 1995, p. 4). However, little research has concentrated on why students are joining Greek Life even when the majority of the topics that describe Greek Life deal with the negative aspects. Thus, the purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the joining experiences of women in Traditional Greek sororities and Latina-Based Greek sororities at a Midwestern Predominantly White Institution.

The participants were part of Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Sororities at a Midwestern Predominantly White Institution (PWI) and their contribution to the research was based on a semi-structured interview. During the interview, the participants were asked to reflect on questions such as RQ1: How did members first learn about Greek Life?, RQ2: Why did they decide to join their organization?, RQ3: Did the sorority meet their expectations?, RQ4: Would they join the sorority again if they had to do it over again?

Qualitative Research Design

Based on the purpose of the study, the researcher was interested in

"*understanding the meaning people have constructed"* (Merriam, 2009, p. 13) in terms of

the joining experiences of Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek

Sororities. With her interest in mind, the researcher decided to use a qualitative approach

in order to understand the topic at hand. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher

to have a detailed understanding of Greek Life and Sororities by hearing their stories

through the interview. The approach to data collection, which was gathered by semi-

structured interviews, empowered the participants to share their stories and collaborate

with the researcher throughout the research process. Their stories also provided rich

descriptions, which can expand the Greek Life literature.

Among the qualitative approaches, the researcher chose the phenomenological

approach because phenomenology describes, "what all participants have in common as

they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 58)**.** Additionally, the focus of the

phenomenological approach is "to reduce the experiences of persons with a phenomenon

to a description of the universal essence" (Creswell, Hanson, Clark, & Morales, 2007, p.

252-253). An example of a phenomena may be "insomnia, exclusion, anger, or

undergoing coronary artery bypass surgery (Moustakas, 1994 as cited in Creswell,

Hanson, Clark, & Morales, 2007, p. 252-253) or in the case of this study the phenomena

will be the experience of joining a sorority. Also, the researcher chose phenomenology

because this approach is "oriented to practice, the practice of living" (van Manen, 2007,

p. 13). This methodology was chosen because the researcher wants to understand how

the experiences of sorority members differ when they join their sororities so that others can be educated about Greek life in colleges and universities.

Research Questions

Based on this purpose the main question is: How do the Greek life experiences of women in Latina-Based Greek sororities compare with those in Traditional Greek sororities at a PWI? This central question contains other sub-questions, which were required in order to understand and interpret the main research phenomenon as a whole. Therefore, the following research questions (RQ) were investigated:

RQ1: How did members first learn about Greek Life?

RQ2: Why did members decide to join their organization?

RQ3: Did the sorority meet their expectations?

RQ4: Would members join the sorority again if they had to do it over again?

Researcher Reflexivity

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument by which the research information is collected, analyzed, and reported. Even the researcher's impressions, observations, thoughts, and ideas are also considered a form of data (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). Being the researcher is the instrument to the research, Maxwell (2005) explained this statement in the following manner "qualitative research is not primarily concerned with eliminating *variance* between researchers in the values and expectations they bring to the study, but with understanding how a *particular* researcher's values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study" (p. 108) Thus, the researcher stated her perspective, biases, and assumptions in the subsequent paragraphs. One of the main sources of the researcher's position was that she was considered an

"insider" as she is a member of a Latina-Based Greek sorority. The fact that she is a

member of a sorority allowed her to establish rapport with the participants, since they

believed she understood their experiences. Even though, the researcher was an "insider,"

Seidman (1991) suggested that the interviewer should have enough distance so she was

able to ask real questions in order to explore the assumptions and not share those

assumptions (p. 77 as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 108). The researcher made that distance

so she was able to explore the experiences through the eyes of the participants and not her

own.

Being that the researcher was considered an insider, the researcher was looking at

the researcher from the social constructivism point of view. The researcher then was

relying "as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation" (Creswell, 2007,

p. 20) in this case being the joining experience of the participants. Generally, the

subjective meanings from people are formed through the interaction with others

(Creswell, 2007). In the case of this thesis research, the interaction was with other

sorority members as the participants were joining the sorority. Also, the researcher was

looking to the "processes" of interaction among individuals (Creswell, 2007), such as the

learning process on Greek life and the joining process of the participants. Lastly, the

social constructivism philosophy allowed the researcher to position herself in the research

as her interpretation of the information found can be based on her own experiences

(Creswell, 2007).

Research Site

The study was conducted at a Midwestern Predominantly White Research

Institution. This institution has a population of about 24,000 students (University

Nebraska-Lincoln: Factbook, 2010-2011). Out of this population, about 3,000 students

(UNL Greek Semester Report, Spring 2011) are part of a Greek-letter organization. There

are 23 Traditional Greek Sororities and 2 Latina-Based Greek Sororities. The

membership for the Traditional Greek Sororities ranges from 36 to 129 and for the

Latina-Based Greek Sororities there are about 10 members each (UNL Greek Semester

Report, Spring 2011)

Sampling Procedure

The participants for this study were selected through a criterion, purposeful

sampling. According to Creswell (2007), purposeful sampling is when the researcher

"selects individuals…for the study because they can purposefully inform an

understanding of the researcher's problem and central phenomenon in the study" (p. 125).

With 23 Traditional Greek Sororities on campus, the researcher needed to narrow down

the pool. Based on the central question: How do the Greek life experiences of women in

Latina-Based Greek sororities compare with those in Traditional Greek sororities at a

PWI? The researcher decided to find two Traditional Greek Sororities that were most

similar to the Latina-Based Greek Sororities. Hence, the Traditional Greek Sororities that

were chosen were those who did not have a physical building, a house, on this campus.

This characteristic was ideal because Latina-Based Sororities did not have a physical

building either. Although, the chosen Traditional Greek Sororities were in the process of

either restoring or building a house, at some point they did not have a house. Having a

narrower pool of participants, the following characteristics were considered when

recruiting for the research. Participants needed to be members of the selected Traditional

Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities, have been in the sorority for at least

a year, and have had the experience of not living in their house at least for a period of time during their Greek life experience.

With the criteria in place, a list was requested from the Greek Affairs Office at this institution. This list was provided and the recruitment began. Several approaches were taken for recruitment. Potential participants were contacted through email (see Appendix A). The email included a deadline for a response and when the researcher wanted to start interviews. After the first email request, some responses were received. However, they were not enough and a second email was sent (See Appendix B). While the second email request was out and waiting for responses, the researcher found the information to contact the sororities in order for her to attend their weekly meeting. The researcher thought that there was going to be some resistance from the Latina-Based Greek Sororities to letting her attend these meetings, due to the fact that they are more secretive. Yet, it was the Traditional Greek Sororities that did not allow the researcher to attend their meetings. The Traditional Greek presidents did offer to send an email to their sorority members about the research and the need for participants. The Latina-Based Greek Sororities did give the researcher permission to attend their meeting. Thus the opportunity to attend to their meetings was offered to all sororities as a way to be consistent and avoid biases when recruiting.

Even after, the second email and emails to presidents of chapters, the researcher did not have enough participation representation. Nevertheless, the researcher went ahead and scheduled the interviews. Once the list of participants was set, the researcher sent out a reminder email about the interview (see Appendix C) where she let the participants know about the time, place, and how long the interview was going to take.

As the interviews were happening, the researcher did a snowball or networking sampling (Merriam, 2009) by asking participants for the names of other people who may have been interested in participating.

Participants

At the beginning of the thesis research, the researcher was hoping to recruit 16 participants with the following breakdown:

Table 1: Preliminary List of Recruited Participants

Greek Sorority	# of Participants
Traditional Greek Sorority #1	4
Traditional Greek Sorority #2	4
Latina-Based Greek Sorority #1	4
Latina-Based Greek Sorority #2	4

Creswell (2007) recommended 10 participants for a phenomenology study (p. 131), but the researcher was overestimating in case some of the participants dropped from the study. After the recruiting efforts, the final count for participants was as follows:

Table 2: Final List of Recruited Participants

Greek Sorority	# of Participants
Traditional Greek Sorority #1	1
Traditional Greek Sorority #2	3
Latina-Based Greek Sorority #1	3
Latina-Based Greek Sorority #2	4

There were a total of 11 participants; however, the representation for each sorority and each group (Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities) was not equal. The data does provide some insight about the stories of the participants regardless of the group to which group they belong.

Based on the final list of recruited participants, the demographics of the participants varied. With regard to the participants living arrangements, those who lived off-campus still had a roommate who may have been a member of their sorority; however, they did not have a house they lived together by choice. Also, seven out of the eleven are first generation college students and nine out of the eleven can be considered first generation Greek sorority members. Lastly, most of the participants joined their sorority their first year in college. Table 3 provides a more detailed chart of the demographics of the participants.

Instruments and Data Collection

As the interview protocol was being developed, the researcher was purposeful in including the Strange and Banning (2001) environmental components: 1) Physical condition, design and layout; 2) Human aggregate; 3) Organizational structures related to their purposes and goals; and 4) Constructed environment, or the inhabitants' collective perceptions or constructions of the context and cultures of the setting (p. 5) as part of the interview protocol. The interview protocol went through a few drafts and along the way the researcher consulted one of the faculty members in her department to validate that the questions were addressing the four environments.

The data for this study was collected from participants through: semi-structured interview protocols (See Appendix D) and demographic sheets (See Appendix F). The

researcher conducted the eleven interviews. The interviews were audio recorded,

transcribed, and analyzed by the researcher as well. As recommended by Creswell

(2007), the questions used for the interviews as well as the protocol were piloted (p. 133)

and also peer and faculty reviewed. As with the pilot test, the participants were given the

informed consent form (See Appendix E) to read over prior to being interviewed. Once,

the participants read over the informed consent form and signed it and fill out a general

information sheet (See Appendix F), the interview started. The researcher used the

interview protocol as suggested by Creswell (2007, p. 136). The interview protocol

includes: on the left top corner, there is general information about the participant for

future reference, introduction of the researcher, revisiting the informed consent form,

clarifications, and questions. Once the participants had answered all the questions that

the researcher had prepared, the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions

or offer any final comments. After the opportunity to ask questions, the researcher went

over the details with the participants about what was going to happen after the interview.

The details included details about when the transcription was going to be done and the

opportunity to check the accuracy of what they said through the interview with a

member-check as recommended by Merriam, 2009, p. 217-218. The participants had the

opportunity to edit, omit sections of, or prohibit use of their interview.

Storing and Managing the Data

After the data collection, the researcher took the suggestions given by Creswell

(2007) on storing and handling data. The researcher developed backup copies of

computer files (Davidson, 1996 as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 142). Also, the researcher

developed a master list of types of information (Creswell, 2007, p. 142) gathered such as

phenomenon under examination" (p. 253-254). For the purpose of this study, the researcher will take the transcendental or psychological phenomenology so she is able to look at the data with a "fresh perspective" (p. 252-254).

As the researcher analyzed the data, she developed a list of significant statements (horizonalization of the data), then based on these significant statements, another list was developed as nonrepetitive or nonoverlapping statements came up (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). The significant themes were grouped into "meaning units" or themes (p. 159). Once the potential codes/themes surfaced, the researcher took notes on "what" the participants experience was when joining the sorority ("textural description") which would include verbatim examples (p. 159). Also, the researcher took the verbatim examples as a way to describe the "how" of the experience ("structural description") (p. 159) such as where these examples take place.

