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The Perceived Effects of Sorority Chapter Size on the Member Experience: A Qualitative Study

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Higher Education

Audrey Rabas, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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Concordia University–Portland

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a perceived impact of sorority chapter size on the sorority member experience. The qualitative instruments provided the means to understand the member experience based on sorority chapter size. Fifteen sorority women that affiliated with the National Panhellenic Conference were used in this study. Participants were from chapters around the country and members of various chapter sizes. Theories used to provide the framework for the study were Josselson's theory of identity development in women, Gilligan's theory of Women's Moral Development, Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development, and Astin's Student Development Theory. The study used five themes identified by Cohen, McCreary, and Schutts which were shared social experiences, belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose. The main research question for this study sought to explore the lived experience of the sorority members and sorority chapter size. Throughout the research process, the sorority women shared their lived experiences based on chapter size and the five themes. Results from this qualitative study were gathered by using one-on-one interviews along with member checking. Data was analyzed using the van Kaam method. Based on the information provided by the participants, the researcher found that involvement played a role overall in the sorority member experience rather than the specific sorority chapter size.

Keywords: sorority, chapter, chapter size, sorority chapter, members, collegiate women, experience

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my students. They have always inspired me. I appreciated the laughs that were had, jokes that were made, and friendships that were formed.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my MGB, B, and Mais. You inspired me to be the best that I can be. Do not let anything get in the way of your dreams! I love you all to the moon and back. I am very blessed to be your auntie!

Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to my Grams. I miss you so much, but I know that you have been with me throughout this whole process. You were always so supportive of my dreams. I did this for you. We did it Grams!

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I am very grateful to so many people for their constant support and encouragement through this process. I am grateful they believed in me and believed in this research. This dissertation was completed with the help and contributions from the participants and my colleagues.

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by the people he has been sending into my life. I look forward to the future and I cannot wait to

see what you have in store for me. I will plant the seed and let the dirt do its job!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Being a member of a sorority can be an important part of a young woman's college experience. In the 2015–2016 academic year, there were 144,183 newly initiated sorority members (National Panhellenic Conference [NPC], 2016, p. 14). In 2014–2015, there were 380,565 undergraduate sorority women. One year later, in 2015–2016, the NPC reported that there were 411,242 undergraduate members and only 3,288 undergraduate chapters (NPC, 2016). Sororities are identified by their chapter name to distinguish the difference from campus-to-campus. For example, I am a member of Alpha Sigma Alpha, but my chapter designation is the Zeta Beta chapter. In 2014, the average chapter size was 152 members (McCreary, Schutts, & Cohen, 2014). As the number of undergraduate sorority women rises, so will chapter size, which may affect the experience of collegiate women's membership. The word 'experience' in this study refers to leadership development, peer interaction, scholarship, service opportunities, social interaction, and sisterhood (Dugan, 2008). The women who participated in the current study were affiliated with one of the 26 NPC sororities on college campuses throughout North America that are part of different chapter sizes from small (1–50 members), medium (51–100), large (101–200), or megachapters (201 and above). Caroline Hubbard, Vice President of Recruitment and President of Delta Zeta, Zeta Xi chapter, reflected on her membership experience in a small chapter, in which she stated that her sorority provided a bond between her sisters that cannot be broken, and that they always will her back through thick or thin (C. Hubbard, personal communication, 2017).

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

There are 672 college campuses in North America that have an established NPC sorority chapter (NPC, 2015, p. 13). Since inception in the 1800s, sororities have been organizations for collegiate women to belong. Other organizations have been established to emulate this environment such as the Jaycees, Lions, and Rotary Clubs. With only 300 new sororities added in

2015 and a membership growth rate of 10%, chapter size has become an important factor in the membership experience (McCreary, 2015b). Chapter size has become an issue because as more women join sororities, chapter sizes increase in numbers but there is little campus expansion to support the growth.

   History. Sororities were once originally referred to as secret societies that have been in existence since the mid-1800s. These societies were founded to meet the needs of young women based on common interests, and to form friendships in a male-dominated collegiate experience. Women gathered for comradery, ritualistic practices, community building, and community service (San Jose State University, 2016). Comparable to those women, today's collegiate women also gather for similar reasons.

   Conceptual framework. There are many student development theories used in higher education institution research; for this study, the researcher used four theories. Each theory is explained more in-depth in Chapter 2. The first theory used to guide the framework was Josselson's theory of identity development in women. The second theory was Gilligan's theory of women's moral development. This theory consists of different levels and transitions. The third theory was Chickering's seven vectors of identity development. Within Chickering's theory, there are seven different components to complete the theory. Finally, Astin's student development theory is based on the thought that the more involved a student is, the more likely the student will have a better college experience and persist to graduation. This research study focused on female college students' sorority experience; therefore, the theories selected were deemed most relevant to college students and women's moral development.

Statement of the Problem

   This study examined the perceived effects of chapter size on the sorority membership experience. Sorority women affiliated with a NPC sorority are finding their homes in chapter sizes

that vary from campus-to-campus. NPC delegates began having conversations related to chapter size in 2015 stating that the number of women joining NPC sororities continue to grow year after year and chapters are becoming too large to operate effectively (NPC, 2016). McCreary (2015b) supported this finding when he reported that members of chapters with over 150 women did not feel a connection with their sorority sisters or a common purpose within the chapter. Deeg (2015) mentioned that fraternity and sorority professionals should recognize problems that come along with chapter growth and identify ways to address the issues. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study stemmed from previous research on the effects of chapter size and sorority members' experiences, and recommendations for future research to be conducted on the topic.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess personal experiences of collegiate women affiliated with a NPC sorority and explore whether their experiences were positive or negative based on sorority chapter size. This study was also conducted to gain a clearer perspective on how sorority chapter size may or may not affect the sorority member experience. This research study was explored through Cohen, McCreary, and Schutts' (2016b) five categories of (a) shared social experiences, (b) belonging, (c) support and encouragement, (d) accountability, and (e) common purpose.

The need for this study came from the research that was published about chapter size in the NPC annual report (NPC, 2015). Currently, there has been no research conducted on the role of chapter size and the membership experience. The researcher hoped that this information would inspire other researchers to conduct further research focused on chapter size and member experiences particularly for the following fraternal councils: (a) Interfraternity Council (IFC) which, "advances the local fraternity community" (North-American Interfraternity Conference, 2017), (b) National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) which governs the historically African

American fraternities and sororities, and (c) Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) which is similar to the other councils, but focuses on multicultural Greek-letter organizations. Addressing the problem statement may benefit the fraternal community by gaining insight into how chapter size impacts the membership experience and how NPC and other stakeholders can better meet the needs of the members by providing a better experience.

Research Questions

After working with sorority women directly for the past 7 years in various roles and having personal experience within sorority life, the researcher developed questions that helped gain insight into the relationship between chapter size and the sorority membership experience. The following question guided this research study:

RQ1: What is the lived experience of sorority members in regard to sorority chapter size?