When the themes and descriptions of the phenomenon were completed, the researcher focused on the essence, which is the primary focus of conducting a phenomenological study (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). Given the researcher was looking at the essence; the researcher used phenomenological reduction which is the "process of continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure or meaning in and of itself" (p. 26). Once the researcher had the themes and descriptions, the Strange and Banning's (2001) four components as well as the hierarchy of learning environment purposes (Figure #2) were considered as a way to make sense and show the significance of the data that was collected.

Throughout this data analysis process, the researcher used different techniques to keep her focus and organized. She read the transcripts (See Appendix J for a Sample of a

Transcript), at least 3 times before making the preliminary summary of the codes along

with the central and sub-questions (See Appendix K). Once the researcher finished

reading the transcripts, she developed the collection matrix with the summary of the

answers to the questions (See Appendix H) while simultaneously pulling the quotes to

support the codes/themes (See Appendix I for a Sample of the Quotes). Once the quotes

were taken from the transcripts, the researcher wrote the preliminary summary of the

codes. The final summary of the codes (See Appendix L) was created as the researcher

began to write the thesis.

Strategies to Validate the Data

In order to have accurate data, the researcher used several methods to ensure

accuracy. One of the strategies that the researcher used was triangulation. The

researcher triangulated from multiple sources of data (Merriam, 2009, p. 215) such as

interviews from different people and demographic sheets. Another strategy that was used

to ensure accuracy of the data was *member checks* (Merriam, 2009, p. 215). With the

member checks, the participants got the opportunity to see their own transcripts make any

chances they saw necessary. They were given a week to look it over and returned it to

the researcher. The researcher received 9 replies out of 11 saying that the participant had

read the transcripts. Two out of the nine made changes, the changes were respected and

the researchers made those changes in the transcript. Another validation technique was

the researcher explained her *researcher's position* or *flexivity* (p. 129), where she

clarified her biases, dispositions, and assumptions with regard to the study (p. 129). In

terms of external validity, the researcher used an auditor to look at the codes/themes of

the data. The auditor was provided with the transcripts (See Appendix G for a Sample of

a Transcript), the collection matrix with the summary of the answers to the questions (See

Appendix H), quotes to support the codes/themes (See Appendix I for a Sample of the

Quotes), a preliminary summary of the codes along with the central and sub-questions

(See Appendix K), and a final summary of the codes (See Appendix L). Besides the

auditor being provided the documents above, the researcher provided him the whole

thesis, but more specifically she had the auditor review chapters four and five. Once the

audit was complete, the auditor provided the researcher a letter of external audit

attestation (See Appendix M).

Ethical Considerations

Any ethical concerns that might arise from this study were addressed as the

researcher sought Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the institution.

However, the researcher was aware of the ethical concerns that had to be taken into

consideration during the duration of the study. For instance, the fact that she is part of a

Latina-Based Greek organization was a concern since her experiences might bring some

bias into the research. Nevertheless, this was a concern that comes with any research that

is being conducted. The researcher addressed this issue by being purposeful when

"bracketing" her experiences throughout the research process. Also, the researcher took

into consideration the "Ethical Issues Checklist" by Patton (2002) (Merriam, 2009, p.

233), which includes the following:

- Explaining purpose of the inquiry and methods to be used

- Promises and reciprocity

- Risk assessment

- Confidentiality

- Informed Consent Form

- Data access and ownership

- Interviewer mental health

- Advice (who will be your counselor on ethical matters)

With the purpose of the study and the method in mind some of these ethical concerns were considered.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the Greek life

experiences of women in Traditional Greek sororities and Latina-Based Greek sororities

at a Midwestern Predominantly White Institution. The intent of this study was to

contribute to the Greek Life literature by provide an insight into why college students are

choosing to be members of a sorority when there are other organizations and because of

the negative reputation associated with Greek Life based on what people see and talk

about. In this chapter, the researcher presented the findings from the study by

introducing the themes that emerged from the interviews with the participants.

Introduction of Participants

In order to be a participant in this study, participants needed to be members of the

selected Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities, have been in the

sorority for at least a year, and have not had lived in a house at one point during her

Greek Life experience. With the criteria in place, the researcher conducted a total of

eleven interviews.

Table 3 provides a more detailed chart of the demographics of the participants.

This table contains categories such as pseudonym, which sorority the participants belong,

hometown, social economic status, living arrangements (on-campus/off-campus) first

generation college student, first generation Greek member, grade point average, and

when they joined the sorority. The demographics of the participants included with the

majority of the participants living off campus, with those living off campus, they had a

roommate who is in their sorority. Also, seven out of the eleven are first generation

college students and nine out of the eleven can be considered first generation Greek sorority members. Lastly, most of the participants joined their sorority their first year in college.

Overview of Research Questions and Themes

The following themes represent the information that was provided through the interviews conducted with the participants.

- RQ1: How did members first learn about Greek Life?

  o Theme 1: I saw on TV…

  o Theme 2: A Personal Connection…

  o Theme 3: Open Recruitment: The Joining Process

- RQ2: Why did members decide to join their organization?

  o Theme 1: Felt Way More at Home and Real Friends

  o Theme 2: Get Along With…

  o Theme 3: A Group of People to Rely On

  o Theme 4: Keep My Academics Up

- RQ3: Did the sorority meet their expectations?

  o Theme 1: Exceeded My Expectations?

  o Theme 2: Not Having a House: Closer Together

  o Theme 3: Having a Chair or Chairs?

- RQ4: Would members join the sorority again if they had to do it over again?

  o Theme 1: Definitely Again

  o Theme 2: Learned That…

  o Theme 3: I would have told myself…

The first research question on learning about Greek Life covered the idea of how the students were first exposed to this part of college life. This included media such as movies and websites or through the recruitment efforts by the sororities. Given what students are hearing about Greek Life this study focused on why women are joining a sorority and the different reasons why the participants choose to be part of their sorority. The reasons for joining became the themes. Once someone is a member, how is it like to be a part of the sorority? Becoming a member of a sorority at times can be a huge part of someone's life, thus how were the participants' relationships outside Greek Life? Being part of an organization such as a sorority may meet or not the expectations that one has or one's own perceptions about Greek life may change. Finally, knowing what the participants know now about Greek Life will they join the sorority again?

RQ1: How did members first learn about Greek Life?

The ways by which the participants learned about their sororities were based on what they saw on TV, the joining process, and the recruitment process.

Theme 1: I saw on TV…

The majority of the participants mentioned they learned about Greek Life based on what they saw on TV prior to coming to college. With the TV being one of the primary ways the participants learned about Greek life, their knowledge was limited and was mostly based on stereotypes. For instance, Sarah, a Traditional Greek Sorority member, said "I wasn't really interested in joining a sorority because of how I've seen portrayed in movies and TVs, it just seemed like something that I wanted to be involved with." Another participant, Anna, a Traditional Greek Sorority member, goes on to explain just like Sarah that what she saw on TV was not something she wanted to join or

was unsure of joining. Anna said "I thought that was very interesting and I thought it was rather ridiculous so just the way it was portrayed in the movie (referring to Legally Blonde)…I did look into some of them (sororities) before I came into college. I wasn't sure if I wanted to join one or not." If most students have an experience similar to that of Sarah and Anna, then students can become hesitant to participate in Greek life.

Also, participants mentioned the fact that they were only familiar with Traditional Greek Sororities. Two participants stated, Lisa (Latina-Based Greek Sorority member), "I heard I guess before I came to college everything I knew was about Greek life the Traditional sororities that I saw on TV." Also, Michelle, a Latina-Based Greek Sorority member said "Pretty much everything I knew coming into college was about the Traditional sororities and fraternities like what you see in movies and stuff." By just seeing Greek Life in movies and television, students can turn away from the idea of becoming a member even before they set a foot on campus. However, this also keeps them from knowing about the different sororities that Greek Life has to offer.

Learning about Greek Life and Sorority life was just the beginning of a journey for all of the participants in this study. Regardless of what sorority the participants belonged to (e.g. Latina-Based Greek Sorority or Traditional Greek Sorority), for the most part, the participants learned about Greek Life and Sorority Life by watching TV.

Theme 2: A Personal Connection…

Even when some participants were indecisive about participating in a sorority, they gave the sororities a chance by getting to know more about them. Besides movies and television, the participants voiced their opinions of how they learned more about their own sorority and the members through the personal connection they develop with some

members prior to going through recruitment. For example, Liz, a Traditional Greek Sorority member, said:

> they (her friends) kinda start talking to us about possibly joining and to me I was like "this is a sorority, that's way too much estrogen I can't handle all that." So many girls you know it's going to be bad. But my friend dragged me to one of the recruitment events "just go, just go, and see what happens "and I was like "ok, fine."

After going to the event, Liz realized the following:

> It was actually half way through the night before they even mentioned the sorority. They really wanted for me to get to know them in a person level. They introduced themselves and a group of three around me. We just talked to about my hometown, what I used to do in high school what they did in high school. It was nice not to walk into a market pitch.

By Liz giving the sorority a chance, she realized that the group of women wanted to get to know her first before actually wanting her to join the sorority. The personal connection was important for Liz when she was learning about the sorority.

Having that personal connection first was something that other participants expressed such as Laylani, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority:

> I guess a lot of it had to do through like the approach of the girls I had one on one meeting with them. I just felt like I could connect better with the other, with the one that I ended up joining and the principles my organization stands for, ones that I hold very close to my heart and uuhm I guess yeah just the principles they were really big.

Another member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, Jennifer, also felt a personal connection with the members of the sorority prior to joining: "They were just trying to get the one-on-one interaction with me, trying to get to know me, trying to befriend me."

The personal connection was a useful tool for the participants as they were choosing to be part of a sorority. Also, participants expressed that having a personal connection prior to joining was helpful since many of them were not convinced of joining because of the information they had about sororities before attending college. Participants from both Latina-Based Greek Sororities and Traditional Greek Sororities liked having the personal connection before joining the sorority.

Theme 3: Open Recruitment: The Joining Process.

Participants got to learn more about the sorority process by the way the women joined the sorority. The sororities to which the participants belonged to practice what they called open recruitment. Mongell (1991), describes open recruitment or continuous open biddings as having a sorority (usually Traditional Greek Sororities) that has not received new members or that has received new members but is nevertheless below the total allowable chapter size (q) so it is allowed to recruit additional members by simply extending them invitations to join" (p. 444). Also, under continuous open bidding "sororities are not restricted to make a single set of bids but may recruit continuously until their membership reaches T (or, in the case of sororities whose initial membership m was greater than T - q, until they have recruited q new members)" (p. 444). The Traditional Greek Sororities who participated in this study followed this continuous open bidding approach. On the other hand, the Latina-Based Greek Sororities also follow an

open recruitment approach; however, they are not as pressed to meet a certain number of members.

As a way to understand the joining experiences of the participants, the researcher asked the question: "Can you tell me how the joining process works for your sorority?" The joining process differed for each sorority, the sorority members who were interviewed came from smaller sororities thus their initial joining process were somewhat similar. Open recruitment was a process that the sororities members took pride in because open recruitment allows the current membership to get to know the future members. For example, Liz, a Traditional Greek Sorority member, explained the idea of open recruitment:

> My organization is different we do open recruitment year around. So we have
> recruitment events so we will put up posters come look at us come what we are
> about. People will come and then we'll have our friends like "come with us." We
> will go to an event, and they will get their name, number, emails. And then our
> recruitment chair will go through and sit down and have conversation with the
> girls, go get coffee with them. Trying to see if they would be good fit for the
> sorority and then as a group we will decided if we feel that they exemplify what
> we are about, if they have similar morals, and like they have the same goals as we
> want.

Also, Laylani (a Latina-Based Greek Sorority member) and Anna (a Traditional Greek Sorority member) further stated how the sorority members got to know the prospective members for a semester before having them join the sorority:

Before any of us joins, we go through a whole semester of getting to know girls that we are wanting to join. We really develop that friendship first before they decide to join the sorority.

…open rush, you get to know the girls over the course of the semester and you can join towards the end. Which I personally really liked because I got to know the people before I jumped in.

Members of Latina-Based Greek Sororities explained the joining process for the Latina-Based Greek Sororities as "an experience that you will never forget that's going to uplift you as a woman." Lizeth went on to say "…the way that they make it is when you learn about the organization you also learn a lot about yourself." Since the perspective members are learning about the organization and themselves, Laylani expressed that "it is a lot of time commitment it takes…its like another class… you're basically another three credit course because there's a lot of learning involved." Therefore, through the joining process, prospective members to Latina-Based Greek Sororities are going through a learning process.

Another way to understand how the joining process worked was by asking the participants to describe the women that joined their sorority. The majority of the participants stated that their sorority is open to all kinds of people. For example, Adele, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, mentioned:

Yeah, I don't find that (a specific type of women) in my sorority because like there is people of all different weights, sizes, hair color, eye color. Pretty much all different.

Generally, the Latina-Based Greek Sororities stated that their sorority includes all types of people as well even though they are Latina-Based. For example, Jennifer, a member of a Latina-Based Sorority said:

> I would say nationwide we are very culturally like enhanced we have a lot of different cultures in our sorority. Even just in our chapter, we have Asian, Indian, Mexican, Salvadorian, White, Blacks, so we are really diverse and I love that.

Other participants expressed the idea that they look for women who are going to represent the sorority well and stand for the sorority's values. Liz, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority said "…I guess we want someone who's not going to be like, we want someone to represent us well." Then Jessica, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, stated:

> I wouldn't necessarily believe that I think we don't discriminate that anyone that has an interested in the organization regardless of your ethnicity, background, color of hair, color of eyes. If you stand for our pillars then obviously you have something on common right of them bat.

A question that was asked to the participants in order to determine whether or not they had knowledge or awareness of the joining process in other sororities was: "How do you think the joining process differs from Multicultural Greek sororities and Traditional Greek sororities?" The majority of the participants from the Traditional Greek Sororities did not know much about the joining process of the Latina-Based Greek Sororities besides having smaller numbers, open recruitment, and philanthropies. On the other hand, the majority of the participants from the Latina-Based Greek Sororities knew more about the joining process of the Traditional Greek Sororities. For example, Jennifer, a

member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority mentioned that there were some similarities

between the Traditional Greek Sororities and the Latina-Based Greek Sororities joining

process:

> I would also say that for like they might not do their process secretive but they
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> also need to know, they also have like a code that they need to know like, like we
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> have like a motto and a mascot. They also have it too and stuff like that.

Lisa went further and said:

> I feel like the girls in Traditional Greeks, they join the sorority they pick that
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> particular one for a reason. Just like I picked my sorority for a reason. I mean
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> they have their reasons for joining the sorority. And I have mine. I feel that's
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> would be the similarity. We just don't pick a random one to just pick a sorority.
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> We looked into them.

Also, the joining process of the participants from Latina-Based Greek Sororities

and Traditional Greek Sororities is classified as open recruitment. Thus, the joining

process is pretty similar as they recruit year around. Although, the Latina-Based Greek

Sorority members were more specific about the joining process and talked more about

how the joining process is a way to grow as a woman. Joining the sorority is a huge time

commitment for its members but a learning experience worthwhile for many of them.

When the participants described the members of their sororities, everyone, did not matter

which one they belong to, said they accept all types of women as part of their

organizations.

One of the questions where there was a difference between the Latina-Based

Greek Sorority members and Traditional Greek Sorority members was when asked about

their knowledge of other sororities. All of the Latina-Based Greek Sorority members had some knowledge of the Traditional Greek Sororities, whereas, all of the Traditional Greek Sororities had minimal or no knowledge about how the Latina-Based Greek Sororities worked. This difference may be due to the fact that Traditional Greek Sororities tend to be more open about whom they are and Latina-Based Greek Sororities are more private. The difference can also come from the way their membership is educated about Greek Life. This difference is definitely a topic that can be further explored. Based on what they have learned, the participants chose to join their sorority.

Knowing about how the participants learned about Greek Life, such as watching TV, the recruiting approach, the joining process, and who is joining was useful to the research because the information gathered provided a foundation for the rest of the themes.

RQ2: Why did they decide to join their organization?

When the participants were asked what were you looking for in a Greek organization? And why did you decide to join your sorority? These were the questions that began to give an insight about the joining experiences of the participants. After learning about Greek life and sororities, there were many reasons why the participants decided to join their own sorority. The reasons why the participants joined were that the sorority was a home away from home, they got along with the current members of the sorority, and a group they could rely on for support, guidance, and keeping up their academics.

Theme 1: Felt Way More at Home and Real Friends.

One of the reasons that a few participants decided to join their sorority was due to having a sense of being at home. Adele, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, stated:

> I just felt way more at home, I felt welcome right away and like they were all just like really relax and like easy to talk to which was what I was looking for.

Also, Lizeth, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, felt a sense of having a home by being a member of the sorority:

> I guess in the sense that belonging. I had you know I was six hours away from home I knew one other person here and so you know when they starting talking to us they were really friendly, and just really nice and trying to make connections with us. That's one thing that I looked is the fact that they made me feel at home.

Some participants realized that the sorority members could be their friends, their real friends unlike the members of other sororities because of their behavior towards them. Jennifer, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority expressed the friendship reason:

> But I realized that when the other sorority found out that I was talking to my sorority and that I was interested in them I wouldn't say that (refer to a sorority) and couple of them I will not say their names. They found out that I was talking to girls in my sorority and they stop talking to me. They were like fake friends instead of real friends; they were trying to get me interested in the sorority. And two girls from my sorority knew I was hanging out with girls form the other sororities. They knew they still call me all the time, hang out with me all the time, so they showed me that they were real friends and that's how I chose.

The participants from both the Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities were looking for a group, which they considered real friends. For some participants, having the sorority members make them feel like they were at home was important since home was far away from campus. Some participants also felt that they were learning about the sorority and that the sorority members were real friends since they did not care about whom they were spending time with.

Theme 2: Get Along With...

Some participants were more concerned about who the members of the organization were and whether or not they could relate to them. For instance, Anna, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, mentioned: "…I was mostly concerned with who will be in. uuhm cuz I just wanted to make sure that I found people that I got along with." Lisa, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority also expressed the same idea as Anna:

> And I can really see that I would get along with them. There was going to be someone else that I could talk to besides my real sisters at home. And some were actually; like college process and that I really saw myself and that we could connect.

Even Laylani, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority said " …she (a member of the sorority) named some of the girls that were in it. That interested me, too obviously cuz i knew some of the girls, too. Knowing some of the members was a reason for wanting to join the sorority. Additionally, some participants wanted to be surrounded by women that looked like them, in this case, the participants being Latinas. For example, Jennifer, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, mentioned:

She (her roommate) gave me some information about it. But it just didn't feel…I

didn't find that it was me. And I would feel out of place. I know at least at her

house, they had maybe one member that was a minority and the rest were white.

Another participant, Jessica, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, talked about

the fact of wanting to be surrounded by Latinas due to her identity. She was also looking

for a group that came from a similar background and that gave her the opportunity to

learn from them. She said:

> Growing up my mother is White and my father is Mexican. Uuhm so I did have
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> the identity issue where do I fit in. You know, I'm not brown to be white, but
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> then I'm too white to be brown. And uuhm that's something that I was really
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> hoping that I could learn more about to be just surrounded by Latinas and
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> knowing that I was no going to be the only one in that situation.

Participants from both Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek

Sororities wanted to know who was in the sorority and see if they could relate to them as

they were making the commitment to be part of the sorority.

Theme 3: A Group of People to Rely On.

Having someone to be of guidance and support was one reason why some

participants wanted to be part of the sorority. Two participants, Jessica and Rosa,

members of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, felt the need to have someone to be her big

sister:

> I have never had the guidance and I was kinda like no one, I was like "Oh my
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> gosh, one they look like me, two I would have all these big sisters. I would
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> actually be able; they would be able to tell me what to do."

…I've always been a good support system that I wanted to see what it was like to have sisters because I didn't have older sisters it kinda felt to know that. That people could be my older sister.

Lisa, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, who found a connection with the members in the sorority stated:

And just talking to them I found the sorority that specialy a lot of the girls spoke Spanish and that's something that I didn't find that in high school. And like they just a similar life that I did and just seeing that they were interested in academics and they were still in college and pursuing higher education. I felt that's something that I could connect to. I felt they could really be a support network for me.

The sorority was an opportunity for the participants to have a group that would hold them accountable for their academics. For instance, Adele, (a Traditional Greek Sorority member), wanted a structured place so that she could keep her academics up. She knew that the sorority would provide a place like that. Finally, Sara, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, was looking for a group that she could rely on:

But I was looking just getting involved with a group of people that I can rely on because I'm kinda of an introvert. A group of women that I can really feel like I can open up to. The women that I'm involved with, they hold me accountable for my grades, holding me accountable in my faith.

Once again, participants from both Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities were concerned with being part of a group that they can rely on for guidance, support, and accountability as they continue their educational career.

Theme 4: Keep My Academics Up.

Some participants had the reason of academics for wanting to join a sorority. For instance, Adele, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, wanted a place where she can take care of her academics; she said "…keep my academics up. And I knew a sorority would provide that for me. And it would a structured place for me in the craziness of college." Another participant, Jessica, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, knew she did not have the Grade Point Average (GPA) that she needed so she raised her GPA so she could join the sorority. Jessica said:

> When it came to academics I didn't even have the GPA, I started off freshman year, I had a 2.0 something and the requirement at the time was a 2.5 so I was like great I will try my sophomore you know semester kinda get that up and I brought it up and it was not yet to 2.5 so it took a couple of classes to go above that. So I applied and it was a 2.6.

Then, Lisa, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, was happy to find that the sorority focused on academics. She stated:

> …she (a member of a sorority) told kinda what the organization stood for and I realize that it was more academically it wasn't just social. So I decided that was the main reason that I decided to join.

Lastly, the participants from the Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities were looking for a place where pursuing academics was supported. The reasons why the participants decided to join were consistent regardless if they joined a Traditional Greek Sorority or Latina-Based Greek Sorority. The participants were

looking for people that made them feel like home, were real friends, who they could rely on and relate to, and a place where their academics mattered.

RQ3: Did the sorority meet their expectations?