Sub-Questions

a. How does sorority chapter size effect the quality of the membership experience within the individual sorority chapter focusing on shared social experiences, belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose?

b. How does sorority chapter size effect the quality of the membership experience within the overall sorority experience on a college or university campus?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

The rationale for conducting this research study was the importance of providing a good sorority member experience for those that affiliate with a NPC sorority. Membership in a sorority can assist women to persist through college, impact the member's grade point average (Nelson, Halperin, Wasserman, Smith, & Graham, 2006), provide leadership opportunities (Cohen, McCreary, & Schutts, 2016a), and provide social experiences (Nelson et al., 2006). Chapter size can be an important component to the overall sorority experience. Cohen et al. (2016a) explained

the need for a continued study based on their 2014 work regarding sisterhood. Factors such as chapter size may impact sisterhood and the sorority experience (Cohen et al., 2016a). This statement was also supported by McCreary (2015b) work regarding sorority members having a different experience once a chapter reached membership of over 150 women.

The results of this study provide benefits to the fraternal movement particularly relating to sorority life. This research is especially relevant to organizations and councils focusing on the sorority experience with intentions to increase the sorority member experience as it relates to chapter size. This information may help organizations understand how reaching campus total may impact member experiences, and even how chapter size can result in the expansion or closure of chapters.

This qualitative research study may be relevant to multiple stakeholders including national organizations, NPC, campus officials, and advisors, as the data gathered may provide the stakeholders with important information to better meet the needs of sorority women. The findings from this study, as related to the perceived impact that chapter size may have on the sorority membership experience, may be applied to multiple organizations including those inside and outside of the fraternity and sorority community.

The results from this study may also be used to help others make informed decisions concerning sorority women and their membership experience such as whether chapter total should be reset every semester. This study will also allow for organizations, NCP, advisors, members, and campus stakeholders to critically think about the current methods of the membership experience, chapter size, how chapter size impacts the sorority member. The information obtained from this study could serve as a resource for advisors and staff who make the decisions regarding sorority management in order to better meet the needs of sorority members across the country.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the specific meanings were used for the following terms:

Accountability. In this schema, sorority women understand that sisterhood is best established when sorority sisters make each other better women by holding one another to higher standards based upon the sorority's shared expectations (McCreary, 2015).

Belonging. "This schema of sisterhood involves a sense of connection that goes beyond friendship. Women who think of sisterhood in this way describe their sorority sisters as 'family' and their sorority as their 'home away from home.' The connection is based on a sense of shared values and a feeling of being appreciated and accepted despite one's flaws" (McCreary, 2015, para. 8).

Chapter. A chapter is an individual unit of an inter/national sorority (NPC, 2017).

Common purpose. This is the highest concept of sisterhood and sorority women working in this schema understand the big picture Sorority women describe this concept as a connection that is based in the sorority's ritual that all sisters and the goodness of working towards the common goal together (McCreary, 2015).

National Panhellenic Conference. The National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) is one of the largest women's organizations and is the support group for the 26 national and international sororities (NPC, 2017).

Shared social experiences. This is described as 'surface level sisterhood' which revolves around doing things together and sorority women who describe sisterhood may see this aspect when they are doing something fun with their sorority sisters. This aspect of sisterhood may emphasize social standing of their group among the Panhellenic community and see recruiting new members in their chapter because of its social status (McCreary, 2015).

Sorority. A sorority is an all women organization with benefits exclusive to membership. It may be identified with two or three Greek letters and uses ceremonies and rituals (Callais, 2002).

Support and encouragement. This schema of sisterhood is viewed through demonstrations of support examples include but are not limited to 'sisters being there for one another' and sisters encourage others to be better students (McCreary, 2015).

Total. Total defined as the acceptable chapter size as determined by the College Panhellenic. It includes both new and initiated members (NPC, 2017).

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

For this research study, it was assumed that the participants had some personal experience as members of their sorority that related to chapter size. It was assumed that the information the participants provided will offer a different perspective into experiences based on chapter size and it was also assumed that different chapter sizes would influence the membership experience.

A delimitation of this study was not using all fraternity and sorority councils for gathering research. Since this study was focusing on NPC sororities, any reference to NPHC and MGC sororities were not used for the purpose of this study.

A limitation of this study included the weaknesses that were associated with the demographics of the study, responses to the interview questions, and the themes that were identified. Another limitation was the required access to technology for the participants along with the interpretation of the interview questions as it related to their sorority member experience. Lastly, while researching sororities, an important limitation arose regarding the limited amount of research regarding sororities and specifically related to chapter size. Callais (2005) discussed the disadvantage to research related to sororities stating, "…scholarly research is limited as it relates to sororities and studies conducted on fraternities are not equally applicable to sororities" (p. 4).

Summary

This chapter discussed sorority women and the impact that chapter size had on sorority member experiences. The purpose of this study was to examine sorority members' experiences and the role of chapter size. The study used five themes to categorize the information from the interviews. These five themes were social experiences, belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose (Cohen et al., 2016b). This chapter also presented the student development theories related to women's development that helped guide the study.

In the following chapters, information provided will offer more insight into this research study. Chapter 2 includes a review of scholarly literature related to sororities on college campuses and within society, the conceptual framework used to guide the research study, and a review of literature and methodology. The intention of Chapter 2 is to review how researchers have presented information related to sorority life and how that can be impacted by chapter size. Chapter 3 includes a detailed explanation of the research methods used throughout this study and Chapter 4 includes the data analysis of the research and the results gained from the study. Chapter 5 concludes the study with a discussion of the results, limitations that occurred throughout the study, implications of the research, and finally, recommendations for further research on the topic of chapter size and member experience.

<center>**Chapter 2: Literature Review**</center>

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presented research that was previously conducted regarding fraternity and sorority life along with information related to organizational size. Additional information such as involvement, values and rituals, scholarship, philanthropy and service, along with advantages and disadvantages are addressed within this chapter. The literature presented in this chapter provides information regarding sororities while highlighting the lack of research that focused on the impact of chapter size and the member's experience. Cohen et al. (2016b) found that many factors may impact sisterhood such as chapter size, leadership level within the organization, the culture of a sorority but further research is necessary to make this assumption. The literature presented in this chapter provided a context for this research study of member experience and sorority chapter size.

Organization of research. In order to gain the highest level of knowledge and a conceptual framework for this study the researcher studied literature related to the sorority experience and conducted a comprehensive review of literature related to the relationship between chapter members and the sorority experience. The literature search was conducted using different databases such as ProQuest, JSTORE, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Concordia University and Lenoir-Rhyne University databases, along with the interlibrary loan services of Concordia University. Documents accessed included academic journals, periodicals, reports, blogs, dissertations, and books. To establish perspective, it was appropriate to gain a historical perspective of sororities.

History of sororities. Sororities have been part of the collegiate experience since the mid-1800s. Some of the first sororities founded were called fraternities because there was not a word for the women version of fraternity (San Jose State University, 2016). The women that founded

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sororities were doing so because they needed a place to gather in a male-dominated educational setting. Nelson et al. (2006) stated that, "from the onset, the fraternity/sorority experience has provided students with a welcomed social outlet from the rigors of academic life" (p. 61). These women gathered for a common interest and some of these interests include comradery, rituals, community service, and friendship (San Jose State University, 2016). Alpha Delta Pi and Phi Mu were part of the early founding of sororities even though both were considered societies. Sorority membership grew rapidly after the first women's fraternity was established. Pi Beta Phi was established as the first women's fraternity in 1867 (Pi Beta Phi, 2014). Kappa Alpha Theta was established 3 years later in 1870 and was the first Greek-letter society for women (Kappa Alpha Theta, 2017). Since then, 24 other sororities were established that fall under the NPC. The NPC was established in 1902 and is now the umbrella organization for 26 organizations and advocates for women and works closely with colleges, universities, and Inter/National Headquarters of the organizations (NPC, 2016). Nelson et al. (2006) stated that, "if fraternities and sororities are true to their missions and are high performing, they are optimal environments for student growth and development" (p. 70).