Being a member of an organization such as a sorority is different because the membership is considered to be for life. Thus, if the sorority does or does not meet the expectations is essential to know since sororities take this into account in order to grow and better educate the membership about the sorority's expectations.

Theme 1: Exceeded My Expectations?

For the most part, the expectations that the participants had for the sorority were met or even exceeded. At the chapter level, their expectations were met even more than they imagined. For example, Sarah, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority stated that she opened up to other people:

> Well, it kinda exceeded my expectations. I don't know I was not expected to really be open up as much as I have. I'm kinda introvert in kinda sharing who I'm personally with other people. So it has been great with the sorority I just feel pretty comfortable and I can make as many jokes as I want and not feel. I feel comfortable around in a way that I haven't been able to before.

Many of the participants felt that the sorority helped them grow as a person. Adele, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, went on to say "it [sorority] just teaches you life lessons that you can use in the long run." Another participant, Jennifer (a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority) stated: "I don't think I would have came back to college if it wouldn't have been for the sorority."

Besides growing as a person, the sorority provided the participants with an opportunity to grow as a professional. For example, Lisa, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, stated:

> … to help me grow as a person as a woman. Like I'm more outgoing now, I'm definitely more confident in the decisions that I make, like just not in life but educationally. Career wise, it provided the support that I needed of women who are in higher education. Who have careers and we're Latinas and so they know how family is an important part and kinda balancing family. And kinda pursuing your education and not having a family right away. Just kinda that balance.

Jessica (a member of a Latina-Based Sorority) similar to what Lisa stated said:

> … in regards of networking, it definitely fulfill those obligations because I'm meeting people constantly all the time just to talk about things and they want the sorority to do, all this stuff. So that's great I love when people contact me, professors, "Hey we need you to co-sponsor this, we need to do that" and the guidance, the expectations of guidance of older sisters and alumni in terms of careers and being so close to graduation. These are the steps that I took or this is the route that I did for grad school; look at my cover letter, look at my applications and that stuff. They have been very helpful with that.

Another participant, Laylani (a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority) had the same experience as Jessica and Lisa. Laylani mentioned:

> It really built me up as a leader to situations. One of them us, being so small and trying to do so much, and there's so little of us. I feel like nothing is impossible anymore hahaha I can do it all now. I really network is like a big thing for me cuz

getting to know faculty members and like and use them as resources is the most important thing. Like you don't have to do it by yourself there's resources out there that they can help you. They recognized for who are and we have done for like the university. So it's always nice that recognition. And just yeah that's a big part mainly.

Some participants expressed that some of their expectations had not been met. One participant from a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, Laylani, saw her academics fall due to the size of the sorority. She said:

my academics have fallen since I joined. I mean it's not like is terrible but you know for statistics "ooh uhm after you joined the sorority it helps your GPA cuz they do study hours, and do this and that, and your GPA increases after you joined" I've kinda actually seen the opposite. It's like because…especially Multicultural Greeks maybe its different for Traditionals. I have actually seen a research done that grades do tend to fall down because they are smaller and they have to do so much and they don't focus on academics. That's one thing. One downfall I guess.

Other expectations that were not met were related more towards the way the national headquarters worked. Jennifer, a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, stated: "… one expectation that the sorority hasn't met is, national, nation wide, I don't think our executive board members do a lot of their chairs sometimes." Similar to Jennifer, Jessica, a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, had something to say about the national headquarters:

the thing that we struggle the most is our directors, our national board because we are so young still when you break down when we were founded, compared to when Black organizations, fraternities and sororities, were founded they have this great alumni networking and these great boards that are being. Our national board is earning nothing but it is another full-time job for them. I hope and I'm still waiting to see that I would love to see these women to making money.

For the most part, the participants felt their expectations were met or even exceeded as part of being in the sorority. At the chapter level, the participants from Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities had their expectations met. Some of the participants were glad to have been given the opportunity to grow as a person and professionally. However, at the national level, especially the Latina-Based Greek Sorority members felt their national boards can do a better job as they work with the chapters.

Theme 2: Not Having a House: Closer Together.

Having a house, physical space, is sometimes one expectation as being part of a sorority; however, for some of the participants having a house was not an option before or will never be an option due to low numbers and finances. The researcher asked the participants: "How has not having a house affected your (sorority) experience?" For the most part, the participants saw not having a house as a benefit. Just like Liz, Lisa (a member of a Latina-Based Sorority) said:

…I think that has made us closer together because we have to other ways to be together and to hang out and you get to the point you are always hanging out and you are always seeing each other because of the events that you hold. I mean you

become so close together with the girls, that is like "lets have lunch today, lets have dinner, lets spend the night". I think you always see each other. I feel that a house, it doesn't stand in the way of our sisterhood.

For the most part, the participants saw not having a house as not having any effect on their sorority experience. Anna, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, did not know any difference between having or not having a house. She stated:

I don't know what's like to have one. I guess it is a little bit different because we don't get to see each other all the time so we don't fight as nearly as much.

Laylani, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, did not see any difference either because they had an office space that they considered their "home." She said:

No, I mean we have an office at the cultural center and I mean basically the cultural center is our house. Like we basically live there. We always studying in there and…we are always in our office if we need anything.

Liz, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, saw that not having a house helped them to be closer together. She mentioned: "We don't have a house, like I said we appreciate the time that we have together." Just like Liz, Lisa (a member of a Latina-Based Sorority) said:

…I think that has made us closer together because we have to other ways to be together and to hang out and you get to the point you are always hanging out and you are always seeing each other because of the events that you hold. I mean you become so close together with the girls, that is like "lets have lunch today, lets have dinner, lets spend the night". I think you always see each other. I feel that a house, it doesn't stand in the way of our sisterhood.

The participants also felt that not having a house gave them the ability to do other activities besides sorority activities and it gave them the choice of hanging out with sisters. Liz (a member of Traditional Greek Sorority) and Michelle (a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority) expressed this feeling:

> …so that's nice that we have that ability to have more of our lives and do everything at our time versus sorority house dinner meets at this time and sorority stuff is this time. I feel that sometimes they are regulated because they are in a house.

> It is good to have that option that we don't have to live with each other. But we can it's we are choosing to live with each other rather than we have to live with each other because we have a house.

Other participants felt that having a house would have been beneficial to get to know their sisters. For example, Jessica, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, said that having a house would have been positive:

> I think if it would have any effect it would have been positive. I think it would have given the opportunity to get to know us even more for those sisters that live in the house. I would definitely be opened to it; there are days when we wished we had a house. Even a rental property.

Liz (a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority) thought that having a house would be more convenient since they could have meetings in the house without taking the time reserve rooms at school:

> Like I don't have that social bond like 24/7 like the other houses do. That kinda hinders us, I mean I don't want to say that hinder us kinda makes us appreciate

the time we have together a little bit more. Reserving the union is kinda a pain at times. Cuz we are like "we have to get a computer now, a cart like go through bylaws and put up on the projector" and we have to go and reserve that and sometimes they lose the reservation and we have to figure out how to get one. Everything has its trails. I don't think it has overly hinder us.

With the expectations of having a house, there were mix responses from members of Latina-Based Greek Sororities and Traditional Greek Sororities. They did not know how not having a house had affected their experience and what the benefits were of having a house or not. Some participants felt that not having the choice of not living together was great as it allowed them to find other ways to bond with the sisters. Thus, their sisterhood was not based on having a house. Although, some felt that having a house would be beneficial in terms of not having to reserve rooms or being able to have social events.

Theme 3: Having A Chair or Chairs?

Being a member of a sorority also brings the expectation of holding leadership positions. For Greek Organizations having people in leadership positions is necessary in order to run the sorority. Sororities share a common organizational format, however "the makeup of the group may vary depending on geographic location, size, and type of school, the racial composition and background of the organization, and the social class of its members" (Handler, 1995, p. 239). The make-up of the group played a role for these sororities. For instance, the members of Latina-Based Greek Sororities because of small numbers felt that they did not have a choice when holding a position. This feeling may be due to how long the participant had been in the sorority and which organization they

belonged to. For example, Lisa, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, has been in the sorority for about two years and she said the following:

> Especially in smaller chapters like girls hold different chairs, right now I hold chairs. I mean it's rare that one girl will hold one chair. We are a small number and there are so many chairs. I held probably every single chair since I joined. Everyone gets experience of holding a chair.

Other participants expressed the same experience as Lisa, Lizeth (a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority) and Rosa (a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority) said:

> …when we joined we came in right away, I was treasurer right the day that I joined. You know we had a meeting right after we joined, "ok well this is," we did we got to choose which jobs we wanted. Each of us got four jobs we had because we had the four the executive chairs, president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer you have a chair for each principle that we have. So we have, like nine chairs for four people.

> Yeah, they can, like if we don't cross enough girls and a lot of people graduate sometimes we ended up with only couple of people. Lets say like some chapters are really small one or two people and they have to hold all of the chairs. Which it's probably really difficult because just one chair is a lot but yeah sometimes you have to hold more than one.

Even when the sororities have small numbers, some sororities do not have all members hold a position. For instance, Sarah (a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority) said:

> It's not like everyone, it's not a requirement that you must hold a position at one point; it's open to everyone. We just had elections last week, I think every single

girl was nominated for a position and you have a couple of weeks to think about

to either accept or decline the nomination if they want to.

Another participant had a similar experience as Sarah, Michelle (a member of a Latina-

Based Greek Sorority) stated:

…right now we are big enough that not everyone has to have a position but at

times there is like if its smaller you have to hold more than one position if it is big

enough you don't have to hold a position.

For this theme, there was a difference in the way the leadership positions were

filled within the sorority. The Latina-Based Greek Sorority members felt they did not

have a choice when it came to holding being a chair. They needed to hold multiple chairs

in order for the chapter to be run. On the other hand, the Traditional Greek Sorority

members saw that having a leadership position as an option and being able to decline was

a choice. This difference may be due to the fact that the Traditional Greek Sororities still

had more participants than the Latina-Based Greek sororities even though they were both

small sororities. In the Latina-Based Greek Sororities, there are too many chairs that

everyone needs to hold more than one position.

As the sororities continue to exist, their members need to consider the

expectations that they have for themselves and the organization. Also, the expectations

of having a physical space such as a house and the leadership roles the membership plays

in the organization needs to be taken into consideration.

RQ4: Would they join the sorority if they had to do it over again?

Knowing about the joining process and expectations was important to learning

about the essence of the joining experiences of the participants. However, another way to

reflect and know more about their experiences is by asking them if they would join again, taking into account the information that they know have. Also, the interview was an opportunity for the participants to reflect on how the joining process was for them and others, what they learned about themselves, and what they would have told themselves prior to joining the sorority based on what they know now.

Theme 1: Definitely Again.

Throughout the interview, the participants were asked to reflect about their joining experience. One of the questions that the researcher asked was "Knowing what you know now, would you join your sorority again and why?" All of the participants said that they definitely would join a sorority again. Adele, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, realized:

> …it was a hard process to get up here. But now it's so so worth it. If I would
> have known then I would not have freaked I would have done (sorority name) a
> lot sooner.

Other participants felt that the sorority had made them who they are now. For instance, Laylani, a member of a Latina-Based Sorority, said: "I will join a Multicultural sorority because it's made me who I am. Related to what Laylani said, Jennifer (a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority) mentioned:

> I would go with my sorority definitely again just because I would never replace
> what I have gained from it and without it I don't think I would be the woman that
> I'm now and I think in the future being knowing uhm and being a sister, my
> sorority is going to help me out.

Finally, Lisa, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, understood that Greek Life is not for everyone, but the sorority had given her purpose. She stated:

Greek life is not for everyone but if it is for you and you know it then it definitely gives you purpose for something. You have a purpose to do, I guess you have a purpose to con…be involved in something that's bigger than just yourself and just your career goals, and you are just not focus on yourself, is about how you and a group of girls can help the community or help promote your ideals and awareness. I will definitely join again.

With regard to the question of whether the participants would join the sorority again if they had the opportunity to do so, there was a consensus that they would. This agreement came from Traditional Greek Sorority members and Latina-Based Greek Sorority members. All of the participants seemed to have had a positive experience thus far. For some of them it has been a life changing experience. For others the sorority has given them a reason to continue with their education.

Theme 2: Learned That…

As a way to continue to reflect about their experience, the participants were asked: "What have you learned about yourself by joining your sorority?" All of the participants experienced some type of learning. Adele, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, said: "I have learned how to accept more people and no matter what happens forgive and forget I used to hold grudges." Other participants learned some skills that can be used in the long run. Anna, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, stated: "…I gotten better in public speaking and making functional handout with like all the necessary information the other information gets kinds way side." Besides public

speaking other members learned about time management, Laylani, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, said:

>…I've learned that I have make time when there's none. When I thought there is no more time in the day to do something, you find time, there's always time. I learned to not make excuses.

The learning went as far as realizing that they are capable of talking to others and stating their opinions. Michelle, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, stated: "I learned that like I have an important opinion and I can share it. And like I became more confident in myself." Just like Michelle, Sarah, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, saw a change in herself:

>I learned that I'm a lot more capable of things then I thought before uuh just like being so shy coming into college. I'm more capable of like uuuh there have been a few times with helping out with recruitment and things like that. You going up to strangers and talking about the sorority is not something that I would have done before. Especially the first days of rush week, we were put in pairs and a group of girls and then would be 7 girls that this person had to talk to about this sorority. Having to lead these conversations that something that I wouldn't have been able to do before. It was kinda eye opening of being able of doing that.

The skills that the participants from Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities have gained are skills that are likely to be transferable to other areas of their lives: careers and school.

Theme 3: I would have told myself…

The participants when asked the question "Knowing what you know now, what tips/advice would you tell yourself prior to joining a sorority?" Their advice was to prepare for the time commitment that the sorority requires. For example, Jennifer, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, said:

> …I wish have told me the time commitment. Well they did tell me the time commitment but someone to actually broken down the time commitment. Because you can tell someone or would be busy with this as much as you want not until you get in it you will know how busy you are going to be with it. I think that's another thing is that you are going to be busy. With being a chapter so small. I know we are bigger. Last semester, last year, last fall semester, we only had five girls and it was, we were always constantly, constantly doing something like if I wasn't at work, or school, I was doing sorority stuff. I wasn't able to hold any other position with any other club. I was so busy with the sorority. So I wish someone you are really going to be that busy.

Another advice was to be ready for sorority business because sorority life is not all about having fun. Jessica, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, stated:

> So that's something that I would definitely prepare myself because I didn't realize with the sorority comes all this business you do think we are just going to party every weekend we are just going to have fun, take these pictures and have a great time. That's not the reality you have to throw events and you have to be known on campus. Obviously, it all makes sense after you learned about it.

Other participants talked about learning about Greek Life a lot earlier. Liz, a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority, expressed the following:

> I will probably have told myself to not be shut off by like uuhm I came in here thinking that I didn't want to be in a sorority, it's ridiculous, that's just dumb. I

would have told myself don't be so close-minded and go out there give a chance to learn more.

The participants also talked about what advice they would tell others who might be interested in Greek Life. For example, Laylani (a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority), stated: "Just know that this (sorority life) is going to take your whole life…But you will love it." Lastly, Jennifer, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, stated:

> … don't judge a book by its cover I guess just because for anyone who's trying to join a sorority whether it's Traditional or Latina-based or even African-American based, don't judge a book by its cover because what exactly what they do and how they do their stuff and it's not always like the stereotypes it might be different.

The advice that the participants would have told themselves prior to joining comes from Traditional Greek Sorority members and Latina-Based Greek Sororities. The participants agreed that the sorority takes time and they wish they would have known about it and that they would have joined sooner.

Conclusion

The participants experienced a journey as they joined their sororities. The way that they learned about Greek Life was based on what they saw on TV, a personal connection they made prior to recruitment, or the way that they were recruited. Once the participants joined the sorority, there was the question of why join a sorority? For many of the participants, the reasons included the sorority was a home away from home, they got along with whoever was already in the sorority or a way to keep up their academics. Since they were already members of a sorority, the participants were asked if their

expectations were met. The majority of the participants said that the sorority exceeded their expectations with an exception of working with the national headquarters. Even with the expectation of having a house, they felt that for the most part not having a house had benefitted them by being closer together as a sorority. Similar to not having a house, being in a small sorority brought them closer. Some participants saw that having leadership positions such as chairs as not being an option but a necessity to be able to run the chapter. With the experience of being in a sorority and knowing what they know, the participants were asked the question if they would join the sorority again if they had the chance to join again? The participants said that they would definitely join again because the sorority had made them who they are now and they had learned skills that they can use in the long run. Lastly, knowing what they knew about Greek Life, what advice would they had given themselves prior to joining their sorority.

With the themes in place, Chapter 5 focused on what the themes mean based on the literature and the theoretical framework. Also, this last chapter included some suggestions on how sororities can be better served in the different colleges and universities.

<center>**Chapter Five**</center>

<center>**Discussion**</center>

Introduction

Before continuing with the discussion, the purpose of the study will be restated along with the main questions and sub-questions. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the joining experiences of women in Traditional Greek sororities and Latina-Based Greek sororities at a Midwestern Predominantly White Institution. Given the purpose, the researcher formulated the main question: How do the joining experiences of women in Latina-Based Greek sororities compare with those in Traditional Greek sororities?

Since the study usesd the phenomenological approach; the researcher was looking at the essence of joining a sorority. The essence of joining a sorority was explored through the research questions: how did the participants learned about the sorority, why did they join the sorority, how their expectations were met, and if they would join the sorority again if they had a second chance. Besides the research questions, the researcher incorporated questions based on the theoretical framework of Strange and Banning's (2001) environmental components: 1) Physical condition, design and layout; 2) Human aggregate; 3) Organizational structures related to their purposes and goals; and 4) Constructed environment, or the inhabitants' collective perceptions or constructions of the context and cultures of the setting (p. 5) as part of the interview protocol. The four components were found within the themes.

Given the purpose, the central question, research questions, and the theoretical framework, this chapter includes the discussion of the themes as they apply to the

literature and theoretical framework. Also, the chapter contains the significance of study, the implications to student affairs and sororities, and future research.

Summary of Findings with Research Questions

Below is a brief summary of the findings based on the research questions, which were discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Under each of the research questions, the themes provided an understanding of the joining experiences of the participants.

RQ1: How did members first learn about Greek Life?	
Theme 1: I saw on TV	Encompassed the idea that the majority of the participants learned about Greek Life and sororities through what the saw on TV.
Theme 2: A personal Connection	Dealt with having a personal connection once they got to campus.
Theme 3: Open Recruitment: The Joining Process	Talked about how open recruitment offer an opportunity to get to know members prior to joining the sorority. Also, discussed the knowledge the sororities have about each other.
RQ2: Why did members decide to join their organizations?	
Theme 1: Felt Way More at Home and Real Friends	Considered how the participants felt like and home and having real friends when getting to know members of the sorority.
Theme 2: Get Along With…	Included how participants contemplated whether or not they could get along with whoever was a current member of the sorority.
Theme 3: A Group of People to Rely On	Discussed how participants were looking for a group of people whom they could have support and guidance as they made decision about life.
Theme 4: Keep My Academics Up	Covered how participants were looking for a place where they could be hold accountable for their academics.

RQ3: Did the sorority meet their expectations?	
Theme 1: Exceeded My Expectations?	Spoke to how the sorority had exceeded their expectations which allowed them to have grown to the person they are today.
Theme 2: Not Having a House: Closer Together	Reviewed how not having a house was both a benefit and a hindrance for the participants at times. However, not having a house did not stop their sense of sisterhood.
Theme 3: Having a Chair or Chairs?	Contained an insight on the organizational structure of the sorority and how the leadership positions are delegated.
RQ4: Would members join the sorority if they had to do it over again?	
Theme 1: Definitely Again	Comprised the idea of the participants wanting to join the sorority again if they had a chance to go back based on what they know now.
Theme 2: Learned That…	Involved the lessons the participants learned as part of being part of joining the sorority.
Theme 4: I would have told myself…	Revealed advices the participants would have given to themselves prior to joining a sorority.

The themes provided an understanding in the joining experience of the participants.

Overall, the participants seemed to have had similar joining experiences regardless of

which sorority they belong. The researcher discovered the participants learned the

similarly about Greek Life, joined for some of the same reasons, the sorority had

exceeded their expectations, and they would definitely join again if they had the chance.

Applying Findings to Existing Literature

Literature related more specifically to what this study was about of providing an

understanding and insight about the experiences of women in Traditional Greek

Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities in terms of the process of joining the

sorority and what comes out of it, is lacking. There were a couple of studies that

addressed the idea of joining a Greek letter organization and concepts associated with joining such as joining as a gender strategy (Handler, 1995), joining Latina-Based Greek Sororities (Olivas, 1996; Layzer, 2000, Nunez, 2004), the rituals associated when joining a sorority, (Callais, 2002), the adjustment of Latina Sorority members and non-members (Garcia, 2005), comparison of groups joining Greek Life (McCall, 2007), and joining a sorority/fraternity based on their value system (Stansfield Hunter, 2010, Burnett, Vaughan, & Moody, 1997).

One of the studies that was similar to this thesis was the one that McCall III (2007) conducted. The way that McCall III conducted his study, through the recruitment and interview process, was taken into consideration when shaping the research for this thesis. The findings from McCall III (2007) could be related to one of the questions of this thesis research, which is what the participants learned when joining the sorority. The findings from McCall (2007) stated "during their membership intake experiences participants reported gaining a boost in self-confidence; increase in self-awareness; development through learning; and preparation for leadership" (McCall III, 2007, p. 39). These findings can be related to the findings of this thesis because the learning that the participants experienced went as far as realizing that they are capable of talking to others and stating their opinions. Michelle, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, stated: "I learned that like I have an important opinion and I can share it. And like I became more confident in myself." Just like Michelle, Sarah, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, also saw a change in herself.

Another study that was closely related to this thesis, was the one conducted by Olivas (1996). Unlike, McCall (2007) Olivas only focused on one group, the Latina-

Based Greek sororities. With regard to the findings of her study, the participants from this thesis research and Olivas's study had similar experiences. For example, Adele (a member of a Traditional Greek Sorority) related to one of the participants from the study that Olivas conducted in 1996. Adele said that the in the sorority:

> …you can feel how much they care about each other. And I don't know if it is because like there's less people in it. So you can really feel the bonds between everyone.