NPHC sororities were also established in the early 1900s and the first was Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority at Howard University in 1908 (NPHC, 2017). There are nine fraternities and sororities that affiliate with NPHC. Outside of NPHC, there is also another council referred to as National Multicultural Greek Council (MGC). Multicultural organizations became established on college campuses in the early 1980s. The first multicultural sorority was founded November 1981 as Mu Sigma Upsilon Sorority, Inc. (National Multicultural Greek Council, 2015).

Conceptual Framework

As a freshman at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, I was eager to get involved on campus and make a mark. A few weeks after starting college, I went through formal sorority

recruitment. Four nights later, I accepted a bid into Alpha Sigma Alpha. Throughout the next few years of college, this organization had an impact on the college experience and personal life. Joining a smaller chapter allowed for a variety of leadership opportunities, social experiences, and networking opportunities that may have otherwise been missed if with a larger chapter; women were afforded more access to resources and opportunities, because there were less women to serve.

According to the Delta Zeta Sorority website, it is stated that, "sororities are self-sustaining friendship organizations composed of female students in colleges and universities in the United States and Canada" (Delta Zeta, 2016, para 2). Most sororities have values and special qualities in which they strive to model and exemplify within their members and, "many of the basic principles of sororities and fraternities are essentially the same, yet each is distinct" (Delta Zeta, 2016, para 5). Each sorority has a purpose that is fulfilled by developing and executing programs related to their purpose for all members, college students, and alumnae. According to the Alpha Sigma Alpha Sorority website, members can get involved with community service activities, campus fundraising events, or serve in an officer position (Alpha Sigma Alpha, 2016, para 2). Chapters provide many benefits to a campus and are governed in a unique way. According to the Delta Zeta Sorority website, "…fraternities and sororities on college campuses support the aims and purposes of the institution and are guided by the policies and rules of their own organization" (Delta Zeta, 2016, para 7).

Women fraternities were established in the 1800s. These fraternities were meant to allow women to gather together for a common interest and have been defying expectations for decades, just by being fraternal organizations for women (NPC, 2017c). The NPC is the umbrella group for 26 national and international sororities and is one of the largest organizations that advocates for women. There are more than 670 NPC sororities on college campuses. The purpose of the NPC is to "assist collegiate and alumnae chapters of the NPC member organizations in cooperating with

colleges and universities and to foster interfraternal relationships" and has been the purpose of the organization since the establishment of NPC in 1902 (NPC, 2016, para 1). The NPC values relationships that are, "built on trust through transparency, accountability and mutual respect. Innovation and our core values of friendship, leadership, service, knowledge, integrity and community guide us in fulfilling our mission" (NPC, 2016, para 4) and the mission of NPC is to, "advocate and support the advancement of the sorority experience" (NPC, 2016, para 2).

Not only being a collegiate member of a NPC affiliated sorority, I also had the experience of advising small chapters in a role as Director of Student Activities at Lenoir-Rhyne University. I was interested to find out if the sorority and sisterhood differ according to small, medium, large, and extra-large chapters. For this study, chapter sizes are defined as small (1–50 members), medium (51–100), large (101–200), and megachapters (201 and above). McCready, Cohen, McCreary, and Schutts (2017) stated in an Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors presentation that the defining point of chapter size and membership is experience. This information has been used to define the small, medium, large, and extra-large chapter size ranges for this study.

The researcher wanted to help advance the sorority experience. Not only does this affect her professional life but she was also an area advisor for five chapters in North Carolina that ranged from small to large. The researcher's goal was to learn how to better advise chapters and be a better Fraternity Sorority Advisor based on the information gathered from this study. She also hoped to be able to present her findings at the Association of Fraternity Sorority Advisors (AFA) annual meeting after the completion of the study.

Most collegiate members of sororities are women that are between the ages of 18 and 22, enrolled in a 4-year institution. Several student development theories helped comprise the framework of this study. The first was Josselson's theory of identity development in women which stated that, "participation in college activities = achievement identity, student affairs, structure,

facilitation, guidance" (Student Development Theory, 2016, p. 1). The theory of identity

development in women was used in the form of identity achievement and moratoriums. The

second theory that helped structure the framework was Gilligan's theory of women's moral

development (Student Development Theory, 2016). This theory was applied to the personal value

system of sorority women in relation to the sorority experience. Another theory used was

Chickering's theory of identity development - The seven vectors (Student Development Theory,

2016). The seven vectors all play a role in the development of undergraduate students focusing on,

"managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature

interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, and developing purpose" (Student Development

Theory, 2016, p. 1). The last theory used was Astin's (1984) student development theory. Astin's

theory was based on the idea that the more students are involved, the better college experience they

will have, and the more likely they are to stay until graduation. Five themes were also used to

guide the study. The themes are shared social experiences, belonging, support and encouragement,

accountability, and common purpose (Cohen et al., 2016a). The information from the survey and

the personal interviews were categorized using these five themes. The researcher believed that

these theories and themes played a role in the study of chapter size affecting the sorority

experience.

The researcher found that there is not a lot of information on the topic of sorority

experience as it relates to chapter size but there is significant research on sorority and fraternity life

since its conception in the 1800s. Cohen et al. stated that "The body of existing research related

sorority involvement has shown both positive and negative outcomes but has generally revealed

that membership in sororities leads to more positive, and less negative" (Cohen et al., 2016b, p.

32). Valuable knowledge of this subject came directly from collegiate women that are actively

involved in a NPC sorority. Studies and surveys from sources such as AFA were also considered

useful throughout this study. AFA is the leading member group for campus-based professionals, headquarters staff, and volunteers for sororities and fraternities.

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

Fraternity and sorority members pride themselves on living the pillars of fraternity sorority life. According to the Fraternity Advisor (n.d.), the five pillars are brotherhood/sisterhood, leadership, academic success, philanthropy/community service, and being social. Chapter size can influence these opportunities. The literature reviewed provided details of involvement but was limited due to the lack of connection to chapter size.

Involvement in sorority life. Hummel stated that, "one would think that membership in a small chapter would allow for more involvement opportunities because there are less people vying for those experiences," (C. Hummel, personal communication, February 5, 2017). McCready et al. (2017) stated in their presentation at the 2017 AFA Annual Meeting that larger chapters have a low percentage of members involved. An example that McCready et al. (2017) used was: if there are only 12 leadership position in a 400-person chapter, then less people are involved in leadership roles. Involvement can be many different things within a chapter and a study completed by Asel, Seifert, and Pascarella (2009) described the effects of membership in a fraternity or sorority. Within the study, a correlation between being involved in a sorority, involvement on campus, and scholarship was identified. Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement supports the information regarding the benefits of sororities on a college campus. Astin's (1984) observations indicated that, "students who join social fraternities or sororities or participate in extracurricular activities of almost any type are less likely to drop out" (p. 523). Involvement in these organizations are related in a positive way to intellectual development and student learning. Long (2012) researched the benefits that members get from their sorority membership which include scholarship, leadership, service, and friendship.