The participant in Olivas's study when responding to a question regarding the benefits of being in a sorority (Olivas, 1996, p. 21) stated: "…A lot of my sisters, when they hug you, you can just feel it [love], it's like something in your heart…"(Olivas, 1996, p. 21). Adele and Oliva's participant had a similar experience when joining the sorority even though they joined almost 16 years apart and were from different sororities.

Also, the literature agreed with what the participants were saying about the reasons why they joined a sorority, there needs to be value of congruence for students joining sororities (Burneet, Vaughan, & Moody, 1997). The value of congruence was present especially when participants wanted support and guidance in their academics. For example, Lisa, a member of a Latina-Based Greek Sorority, was happy to find that the sorority focused on academics. She stated:

> …she (a member of a sorority) told kinda what the organization stood for and I realize that I was more academically it wasn't just social. So I decided that was the main reason that I decided to join.

Being able to see similarities between the existing literature and this thesis research is necessary as the Greek Life literature moves forward. The researcher wanted to

understand how previous studies have been conducted and how they relate to each other, but most of all how the findings from this study can be applied to the real world.

Applying Findings to a Theoretical Framework

Given the purpose of this study, which is to describe the experiences of women in Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities in terms of the process of joining the sorority and what comes out of it. This topic was relevant to the higher education environment as their experiences can potentially be explained by the Strange and Banning (2001) environmental components and the levels of the hierarchy of learning environment purposes which are: Level 1: Safety and Inclusion (Sense of Security and Belonging; Level 2: Involvement (Participation, Engagement, Role-Taking); and Level 3: Community (Full membership) (p. 109)

When considering the theoretical framework for this study, the four main environmental components defined by Strange and Banning (2001) were the most appropriate lens for analysis for the data that was gathered. The goal was to understand human behavior, the behavior of those in Greek organizations on campus, so environment is a key element. Moos (1986) stated that the "arrangement of environments is perhaps the most powerful technique we have for influencing human behavior. From one point of view, every institution in our society sets up conditions that it hopes will maximize certain types of behavior and certain directions of personal growth" (p. 4). Keeping the importance of environment in mind, Strange and Banning (2001) discuss four key components of human environments, which are:

1. Physical condition, design and layout

2. Human aggregate or the characteristics of the people who inhabit them

3. Organizational structures related to their purposes and goals

4. Constructed environment, or the inhabitants' collective perceptions or constructions of the context and cultures of the setting (p. 5).

Based on these four components, themes were categorized in order to understand what the participants were expressing. For the first component, physical condition, design and layout, dealt with not having a physical home like other sororities that do. According to Strange and Banning (2001), the physical environment can impact the campus behavior or in this case the behavior of the sorority members. The participants felt that not having a house brought them closer together (RQ3: Did the sorority meet their expectations?, Theme 2: Not Having a House: Closer Together) because they had to find other ways to be together. The participants were also displaying their self (Zeisel, 1981 as cited in Strange & Banning, 2001) through the other means such as having groups of sorority members living in the same floor of a residence hall or having an office space to called their "home."

The second component is human aggregate or the characteristics of the people who inhabit them (p. 5). The following question: RQ2: Why did they decide to join their organization?, encompassed this component because the participants based their reasons of joining the sorority on the people and the environment that the people in the sorority constructed. The characteristics of the sorority such as the sorority being a home away from home and getting along with their members are "the human characteristics [which] influence the degree by which people [new sorority members or current sorority members] are attracted to, satisfied and retained by those environments" (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 35). Besides the reasons for joining, the participants had their

expectations met by the sororities after they joined (RQ3: Did the sorority meet their expectations?, Theme 1: Exceeded My Expectations?) so they were satisfied and will continue to be a part of the sorority because of the people that have made their experience enjoyable.

For the third component, organizational structures related to their purposes and goals (p. 5). An organization can be characterized by "the division of labor, power, and communication responsibilities, division which are not random or traditionally patterned but deliberately planned to enhance the realization of specific goals" (Strange & Banning, 2001), which is happening in the sororities. The participants are part of the organizational structure of the sorority. They have different responsibilities that need to be fulfilled in order for the sorority to function that is why they have a chair or chairs (RQ3: Did the sorority meet their expectations,, Theme 3: Having A Chair or Chairs?). Also, there was some difference in the number of chairs the participants held in their organization. The number of chairs may have to do with the size of the organization which defines the quality of the organization (e.g. static or dynamic) and how the organization functions (Strange & Banning, 2001). Compared to each other, the Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities that were interviewed, the size of their membership varied. The Traditional Greek Sororities had a membership of about 40 members. On the other hand, the Latina-Based Greek Sororities had a membership of about 10 members. The size of the organization differed which led to having less pressure to hold leadership positions if there were 40 other members to fill them. In Latina-Based Greek Sororities, having a membership of 10 people led to having their members hold multiple positions so the sorority could run its business.

The last and fourth component, constructed environment, or the inhabitants'
collective perceptions or constructions of the context and cultures of the setting (p. 5) was
applied to the findings. Unlike the other components, the constructed environment,
"focus on the subjective views and experiences of participant observers, assuming that
environments are understood best through the collective perceptions of the individuals
with them" (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 86). For example, the participants had a
conception of Greek Life based on what they saw on TV and movies. However, once
they got to campus, they learned more about Greek life by experiencing a personal
connection with someone or during open recruitment. Finally, the participants came full
circle when asked about knowing what they knew if they would join their sorority if they
had a chance. Everyone said they would join again if they had known what they knew
now. Also, along the way they learned about themselves and how the sorority benefited
them. Thus, for the participants to see what Greek Life was about was to believe
(Strange & Banning, 2001).

Aside from the four environment components, the levels of the hierarchy of
learning environment purposes were considered because they can explain the process of
how people learn about their environment, in this case how the participants learned about
sororities. When the participants were interviewed, they had already gone through the
three levels since they had full membership in a sorority. For example, when the
participants were learning about the sorority and the reasons of joining, they were in
Level 1 as they were exploring the idea of belonging. Once the participants joined the
sorority and they continued to be in the sorority, they were in level 2 of participating and
role taking within the organization. Knowing about these levels is useful as colleges and

universities look at the learning process that students go through as they learn about their environment.

Significance of the Study

While there are studies around the concept of joining sororities as was stated in Chapter Two and in the section of applying the findings to the existing literature of this chapter, this thesis brought a new perspective by researching how the participants learned about Greek life, why they joined the sorority life, if their expectations were met, and if they would join again based on what they know. The interview protocol was purposeful in the sense that it allowed the participants to reflect on their experience instead of feeling like they were being an interviewed. Also, the researcher took four different sororities, but similar sororities based on their membership and having a physical space to call home, two Traditional Greek Sororities and two Latina-Based Greek Sororities. Having these sororities brought a new perspective on how we may perceive them as different. However, the findings showed that their backgrounds and joining experiences were similar. For example, 10 out of the 11 participants were the first ones in their family to join a Greek Letter organization. Being the first one in their family brought a comparable experience because what they knew about Greek Life was based on what they saw on TV and the open recruitment process that they went through. Also, their reasons for joining were about the same. They all wanted a group that they can rely on in with regard to academic advice, speaking the same language, or having the same faith base.

One of the questions that participants were asked was "How do you think the joining process differs from Multicultural Greek sororities/Traditional Greek sororities?" The majority of the participants from the Traditional Greek Sororities did not know much

about the joining process of the Latina-Based Greek Sororities besides having smaller

numbers, open recruitment, and philanthropies. On the other hand, the majority of the

participants from the Latina-Based Greek Sororities knew more about the joining process

of the Traditional Greeks. Awareness of other sororities and their joining process can be

beneficial as they learn about Greek Life and how they fit within their organization and

the larger community. Also in terms of having leadership positions within their

sororities, there were some differences. The Latina-Based Greek Sorority members felt

obligated to have a leadership position due to their small numbers, unlike the Traditional

Greek Sorority members whom expressed having more of a choice when filling

leadership positions in their sorority.

Given the findings of this thesis research, there were more commonalities on the

joining experiences than differences between the Traditional Greek Sorority members

and the Latina-Based Greek Sorority members. These findings were different than what

Olivas (1996) stated in her research. She said:

> my research has indicated that though Latina sorority members join sororities for
>
> some of the same reasons given by white women who join traditional white
>
> sororities, there are indeed more differences than there are commonalities (Olivas,
>
> 1996, p. 34)

Although she further explained that the reason for joining may have a different

conceptual meaning of "family," "friendship," and "connecting to campus life" (p. 35).

Olivas might have a point with the participants giving different meanings to the concepts;

however, the interviews for this thesis research had some similar usage of words to

describe their experience. Also, the work done by Olivas is about sixteen years old and

experiences may have changed throughout the years causing for the joining experiences
to be somewhat similar among sororities.

Implications for Student Affairs

With the findings and the discussion in place, there are some implications for
student affairs as we move forward to better serve students who are part of the sororities.
The implications came from the interviews and the existing literature. For example, if
students are learning about Greek Life through TV, it is important to communicate better
with incoming students, since what they see on TV may not be a reflection on how
sororities and fraternities are on campus. With the parents being more involved in higher
education, having the office of Greek Affairs offer family days, as a campus wide event
will be useful to teach families about Greek Life. Given the purpose of sororities,
colleges and universities can benefit from having more women join them. As Sarkissian
(2008) explored through qualitative research, women can benefit their development from
establishing relationships and having commitment, in this case sororities being an option.
However, the financial aspect of sorority life can be overwhelming. Thus, having some
type of scholarship for women wanting to join will benefit not just the university but also
the future members.

Sororities can have the potential to be great organizations on campus that can help
with both outreach and retention of students of all backgrounds. By having student
professionals understand and help students understand the idea of value congruence
(Burnett, Vaughan, & Moody, 1997) of an organization such as sororities is necessary as
universities and colleges continue to grow. If universities and colleges understand the
value system, than they can be more intentional with the recruitment and retention of

members. Besides understanding the values, there needs to be an awareness of who is part of the Greek community. Many times the student affairs professionals do not see Greek life as part of the whole campus and do not know how sororities and fraternities function. Knowing about each other can strengthen the relationship between the two groups and make the campus a better place. Lastly, student affairs professionals need to have a continuous communication with alumni of sororities and fraternities. Having this communication can be of benefit as policies and rules change in order to make a better campus.

Implications for Sororities

Similar to the implication of student affairs professionals, the implications for sororities are based on the interviews with the participants. The following implication is geared toward small sororities. For example, using the requirement and purpose of the sorority to attend events of other organizations is a way to fulfill their requirements. For example, if there is a community service requirement and one of the sororities is having a community service or philanthropy event, the sorority members can attend and support the other sorority and fulfill the requirement as well. Also, there is the suggestion of having a big sister chapter, which can be applicable to newer sororities. The big sister chapter can be a chapter from the same sorority who is located nearby and/or a chapter from a different sorority on campus. Having a big sister chapter can be useful as the newer sorority is learning how to function as a chapter. One of the participants mentioned that in her sorority they do what she called a leadership position shadowing which is basically allowing members who are interested in a specific position to shadow the current person in that position to get an idea about what the position is about. The

researcher thought that this was a great idea for chapters to do as the sororities are helping others to develop their leadership skills as members. Knowing about the position ahead of time can be useful because the person pursuing the leadership position may realize that she does not want the position or that the position is one that she wants. Just like student affairs professionals, sororities need to be aware of who are the members of the Greek Life community and how they function. Being aware of each other can be beneficial when trying to collaborate or just attend each other's events.