Sororities were founded as values-based organizations and each organization has a set of values that the national organization expects the sorority members to live by. Within the pillars of brotherhood/sisterhood is where ritual falls. Rituals are special ceremonies that each organization has specific to the organization. Participating in rituals is a very sacred moment in a sorority or fraternity and most members participate in their first ritual when they are beginning their initiation process. For example, as stated on the NPC (2016) website, "we are committed to relationships built on trust, through transparency, accountability and mutual respect. Innovation and our core values of friendship, leadership, service, knowledge, integrity and community guide us in fulfilling our mission" (para 4).

These values go hand-in-hand with the sorority experience and are continuously taught throughout the member's experience. Each sorority may have different values, but the values are constant for each organization. No matter what chapter a woman belongs to, the number of members within the chapter, or the university attended, the sorority values and rituals should be the same.

Barnhardt (2014) conducted a study to address the inconsistency between the missions and creeds of the organizations and the actual way the members act. Chapters try to educate their members about the values and how to espouse it in their lives daily. Callais (2005) also based a study on rituals and their impact on the values and behavior of sorority women. Callais (2005) wrote about rituals in her study, stating that:

> Sororities offer an environment that has engraved within its foundations a system of rites of passages. From the time young women become a part of a sorority, ceremonies and symbols represent their "passing through" various phases of the organization. Most of these ceremonies and symbols are handed down from generation to generation. (p. 61)

This process can happen through rituals, creeds, or chapter meetings as well as membership classes. These rituals and traditions were established by founders and early members during the establishment of the sorority (Callais, 2005).

Scholarship. Scholarship is another pillar that sororities value. Most sororities have a minimum GPA to be an active member within the organization. Some chapters may have a scholarship plan that is specific to the organization, and within that plan, may require study hall hours. A member who may or may not meet these expectations or participate in the scholarship plan may have a different experience within the chapter.

Sororities can influence the social and moral development of their members (McCabe & Bowers, 1996). Debates have been going on for years that address the development of positive values gained from being a member of a fraternity or sorority. A study by McCabe and Bowers (1996) addressed the cheating behaviors of affiliated and non-affiliated students. While a study completed by Stannard and Bowers (1970) unexpectedly found that cheating on academic assessments declined as fraternity and sorority membership grew (McCabe & Bowers, 1996). In contrast, other students have found that cheating is more prevalent among affiliated students than their unaffiliated peers. An interesting point to the study is that, "while fraternity members cheat more than independents, fraternity dominance on a campus is associated with lower, not higher, rates of cheating" (McCabe & Bowers, 1996, p. 282). The authors concluded that there was a significant relationship between fraternity and sorority membership and academic dishonesty (McCabe & Bowers, 1996). The researchers also found that sorority members cheated less than fraternity members. Academic dishonesty that is associated with fraternity membership is also a characteristic of sorority membership. Students who perceived greater disapproval from their peers were more likely to not cheat. McCabe and Bowers (1996) reported that the closer students affiliate with their organization, the more likely those members are to cheat. McCabe and Trevino

(1996) suggested that sororities engage in behaviors that condone or support academic behavior of their members that is questionable. An example of this may be the test files organizations keep and view as a benefit of joining their chapter. Even though the authors indicated that there is a higher level of cheating among those affiliated, removal of these organizations would not put an end to cheating.

Academic dishonesty has become a big problem on college and university campuses. Petress (2003) reported that it is, "a plague on our profession" (p. 625). Jendrek (1992) also reported that 74% of college students have said that they have observed their peers cheating. College students are more likely to ignore or report cheating because of the possibility of confrontation, and some of these students have reported that they are more likely to cheat if they see their peers getting away with it (Williams & Janosik, 2007).

Many studies have been completed about academic dishonesty but Williams and Janosik (2007) specifically studied sorority women and focused on four groups of collegiate women. The groups were broken up into, "(a) incoming freshman women expressing an interest in sorority affiliation, (b) incoming freshman women expressing no interest in affiliation, (c) upper-class women who have affiliated with a sorority for a year or more, and (d) upper-class women who have not affiliated" (Williams & Janosik, 2007, p. 707). The four groups were compared on their levels of academic dishonesty. A survey was sent out to selected participants and the survey instrument that was given to participants was McCabe's (1997) Academic Integrity Assessment Guide. The results of the study showed that Group A had a higher score than the other three groups when it came to academic dishonesty (Williams & Janosik, 2007). The findings showed support for other research related to academic dishonesty in college because students come to college with cheating experience from high school.

Co-curricular involvement might also affect academic dishonesty as involved students have less time to devote to their academics. Williams and Janosik (2007) also found that upper-class women that are affiliated have higher academic dishonesty rates that their non-affiliated peers. Between the four groups, there were limited differences. Two of the groups had reported an increased rate of cheating behaviors. One of the two groups also reported that the acts noted on the behavior lists were not considered cheating so, indicating similar findings for both groups (Williams & Janosik, 2007). Some of these behaviors that are considered cheating are considered acceptable to students. Enforcing an honor code may be a tool to help decrease academic dishonesty. Sorority members may help decrease academic dishonesty by developing educational programming and reviewing expectations.

Sororities strive to have higher GPAs than female college students who are not members. Most organizations place a strong emphasis on academic achievement for their members. On the other hand, "studies have shown that these same students participate in academic dishonesty in large numbers" (Williams & Janosik, 2007, p. 707). There is a lot of pressure to achieve academically from many sources with fellow sorority sisters being the most influential. There is pressure to keep their GPA at an average that is acceptable and in good academic standing. Co-curricular activities such as sorority membership, may take a woman's focus from academics to involvement in her chapter.

Going to college is a major step in someone's life, the same is true of joining a sorority. Sorority membership can have a major impact on a student's first year of college. Pascarella et al. (1994) conducted a study on the effects membership has on a person's first year of college. The focus of the study was on student satisfaction, academic success, and campus involvement along with alcohol consumption, academic dishonesty, and persistence in college (Pascarella et al., 1994). Pascarella et al. (1994) suggested that those who are affiliated with fraternities and

sororities are less autonomous and, in comparison to their peers, value autonomy and personal independence less. The results of the study confirmed that membership in a sorority during the first year of college has a negative impact on cognitive development (Pascarella et al., 1994). The effects are specifically for reading comprehension and composite achievement (Pascarella et al., 1994). The authors also illustrated that, "women who joined sororities had lower end-of-first-year scores on all four cognitive measures than non-sorority women, but only the differences in reading comprehension and composite achievement were statistically significant" (Pascarella et al., 1994, p. 19). Overall, fraternity and sorority affiliation can have a negative cognitive effect on members beginning as early as their first year. Being involved with fraternity and sorority life may distract students from being successful in their academic career.

      Benefits. In the 2014–2015 academic year, the NPC (2016) reported that, "$34,880,415 was raised for philanthropic causes by collegiate and alumnae members…, and 2,958,395 hours volunteered in support of nonprofit organizations" (p. 13). Philanthropy and service is another pillar that sororities value. The opportunities can have an impact on the sorority membership experience and depending on the opportunities available and the chapter size, may impact one group more than another. NPC statistics reported the overall benefit of sorority life to those outside of the community. Individual organizations and chapters may report different benefits that their women provide.

      There are different types of chapters even within the same sorority. Benefits of joining a particular chapter differ based on the type of chapter a member joins. Schanzle (2016) described her personal benefit of joining a sorority at a small school. Those benefits were identified as getting to know the community, multiple networking opportunities, big ambitions, and the support the community provides for its members. Involvement in a sorority can have a big impact on the member's life and college experience and students find that membership in a sorority is appealing

because they are student-centered and self-governed organizations (C. Hummel, personal communication, February 5, 2017). Nelson et al. (2006) stated that, "students' direct involvement in chapter management and leadership opportunities allows for practical experience that complements classroom instruction" (p. 70).

In the past 40 years, fraternity and sorority life has been in the media many times and has come under scrutiny. Pike (2003) found that, "criticisms of the Greek system have intensified and focused on research results showing that Greek affiliation can have negative effects of students' learning and intellectual development" (p. 369). Pike (2003) completed a study regarding student engagement and educational outcomes for members in a sorority and fraternity. Fraternities and sororities pride themselves on having higher GPAs than their peers, so it was surprising to find, "evidence that Greek affiliation is associated with lower levels of student learning and intellectual development" (Pike, 2003, p. 369). In addition, the study reported that students affiliated with a sorority or fraternity are more involved in college through on-campus opportunities. Usually, higher levels of involvement lead to higher levels of student learning and intellectual development. Pike (2003) reviewed a study conducted at the University of Missouri- Columbia and found that, "Greek students reported substantially higher levels of academic and social involvement" (p. 370). According to the study, affiliated freshman reported that they had made more gains with interpersonal skill development compared to unaffiliated freshman (Pike, 2003).

Pike (2003) wanted to find information about the differences between men and women and first year and senior students that are affiliated. Three questions were asked that helped guide the research which were based on the levels of student engagement between fraternity/sorority members and non-affiliated students according to gender and year in college. The study consisted of 6,782 undergraduate students who attended 15 different universities. Fifty-eight percent of the participants were women and 16% of the participants identified as being a member of a minority

group. Only 15% of the first-year participants were affiliated members and 17% of the senior participants were affiliated. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) provided four benchmarks of student engagement throughout this study. The results of the study are, "consistent with the findings of previous studies that relied on self-reports of student engagement and learning and did not attempt to control for differences in students' college experiences" (Pike, 2003, p. 376–377). Pike (2003) found that affiliated students are engaged as much as their non-affiliated peers. Lastly, the research also showed that, "the positive effects of belonging to a Greek organization are greater for seniors than for first-year students" but first-year affiliated students reported having a, "more positive perceptions of the campus environment and reported greater gains in their personal development" than their non-affiliated peers (Pike, 2003, p. 377). Overall, the benefits of being in a sorority were greater for senior members than first-year members (Pike, 2003). The benefits of being a sorority may be different depending on chapter size because of the different opportunities that are available to the members.

Sorority involvement, "has long been linked to college satisfaction and retention" (Nelson et al., 2006, p. 61). In a previous study, Astin (1977) found that membership in a sorority had a meaningful impact on the college experience, satisfaction, and persistence to graduation for members. Even though sorority involvement has positive attributes, some critics focus on academic performance. The researchers also reported that, "in terms of grade point average (GPA), several early studies found that fraternity/sorority membership does not have a negative impact on academic performance" (Nelson et al., 2006, p. 61). Learning and development does not only take place within the four walls of a classroom. "Membership in a fraternity or sorority has a positive influence on members within its community, and if the values, mission, and goals of fraternities and sororities are aligned with those of the institution, then the fraternity/sorority communities can foster valuable out-of-class learning" (Nelson et al., 2006, p. 62). The sorority experience can be

different based on organization, chapter, and campus as "the quality of the fraternity and sorority experience is most influenced by local factors and conditions such as housing, academic selectivity, organizational strength, and student leadership" (Nelson et al., 2006, p. 62). Nelson et al. (2006) focused on, "the effects of fraternity/sorority membership and the semester of recruitment on GPA and retention" (p. 62). The study was conducted with first-time, full-time students and with two separate groups, one group that does fall recruitment and the other group conducts deferred recruitment. The results of the study indicated that there were no noticeable differences in GPA between affiliated and non-affiliated students. The study also established that sorority membership impacted retention rates. Even though a negative correlation is found between, "GPA during the recruitment semester, membership in a sorority has positive outcomes such as a co-curricular experience, membership in a fraternity or sorority promotes involvement and student retention" (Nelson et al., 2006, p. 70). A staff member of Destiny Christian Church stated that, "like retention in sorority life, megachurches may also find that those that are involved in the church are more likely to retain as members" (K. Langham, personal communication, December 5, 2017).

Disadvantages. Fraternity and sorority leaders have been questioned regarding their purpose on college campuses since their emergence in the 19th century (Martin, Parker, Pascarella, & Blechschmidt, 2015). A disadvantage of membership is that affiliated members consume more alcohol than their nonaffiliated peers and engage in higher levels of academic dishonesty than their counterparts. Recently, organizations have been called out for cultural insensitivity. Supporters of fraternity and sorority life try to highlight the benefits such as volunteerism, responsibility, and on campus involvement along with retention statistics. Supporting organizational participation in cultural insensitivity, "one might conclude that fraternal membership may inhibit intercultural

competence" (Martin et al., 2015, p. 66). The evidence regarding this aspect of fraternity sorority involvement is mixed. There are studies that support the notion and others that do not.

There is some research that has suggested that, "fraternity/sorority membership may be positively linked to gains in intercultural competence" (Martin et al., 2015, p. 67). The purpose of the Martin et al. (2015) study was to measure the impact of fraternity and sorority membership, "on students' development of intercultural competence" during their collegiate experience (p. 67). Information was collected from 11 4-year institutions that were participating in the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education from 2006–2010. A pretest and posttest were developed and administered to the participants. Two scales were used in the study, the Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale and the Openness to Diversity/Challenge scale. A noted methodological strength of the assessment was its longitudinal design of the pretest and posttest. The end results of the survey suggested that fraternity or sorority membership does not have a significant impact on students' intercultural competence during their collegiate experience. Martin et al. (2015) contradicts previous studies and research that found negative intercultural competence and also confirmed that, "no significant conditional effects, suggesting that regardless of fraternity/sorority member's sex, race, or type of institution attended, any differences in growth on intercultural competence were likely due to chance, not membership in a fraternity/sorority (p. 71). Members of the fraternity and sorority life (FSL) community should be included in educational experiences as positive outcomes may occur. Involvement may help make chapters more diverse and participating in multicultural training may help community members be more understanding of cultural differences, engage in other activities outside of chapter events, and become culturally competent members of society.