Future Research

The current thesis research was just the beginning for the contribution and the need for more research in Greek Life as it relates to colleges and universities. The following topics are ideas that were brought up during the interviews or topics that the researcher has been thinking about:

- How is the membership educated about other sororities and fraternities?
- How do sororities who are smaller and may not have a house on campus feel
- How about some sororities are not being able to participate in the recruitment week as their peers?
- What type of relationship do universities and/or sororities have with their alumni?
- What are the experiences of students once they are sorority members?
- How has the sorority influenced your relationships with those not part of Greek life? How are those relationships balance with sorority life?
- What are the joining experiences of members whose sororities have a house?
- How do leadership transitions happen between members?
- Similar study to this thesis research, however, a comparison of other sororities

such as historically African American, Asian, and other cultural groups to the majority sororities (e.g. Traditional sororities)

- Who is joining sororities? (e.g. demographics of the women)

Any of these topics can provide universities and colleges a better understanding of organizations such as sororities. When looking at these possible research topics, the methodology should be qualitative research by conducting interviews and/or focus groups. Having a qualitative approach would allow to have a richer description of the experiences.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to have an understanding of the joining experiences of students in Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities. With this purpose in mind the researcher wanted to gain an insight on how this group of students can be better served. The findings did provide some evidence on how the sorority members learned about Greek Life which were to join for some of the same reasons, have expectations that they wanted to be met, and they learned to grow as a person as part of joining the sorority life. But more importantly it gave an understanding that at one point during the joining process, all sorority members may have a similar joining experience. By having a theoretical framework such as the one that Strange and Banning (2001) and the hierarchy of learning environment purposes can be useful for colleges and universities when assessing their activities on campus. Lastly, the research gave some suggestions and future research to think about as we move forward on learning more about sororities and how they fit into the campus life.

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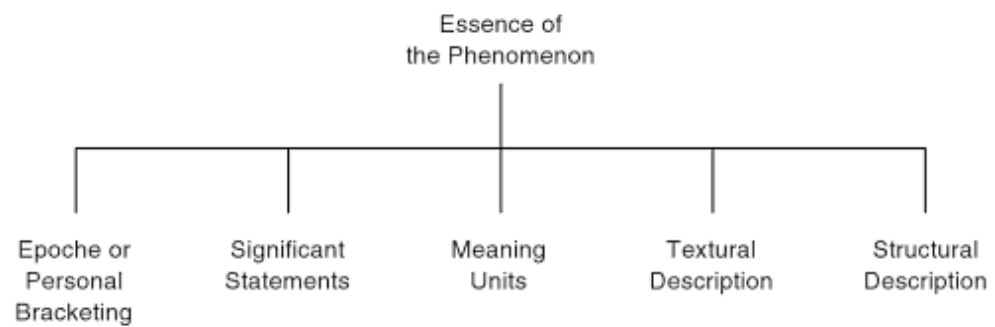
Figure #1

Essence of
the Phenomenon

Epoche or	Significant	Meaning	Textural	Structural
Personal	Statements	Units	Description	Description
Bracketing				

Figure 8.4   Template for Coding a Phenomological Study

Table 3

Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Traditional Member/Latina-Based Member	Hometown	Ethnicity/Race	Social Economic Status	Live On-Campus/Off-Campus	Roommates in Sorority	First Generation College Student	First in Family to Join a Greek Organization	Grade Point Average (GPA)	Joined Sorority
Adele	Traditional	Omaha, NE	Caucasian	Upper Middle	Off-Campus	Yes	No	No	3.8	Fr.
Anna	Traditional	Idaho Falls, SD	White	Middle Income	On-Campus	No	No	Yes	3.8	Fr.
Jennifer	Latina-Based	Lincoln, NE	Latina	Low Income	Off-Campus	No	Yes	Yes	3.3	Fr.
Jessica	Latina-Based	Lincoln, NE	Mexican	Upper Middle	Off-Campus	No	Yes	Yes	3.1	Soph.
Laylani	Latina-Based	Lexington, NE	Hispanic	Middle Income	Off-Campus	Yes	Yes	Yes	2.8	Fr.
Lisa	Latina-Based	South Sioux City, NE	Mexican American	Middle Income	On-Campus	No	Yes	Yes	3.8	Soph.
Liz	Traditional	Rapid City, SD	Caucasian	Upper Middle	On-Campus	No	No	Yes	3.5	Fr.
Lizeth	Latina-Based	Scottsbluff, NE	Hispanic	Middle Income	Off-Campus	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.1	Fr.
Michelle	Latina-Based	Scottsbluff, NE	Hispanic	Middle Income	Off-Campus	Yes	Yes	Yes	2.5	Fr.
Rosa	Latina-Based	Lincoln, NE	Mexican	Low Income	Off-Campus	No	Yes	Yes	2.5	Soph.
Sarah	Traditional	Lincoln, NE	Caucasian	Middle Income	On-Campus	Yes	No	Yes	3.6	Fr.

Appendix A
Recruitment Email

Dear _____,

My name is Lorena Zamarripa-Lovo and I am a graduate student in the Educational
Administration Department.

I am currently conducting research for a master's thesis and I need your help! The topic being
studied is to better understand the experiences of Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based
Greek Sororities in a Midwestern Predominantly White Institution (PWI). You were a selected
due to your membership to one of the sororities on campus.

A one-on-one interview that will last about 45 minutes and will be conducted in order to describe
your Greek life experience and joining your sorority. The interview will take place in an agreed
upon location such as the Nebraska Union.

Would you be willing to be a part of this study? Please contact me if you have any questions
about the study and/or willing to participate at 402-706-9958 or lzamarripa-
lovo@huskers.unl.edu

Thank you for considering this opportunity!

Lorena Zamarrripa-Lovo
Graduate Student
Educational Administration

Appendix B
Follow-up Email

Dear _____,

My name is Lorena Zamarripa-Lovo and I am a graduate student in the Educational Administration Department.

I am currently conducting research for a master's thesis and I am still looking for participants for my study. Once again, the topic being studied is to better understand the experiences of Traditional Greek Sororities and Latina-Based Greek Sororities in a Midwestern Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Your input would be greatly appreciated, as a member of a sorority on campus

A one-on-one interview that will last about 45 minutes and will be conducted in order to describe your Greek life experience and joining your sorority. The interview will take place in an agreed upon location such as the Nebraska Union.

Are there any questions that I can answer to clarify the study? If you have any questions and/or willing to participate. Please contact me at 402-706-9958 or lzamarripa-lovo@huskers.unl.edu

Thank you for your considering this opportunity!

Lorena Zamarrripa-Lovo
Graduate Student
Educational Administration

Appendix C
Reminder Email About Interview

Dear _____,

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of my study! Your interview date, time, and location is:

TIME
DATE
LOCATION

Attached is an informed consent form you will need to sign in order to participate in this study. We will discuss it in more detail prior to your interview. Please set aside an estimated time of 45 minutes for this interview.

Please contact me at 402-706-9958 or lzamarripa-lovo@huskers.unl.edu if you have any questions. I excited to meet you and discuss your experiences in your sorority.

Sincerely,

Lorena Zamarripa-Lovo
Graduate Student
Educational Administration

Appendix D
Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me! My name is Lorena Zamarripa-Lovo and I am a graduate student in the Educational Administration Department. Before we begin visiting about your experience in your sorority, let's review this informed consent form.

[WALK THROUGH CONSENT, RIGHT TO RECEIVE A COPY].

Here is a copy of the informed consent form for your records. Do you have any questions?

If you have any questions after the interview, you are welcome to contact me.

Also, do not hesitate to stop me at any point throughout the interview to ask questions or to ask me to clarify. Let's get started!

Please start by stating your name, year in school, what you are studying, and year in school when you join your sorority.

Participant introduces herself

Now that you stated who you are, we will start with the questions.

QUESTIONS

Tell me…How did you learn about Greek Life?
Tell me…Did you look at Traditional Greek Organization/Multicultural Greek organization and why?
Tell me…What were you looking for in a Greek organization?
Tell me…Why did you decide to join your sorority?
Tell me…How has the sorority influenced your relationships with those not part of Greek life?
Tell me…In what ways did your sorority meet and not meet your expectations?
Tell me…What does sisterhood mean to you?
Tell me…What opportunities have come from joining the Greek community and your sorority in particular?
Tell me…What have you learned about yourself by joining your sorority?
Knowing what you know now, would you join your sorority again and why?
Knowing what you know now, what tips/advice would you tell yourself prior to joining a sorority?

This concludes the interview! Thank you so much for your time and answers! I appreciate your help with my study! Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions that you may have!

Appendix D
Informed Consent Form

IRB# 20111011911 EX
Date Approved: 10/05/2011
Valid Until: 10/04/2016
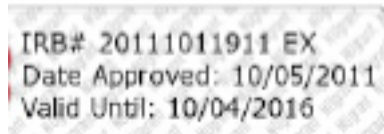
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

IRB# (Labeled by IRB)

Purpose of the Research:
This is a study to better understand the Greek life experiences of women in Traditional Greek sororities and Latina-Based Greek sororities at a predominantly white Midwestern Institution. You were invited as a possible participant because of your membership to one of the sororities and currently enrolled at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The research will be conducted mid-September through December 2011. The research will lead to a thesis, which should be completed by April 2012.

Procedures:
A one-on-one interview will be conducted with you in order to describe your experiences in your sorority at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The interview will be audio taped and will last about 45 minutes in an agreed upon location.

Risks and/or Discomforts:
There are no known risks involved in this research

Benefits:
The interview will allow you to talk about your experiences in the Greek community at UNL. They will be used to further the direction of the Greek organizations.

Confidentiality:
The information, you provide during your interview will be used by the primary investigator to write a master's thesis. The results may be published in professional publications or potentially presented at professional conferences. Your name and information will be kept confidential; a pseudonym will be assigned in the thesis in order to maintain your confidentiality.

Also, the observations made by the primary investigator during the interviews may be used to describe findings in the research. The data will be stored on the primary investigators' personal computers and will be deleted following completion of the project in May 2012.

_____
Participant Initials

Opportunity to Ask Questions:
You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study by contacting the investigators at the numbers listed below.

If you any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Compliance Service Office at Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6929

Freedom to Withdraw:
Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time throughout the interview.