Fraternities and sororities are constantly battling stereotypes of being affiliated. Pike (2003) also found that, "during the past 4 decades the role of fraternities and sororities on college

campuses has come under increasing scrutiny" (p. 117). This negative outlook has been found

through research in which, "membership in a fraternity or sorority is associated with higher levels

of alcohol use, lower levels of personal development, and lower levels of academic achievement"

(Pike, 2003, p. 117). Walker, Martin, and Hussey (2015) noted that membership in FSL has both

desirable and undesirable outcomes that happen throughout the college experience. Most members

come to campus with a greater emphasis placed on their social life. The results of the study support

three conclusions: (a) social comparison between affiliated and non-affiliated, (b) the role of

alcohol and drug usage, and (c) the involvement, satisfaction with social life, and retention

(Walker et al., 2015).

Martin, Hevel, Asel, and Pascarella (2011) conducted a study that focused on whether or

not fraternities and sororities foster or inhibit students and their development and educational

gains. Non-affiliated members differ significantly than those that are affiliated. Non-affiliated and

unaffiliated can be used interchangeably. Unaffiliated peers are those not members of a fraternity

or sorority (Martin et al., 2011). The study focused on the comparison between affiliated and

unaffiliated peers. This comparison was based on the following five outcomes of college: "(a)

moral reasoning, (b) cognitive development, (c) intercultural effectiveness, (d) inclination to

inquire and lifelong learning, and (d) psychological well-being" (Martin et al., 2011, p. 543).

Sisterhood. Sisterhood is another pillar within the sorority community. Sisterhood may

also have a perceived effect on the members' experience. Asel et al. (2009) implemented a study

regarding the membership experience and the associated outcomes of being affiliated. The

researchers described the effects of the membership in a fraternity or sorority. The participants

were from a large public university and focused on college experiences for first-year and senior

college students. The sample size for the study was 3,153 students; 1,477 were first year students

and 1,676 of the participants were seniors. The researchers reported that there is a relationship

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between being involved in the fraternity and sorority community and involvement and scholarship. Asel et al. (2009) mentioned that joining a fraternity or sorority may limit one's social groups because of their involvement in the organization. The members may only socialize with their brothers or sisters rather than gaining social experiences with non-affiliated students. The result of Asel et al. (2009) also verified that there was little support regarding affiliation based on gender differences. Recommendations on how to engage the collegiate and alumni members on how to support the intuitions mission was given for student affairs professionals.

Cohen et al. (2016b) conducted a study that explored the conceptualization of sisterhood. The study mirrored another study by McCreary and Schutts (2015) that was implemented with fraternities on brotherhood using the five themes of accountability, belonging, common purpose, shared social experience, and support and encouragement. Cohen et al. (2016b) research was a qualitative study with a grounded theory approach as to how women in sororities defined sisterhood. The study was completed using one international sorority's members to gather the information. The women that participated in the study were selected at random and were asked the same three interview questions. Cohen et al. (2016b) revealed five common themes. The themes were shared social experience, encouragement and support, accountability, belonging, and a common purpose. At the conclusion of the study, participants had described sisterhood as a process. Cohen et al. (2016b) described the process as, "indicating that most members come into the sorority expecting and experiencing the social nature of sisterhood but, over time, begin to understand and experience the more advanced notions of sisterhood" (p.22). The researchers also detailed the limitations of their study. A noted limitation was that the group was very homogeneous. Another limitation was that the focus group took place after the chapter women had participated in the sorority's ritual at their national convention.

Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2016a) completed an expansion study regarding the conceptualization of sisterhood. The original study concluded that there were five themes of sisterhood. Those five themes are shared social experience, encouragement and support, accountability, belonging and a common purpose. The follow-up study attempted to gain more in-depth information related to these five themes. The study explored each theme independently. The first part of the study was to develop the scale in which the themes and variables would be measured on. A list of 39 items were generated and evaluated. None of the items were eliminated. The researchers had four women evaluate the validity of the items. The researchers were left with 35 statements within the five themes of sisterhood. The assessment was given to 1,964 collegiate sorority women. The participants measured 39 statements on a Likert scale. Items that were below a .40 that was considered cross loading or loading values were eliminated. The correlation for the factors all reflected that the five themes were highly significant. A second and third study focused on how to construct validity based on findings from the first study. The third study, in particular, was a beneficial extension of Cohen et al. (2016a) as the researchers completed a scale development, item analysis, and validation efforts, concluding the 29 items scale was reliable. A recommendation of utilizing the same study and a unified scale that could be used to test for invariance by gender was provided.

Cohen (2015) also wrote on sisterhood and how it transcends during the member's experience. Cohen (2015) stated that "there seems to be a higher level of connectivity that exists beyond the realm of friendship within the context of a sorority. A level of bonding that is deep enough to be considered familial in nature to the point of feeling like they are sisters" (p. 1). Being part of a sorority or fraternity creates an environment that is unique. Cohen credits Bronfenbrenner's (1993) Ecology Model as the framework of her study and that sororities serve as the ecological niche within the model. The niche is a, "specified region in the environment that is

especially favorable or unfavorable to the development of individuals with particular personal characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 22). There are different levels of connectedness and sisterhood within a sorority is a fluid process. Cohen (2015) stated that it is, "one that starts at a very surface level and transcends to a higher place of interconnectivity and common purpose" (p. 1).

Cohen (2015) suggested that "members must transcend beyond simply holding each other accountable to the shared standards and expectations of the chapter" (p. 1). Sisterhood is strengthened and bonds are created when members cooperatively work towards a common purpose. Cohen gave an example of transcendence through effective officer transitions. Cohen (2015) discussed that older sisters have a great opportunity to mentor new members into a new role, if done correctly. Cohen also used newly colonized (new chapters) and established chapters when completing the focus groups. This provided a new a perspective of sisterhood in the FSL community because the women were new to the sorority member experience. An important note that Cohen (2015) highlighted was that in order for sorority women to transcend from, "friendship to sisterhood members needed to engage with the organization on a level with heightened dedication beyond what might be considered surface-level participatory membership" (p. 2). Some of these heightened dedications would be to live in the house or having a family member exposing others to the fraternity or sorority experience.

Cohen (2015) also suggested that further research be done to understand the process of transcendence and its role in sisterhood. Cohen (2015) study on transcendence during the member's experience attempted to address how chapter size effects the member's experience. Cohen (2015) work did not address if the participants were in a small, medium, large, or extra-large chapter, and how chapter size may have an influence on their experience. Cohen (2015)

mentioned that being a part of a sorority creates a unique environment; therefore, the current study attempted to determine if that unique environment is different based on chapter size.

Sororities pride themselves on being values-based organizations. A study completed by Burnett, Vaughan, and Moody (1997) found that women going through recruitment joined organizations with values closely aligned to their own. Potential new members preferred environments that, "have the same 'personality' profile as themselves" (Burnett et al., 1997, p. 297). This means that potential new members opt to join an organization that reports values congruent to their own.

Burnett et al. (1997) also focused on if potential new members changed their values through the recruitment process to better align with another organization. Burnett et al. (1997) suggested that, "to determine value congruence, potential organization members have to acquire relevant information about the organization's culture and values" (p. 297). The study used nine sororities that had recruitment in the fall semester. The recruitment chair distributed the questionnaires to new members and those that joined within the past year. Two hundred and thirty-one members participated in the study. The questionnaire was the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP). The profile had 54 value statements, "that identified organizational characteristics such as innovation, supportiveness, team orientation, and competitiveness" (Burnett et al., 1997, p. 298). The sororities' profiles were developed by averaging item by item. Burnett et al. (1997) found that the sorority members that participated in the assessment were very consistent about their organizational values. Two groups of college students that were interested in joining a sorority also participated in the study. The participants were 17–20 years old. The participants responded to the OCP with modifications. The recruitment chair gave out the OCP at two different times. The first time was before recruitment began and the second was after the recruitment process concluded. The results of the first assessment determined that the, "values they attributed

to their ideal organization were similar to those they used to describe the organizations they wanted to join" (Burnett et al., 1997, p. 299). The researchers found that organizations want to find members with the same values, and members want to join an organization that closely matchings their own values. The potential new members' values did not change from the first assessment to the second assessment, pre- and post-recruitment.

Another important study was completed regarding the effect of being affiliated with a sorority during the first year of college. Most sororities pride themselves on having better grades than those that are not affiliated. Martin et al. (2011) found that being affiliated did not differ from their peers on outcomes that were identified in the study. Only two other studies were conducted that, "estimated the impact of fraternity or sorority affiliation on standardized measures of cognitive development" (Martin et al., 2011, p. 544). Although affiliation did not impact the educational outcomes, a study by Pike and Askew (1990) found that affiliated members of the sorority community exerted more efforts academically than those that are not affiliated. Martin et al. (2011) data collection for their study was collected in the fall semester with 4,501 students at 19 different institutions. After the initial study was conducted, a follow-up was implemented in the spring semester. Only 3,081 students participated in the follow-up with about 21% of them reporting being affiliated. Five outcomes were measured within the study. The outcomes were moral reasoning, critical thinking, intercultural effectiveness, inclination to inquire and lifelong learning, and psychological well-being. Martin et al. (2011) found that membership does not have a significant influence on students' growth and educational outcomes during the first year in higher education. One unique take away from the study is that affiliated women had lower moral reasoning after two years of college in comparison to their peers. Another important finding was the lack of negative impact on critical thinking related to those in fraternities and sororities. Future studies such as this may help chapters reduce negative criticism.

Similar to Martin et al. (2011) study on the effect of sorority affiliation in the first year of college, Hevel, Martin, Weeden, and Pascarella (2015) conducted a study about membership in the fourth year of college. McCready et al. (2017) mentioned that members in megachapters are having a having a 2-, maybe 3-year membership experience because of the size of the chapter. In their 2017 AFA session, McCready et al. (2017) discussed that there is a lack of mentorship and challenges associated with big and little programs because the programs offered a limited experience. The discussion continued with an example that during the first-year freshman get initiated and get a big sister. In the second year, they live in the house, become a big sister, and apply for leadership positions. If they are lucky, in their third year a leadership position is obtained if available.

A study was conducted to address the four educational outcomes. The outcomes were based on critical thinking, moral reasoning, and lifelong learning, along with well-being (Hevel et al., 2015). The study also explores that not all members in a fraternity or sorority are influenced in the same way (Hevel et al., 2015). Literature on this topic is inconsistent and outdated. Most articles are related to alcohol, hazing, and sexual assault. This leaves a large gap in literature about how such organizations influence their member's development. Hevel et al. (2015) found that in the fourth year of college, sorority women's GPAs were similar to their unaffiliated peers and that fraternal membership affiliates reported more engagement and involvement by their senior year. Hevel et al. (2015) also explored the levels of involvement in sorority women and found that membership in a sorority can positively influence psychosocial outcomes. McCready et al. (2017) found that upperclassmen in megachapters are feeling less engaged in their experience than those in smaller chapters. The sample size of participants was from seventeen 4-year institutions. The study started when the participants were first year students and followed up their fourth year of college. The Need for Cognition Scale and the Positive Attitudes Towards Literacy Scale were the

instruments used in the study. The study concluded that membership in a sorority or fraternity does not have significant effects on any of the outcomes the study addressed (Hevel et al., 2015). Fraternities and sororities should strive to be, "a value-added component of undergraduate education that their members and supports already purport them to be" if they want to remain in higher education (Hevel et al., 2015, p. 468).

Review of Methodological Issues

The majority of the studies discussed in the literature review of this dissertation are quantitative studies. Very little qualitative studies were found while researching the topic of sorority experiences. In the quantitative studies, the participants were collegiate undergraduate students ages 18–24 that were affiliated with a fraternity or sorority. The colleges and universities included in the study were both public and private 4-year institutions. Participants either completed a national survey such as the NSSE (Pike, 2003), or a standard Likert scale survey (Cohen et al., 2016a). For example, Cohen et al. (2016b) studied the conceptualization of sisterhood by measuring women's responses to questions while offering several different response options. As another example, Martin et al. (2011) used standardized measures of cognitive development to examine the impact of fraternity or sorority.

Pascarella et al. (1994) conducted a study regarding the effects membership has on a person's first year of college. Hevel et al. (2015) studied membership in the fourth year of college. Pascarella et al. (1994) and Hevel et al. (2015) both focused their studies around outcomes such as critical thinking, moral reasoning, an increase in inquire and lifelong learning, and well-being. In both studies the researchers used quantitative assessments and gathered information from two separate groups of students that had sorority membership as a constant. Participants were from different universities and members of different organizations. The university and organization were not consistent between the participants. Another limitation was that participants were not

given the opportunity to provide personal feedback nor did it address the issue of chapter size impacting a member's experience.

Asel, et al. (2009) conducted a study about membership experience by using a quantitative methodology with 3,153 students. The researchers reported that participants' membership experience was based on several pillars within the FSL community. These pillars were involvement and scholarship. Another study was conducted by Martin et al. (2011) on the effects of sorority affiliation in the first year of college. The researchers identified several outcomes which included cognitive development, intercultural effectiveness, inclination to inquire and lifelong learning, and well-being (Martin et al., 2011). Similar to the research on membership, neither of these studies addressed the impact of chapter size nor did the researchers utilize qualitative methods.

A qualitative study allows for participants to answer questions based on their own experiences rather than using a scale to rank their experiences. None of the previously discussed studies focused on qualitative methods which is why it was important to utilize this research method for this study.

Synthesis of Research Findings

There are several themes that can be found throughout the literature review. However, none of the research offered any information on the effects of chapter size on the member experience. The research reviewed was missing information related to chapter size. Cohen et al. (2016b) stated that, "research on the sorority experience has been limited to a handful of studies focusing largely on educational outcomes" (p. 32). No research was found that connected any experiences to the size of the chapter. It was suggested by Cohen et al. (2016b) that using, "qualitative data and using them to build and test an instrument aimed at measuring the hypothesized schema of sisterhood.

Once developed, such an instrument could be used to correlate the various schema with other variables of importance" (pp. 25–26).

The first identified theme was that FSL has an impact on members. FSL has an impact on its members by the pillars identified by The Fraternity Advisor (n.d.). The five pillars are brotherhood/sisterhood, leadership, academic success, philanthropy/community service, and being social. The values and rituals that members participate in play a very important role in their experiences within the organization. Another impact that was found throughout the literature review was the negative impact that affiliation may have on a member. The first negative impact that some members might experience is academic dishonesty. In the literature review, there were several ideas that emerged that impact sorority members. One idea was the impact of being "associated with higher levels of alcohol use, lower levels of personal development, and lower levels of academic achievement" (Pike, 2003, p. 369). Another idea was the negative impact of hazing, which some believe proves that a member is dedicated to the organization and shows loyalty.