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. Also, that you meet the 19 years of age or older age requirement to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____ Initial if you agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

Signature of Participant:

_____   _____
Signature of Research Participant   *Date*

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)
Principal Investigator
Lorena Zamarripa-Lovo
lzamarripa-lovo@huskers.unl.edu
402-706-9958

Secondary Investigator
Dr. James Griesen
jgriesen1@unl.edu
402-472-3725

Appendix E
General Information Sheet

General Information

Pseudonym _____   **Hometown** _____

Ethnicity/Race _____

Social Economic Status of Family
          Poor   Low Income   Middle Income   Upper Middle   Upper

Sexual Orientation (Example, Heterosexual, Homosexual, Bisexual, etc) _____

Where do you live?   On-Campus   Off-Campus

Roommates?   Yes   No

          If yes, are they part of your sorority?   Yes   No

Are you a first-generation student?   Yes   No

Approximate Grade Point Average (GPA) _____

When did you join your sorority? (Example: Freshman Year) _____

What other organizations are you involved in besides your sorority
_____
_____

Appendix F
Research Timeline

Month (2011-2012)	Description
End of August	Turn in study proposal to the IRB
September	Get IRB approval
October	Recruiting participants
November	Interviews will be conducted
End of November	Transcribing Interviews
Mid-December	Member Checks (Merriam, 2009, p. 217-218)
End of December	Analyzing Data
January	Check Data by Auditor/Thesis Progress with Adviser
February-March	Writing Thesis

Appendix G
Collection Matrix of Answers.

	How you learned about Greek life?	Look into Traditional Greek Sororities/Latina-Based Greek Sororities	What were you looking for in a Greek organization?	Why did you decide to join your sorority?	Joining Process
Laylani (6)	A girl in a class. At first unsure about joining the sorority.	Did not receive information from the Traditional Greek Sororities she figure they did not want her	Like the events: community service and fundraising. The people in the sorority.	To make a difference through involvement.	Secretiveness. Like another class.
Lisa (7)	TV. Friends.	Yes. Looked at websites, but she did not seem to fit	Social. Academics. Given back to the community. Relate to the members.	Members were similar to her.	An educational process
Liz (8)	Brochures. Friends. Father was in a fraternity.	No knowledge about Multicultural Greek Organizations (MGO) prior to coming to college. Once in college saw flyers about them but they didn't seem to fit for her.	Academics. Philanthropies.	Be part of the majority since she was told that the majority of campus was Greek. Recruitment approach.	Open recruitment.
Lizeth (9)	High school when she went to a conference. Unsure about joining at first.	No, received some information but wasn't interested in doing rush.	A home away from home.	Felt at ease with the sorority members. Maintained roots.	Learn about yourself.

Appendix H
Sample of the Quotes

<u>Learn About Greek Life</u>

Yeah, there's a couple books that I read that had Greek life in them uuuhm and it was, they are all from the 1900s like when Greek life had just started. (Original Transcript, Anna, p. 5, ln. 94-96)

I heard I guess before I came to college everything I knew was about Greek life the Traditional sororities that I saw on TV. (Original Transcript, Lisa, p. 3, ln. 51-52)

I wasn't really interested in joining a sorority because of how I've seen portrayed in movies and TVs, it just seemed like something that I wanted to be involved with. (Original Transcript, Sarah, p. 3, ln. 67-70)

Pretty much everything I knew coming into college was about the Traditional sororities and fraternities like what you see in movies and stuff. (Original Transcript, Michelle, p. 3, ln. 57-59)

<u>Joining Process</u>

Because formal rush happens before school starts and they weren't sure if they were going to be able to handle sorority and school load and so they wanted to have like a first semester and see how that worked out and see they wanted to join (Original Transcript, Anna, p. 28, ln. 617-622).

They were just trying to get the one-on-one interaction with me, trying to get to know me, trying to befriend me. (Original Transcript, Jennifer, p. 6, ln. 118-120)

It was really hard, and a lot of my friends thought, a lot friends thought I was ignoring them and I wasn't making time for them. When it wasn't really the case. I was just really busy. It was challenging to try to hide it but still has enough time to hangout with my friends. Once they saw me to come out, they were "ooh ok this is why you were being so secretive." They understand now. (Original Transcript, Jennifer, p. 16, ln. 354-359)

I try to describe it as an experience that you will never forget that's going to uplift you as a woman. (Original Transcript, Jessica, p. 9, ln. 199-201)

it is a lot of time commitment it takes…its like another class… you're basically another three credit course because there's a lot of learning involved. (Original Transcript, Laylani, p. 8-9, ln. 178-180)

Appendix I
Sample of a Transcript

1	Researcher:	Ok. I just have a couple of questions then. So if you just wanna start by
2		stating your name, year in school, and what you are studying.
3	Adele:	Uuhm…I am Adele. I'm a junior and I'm majoring in sociology with a
4		minor in English.
5	Researcher:	Ok. So…basically the questions that I have. It has to do with your
6		experience of joining the sorority. So if within the questions, when I
7		asked them, if you can give me experiences, any specific examples that
8		you can of that would be helpful.
9	Adele:	Ok
10	Researcher:	Ok, we'll start with can you tell me how you learned about Greek life?
11	Adele:	Uuhm, my brother is actually in a fraternity. He is two years older than
12		me. And he went to this university. And he was in a fraternity before me.
13		And so he like really loves it and had lots of leadership in it. So basically
14		he is the one who kinda talked me into going through formal recruitment
15		week. And then long story short, I ended up dropping out of formal
16		recruitment week, like I didn't get the house that I wanted. And then I
17		went through open recruitment and joined the sorority that I did. So.

Appendix J
Preliminary Summary of Codes

Learn about Greek Life

Joining Process/ Recruitment Approach

Friends/Home/Family

Guidance/Support/Relate to Members/ Stay in Touch with Roots

Academics

Service

Women in Sorority/Sisterhood/ No House

Small numbers in the Sorority/Organizational Structure

Relationships Outside Greek Life (Family and Friends)

Opportunities/Expectations/ Perceptions

Learned About Yourself/Join the Sorority Again? / Advice

Appendix K
Final Summary of Research Questions with Themes

- RQ1: How did members first learn about Greek Life?

    o Theme 1: I saw on TV...

    o Theme 2: A Personal Connection...

    o Theme 3: Open Recruitment: The Joining Process

- RQ2: Why did members decide to join their organization?

    o Theme 1: Felt Way More at Home and Real Friends

    o Theme 2: Get Along With...

    o Theme 3: A Group of People to Rely On

    o Theme 4: Keep My Academics Up

- RQ3: Did the sorority meet their expectations?

    o Theme 1: Exceeded My Expectations?

    o Theme 2: Not Having a House: Closer Together

    o Theme 3: Having a Chair or Chairs?

- RQ4: Would members join the sorority again if they had to do it over again?

    o Theme 1: Definitely Again

    o Theme 2: Learned That...

    o Theme 3: I would have told myself...

Appendix L
External Audit Letter

External Audit Attestation
Wayne A. Babchuk, Ph.D.

Audit Attestation

Lorena Zamarripa-Lovo requested that I complete a methodological audit of her qualitative phenomenological study titled "Sorority Life: Would You Do It All over Again?" The audit was conducted from December 2011-March 2012. The audit was part of the validation strategies used in establishing the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research, which included triangulation of data, member checks, researcher positioning, and peer review. External validity was achieved through the audit where I provided input on aspects of research design and implementation with special attention devoted to data collection and analysis procedures and findings.

I was given the entire thesis for review and provided suggestions on all chapters but focused primarily on Chapter 3 (Methodology), Chapter 4 (Findings), and Chapter 5 (Discussion). The audit was based on materials that Lorena provided for review in electronic and/or hard copy format. These documents were used to continually track and provide input into the research process and to determine the extent to which the thesis findings were supported by the data. These materials included:

- First and final drafts of her thesis
- Purpose statement and central and sub-questions
- Participant interview transcripts
- Data collection matrix with the summary of the answers to the questions
- Participant quotes to support codes/themes
- Preliminary and final summary of the codes/themes

Audit Procedure

The audit procedure consisted of the following steps:

1. Initial meeting to invite me to serve as an auditor for her thesis research and discuss my role and our mutual responsibilities in this process
2. Ongoing discussions of the research design and formulation of the purpose statement and central and sub-questions
3. Review of transcriptions, participant quotes, and initial open coding procedures
4. Review of emerging codes and themes and the data collection matrix and comparison with auditor review
5. Ongoing discussions of findings, analysis, and the writing of the manuscript
6. Read initial and subsequent drafts of thesis chapters and provided input as the project progressed with a particular focus on consistency in purpose and fit between purpose statement, research questions, sample selection, and data collection and analysis
7. Read final draft of the completed thesis
8. Submitted audit attestation for Lorena's review and input
9. Signed and submitted audit attestation to Lorena

Initial Meeting

Lorena Zamarripa-Lovo was a student in *Qualitative Approaches to Educational Research 900K*, a course I taught in the First Five-Week Session of 2011. In this course, she further refined and articulated her research interests and ideas in the required course research mini-project and class presentation and this served as a building block for some of the central aspects of her thesis. Following this course, Lorena asked me to serve as an external auditor for her thesis research she was undertaking for a MA in Educational Administration. I agreed and we began to meet in late December of 2011 to discuss our roles and proceed with the research.

Research Design and Formulation of the Research Question and Sub-Questions
Beginning in the summer of 2011, and finalized in the spring of 2012, Lorena and I met periodically and corresponded via email regarding all aspects of her research design. We discussed her research goals, identification of a research problem, the literature review, formulation of the purpose statement, central questions, sub-questions, purposive sampling techniques, selection of research methodology and its appropriateness to answer the research question(s), strategies of data collection and analysis, findings, validation strategies, and the writing of the manuscript.

Data Collection and Analysis
Lorena provided me with components of her thesis research including interview protocols, participant interview transcripts, participant quotes, a data collection matrix (i.e., participation answers), emerging coding/theme constructions, and thesis chapters. I reviewed transcripts from eleven taped interviews with the participants that noted interactions between the researcher and the participants. I checked and cross-checked her codes and emerging themes that emerged from the research questions asked in the interview and provided feedback and suggestions for all areas of data collection and analysis. Both independently and together we reviewed and discussed the emerging findings and codes and themes and checked and double-checked the consistency and accuracy of these themes with the data and the research questions. I reviewed the notes, figures, diagrams, and tables as listed in the appendix.

Thesis Manuscript
I reviewed the first and subsequent versions of the manuscript to ensure that Lorena remained consistent with the purpose statement and central and sub-questions of the thesis through data collection and analysis, and that her work was supported by participant statements and existing literature on this topic. The thesis was consistent throughout and appropriate documentation of this consistency was provided by her.

Conclusion
Having reviewed the material outlined in this audit, I submit the following conclusions:

The process of this study was consistent with its research design and the assumptions inherent in qualitative research practices in general and phenomenological analysis in specific. Lorena was fully transparent in describing all aspects of the research process and systematically developed and implemented a research plan that allowed her to effectively explore her research questions and extend the literature in this area. Her emergent themes and analysis are consistent with the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm and address the essence of the phenomenon of her study. She provided demographic information of her participants and employed several validation strategies including triangulation of data, member checking, researcher positioning, and peer review.

Upon review of the final draft of this manuscript, I conclude that the goals of the researcher were met, the research design and its implementation was carefully constructed, consistent, and effective in addressing the purpose statement, and the trustworthiness of the study can be established. There is support from the participant data for the emerging themes and her conclusions are consistent with them and augment the literature in this area.

Attested to by Wayne A. Babchuk this 16th day of April, 2012.

Wayne A. Babchuk, Ph.D.
Department of Anthropology
University of Nebraska-Lincoln