The second theme is the benefit of being affiliated with a sorority. Sororities can offer members benefits such as networking, job placement, social benefits, and leadership skills. Cohen (2015) stated that, "there seems to be a higher level of connectivity that exists beyond the realm of friendship within the context of a sorority and a level of bonding that is deep enough to be considered familial in nature to the point of feeling like they are sisters" (p. 1). People who are affiliated also have an impact society and their college community based on the amount of philanthropy dollars that are raised and the amount of community service hours completed. According to the NPC (2016) website collegiate and alumnae sorority women raised $34,880,415 for philanthropic causes and volunteered for 2,958,395 hours in support of nonprofit organizations. Not only do affiliated members provide these services but affiliated members also are more

persistent to graduation at a university. Nelson et al. found that sorority membership has been linked to satisfaction and retention. The Dallas Alumnae Panhellenic helps give back to current members by offer scholarships to graduating seniors. NPC (2017) reported that, "sororities provide valuable social and professional networks for women on campus, but they also offer financial support to members and potential new members alike" (p. 12). Those that advocate for sorority membership may find positive impact from their benefits of volunteerism, responsibility, and on campus involvement along with retention statistics. Lastly, another benefit of affiliation is that, "leadership opportunities, participation in college activities, friendships and extended connections" such as networking with alumnae and other affiliated members (Mercuro, Merritt, & Fiumefreddo, 2014, p. 59). Cohen et al. (2016b) stated that, "the positive benefits of membership improve throughout a women's collegiate experience" (p. 32). It is clear from the literature reviewed that there are many benefits to being an affiliated member of a sorority.

Lastly, an important theme that can be inferred from the literature review is the image of being a sorority member. Members value how they are perceived on campus, off campus, and within their organizations. As a sorority woman and working in the field, I have seen how much both positive and negative images affect the chapter. Websites such as Total Sorority Movement (TSM) have perpetuated the image of sorority women that most sorority women are working to change. In McCreary, Schutts, and Cohen's (2015) presentation on redefining sisterhood, they have identified that women value social status. Social status within some chapters may include their image. Some campuses may have a tiered system that is made up by members of organizations that rank chapters on campuses. Some fraternities may only socialize with sororities that are on the same tier level. Asel et al. (2009) found that membership in a chapter may decrease one's social groups because of their involvement in the organization.

Critique of Previous Research

After reviewing the literature, the conclusion that the researcher found was that the literature was lacking any information on chapter size affecting the membership experience. While the literature was very informative about the impact, benefit, and image of sorority membership, it was missing a discussion regarding chapter size and membership experience. An expansion of Cohen et al.'s (2016b) research regarding sisterhood may be beneficial to explore the impact of chapter size and membership experiences. Cohen et al. (2016a) mentioned that the sorority experience can offer a structure in which women experience support and encouragement through their membership experience. McCreary and Schutts (2015) suggested that sisterhood should be thought of as the currency of sorority and that chapter women have a product and that potential new members are the consumers buying it. He continued to encourage others to better understand the concept of sisterhood by understanding the basics of the membership experience. Continuous conversations about sisterhood may have the capacity to re-establish what it means to be a member of a sorority.

The themes that have been identified through the literature review are important to the membership experience as well as the impact of chapter size. The three themes are that FSL has an impact on its members, the benefit being affiliated with a sorority, and the image of being a sorority member. The literature has provided multiple findings for each of these themes but the research lacked any qualitative resources related to chapter size. It was beneficial to move forward as Cohen et al. (2016b) suggested and use a qualitative research approach to assess the connection between membership experience and chapter size.

Non-fraternity sorority life findings. Megachapters are recent to NPC, but megachurches have been around for many more years. There are many take-aways that extra-large chapters can learn from megachurches. Like small churches, small chapters are missing one important factor

that extra-large chapters and megachurches already have, a large membership. The size of a megachurch may be attractive to other people becoming self-perpetuating in membership (Thumma & Peterson, 2003, p. 115). Extra-large chapters may also reap those benefits. Megachurches have many members which means they likely have a megabudget. The budgets often allow the church to program more events and offer more resources to members (Thumma & Peterson, 2003). Once these members are in the megachurch they need to be taken care of just like members that join a megachapter. Thumma and Peterson (2003) found that the megachurches they studied, had programs to meet the needs of new members such as small groups and new members' classes. Northview Church in Indiana has eight campuses and multiple service times to meet the needs of their members. They also preach a "come as you are" message as to what to wear to church saying, "wear whatever you want and are comfortable in! You don't have to dress up; come as you are" (Northview Church, 2017, para. 4).

Junior Chamber International (JCI) is the third largest organizations in the world with chapters in over 100 countries (JCI, 2014). The JCI requires new members to go through a probation period before becoming a full member, similar to new member education in sororities. JCI also has many different sized chapters and sororities could therefore learn by studying the JCI infrastructure. The set up megachurches are using could be helpful to extra-large chapters. Offering multiple chapter meetings throughout the week may help with chapter meeting attendance. It may also help the way the chapter communicates important information and impact the member experience for the sorority women. Programming events for new members and small groups may also be an idea extra-large chapters can gain from the experience of megachurches.

Similar to work with megachapters, Wicker and Mehler (1971) completed a study that examined membership in a large and small church. In any organization, there are undermanned activities and "in an undermanned activity, there are many jobs to be done relative to the available

population, and thus if members are to obtain the satisfactions the activity provides, they must work harder, engage in a wider variety of tasks, and assume more responsibility than would be in case if there were an abundance of personal" (Wicker & Mehler, 1971, p. 151). Similar to small and medium size chapters, there may be tasks that are unmanned because of the lack of members in the sorority chapter. Wicker and Mehler's (1971) research found that members of smaller organizations show more behavioral support for the activities of their organization along with having "more feelings of self-improvement, challenge, importance, and concern about activities (p. 151). The study conducted by Wicker and Mehler (1971) examined the assimilation of new members into the church activities and functions. Members of smaller churches that assimilated are usually drawn into many positions and the participation opportunities allow a member to interact with many other people in the organization (Wicker & Mehler, 1971). This is not the same in large churches. Large churches have more people to carry out activities. Wicker and Mehler (1971) stated that there is less of a need to recruit new members to help in activities which may cause the newcomers to feel less welcome and may limit the opportunities to participate. The study recruited participants who were members of a small church affiliated with the Methodist denomination. The small church had 338 members whereas the large church was 1,599. Both churches in the study were located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Church records were used to gain access to potential participants. Thirty participants in the study were from the small church and 51 were from the large church. The questionnaire data was gathered from small group meetings either at the church or at individual homes. Twenty-six questionnaires were completed for the small church participants and 40 in the large church with the average length of church membership being around 15 months. The results of the study demonstrated that members of the small church, "showed greater assimilation than the members of the large church" (Wicker & Mehler, 1971, p. 155). A factor analysis of the information indicated that there was greater support from other

members that have been at the small church for longer than 30 months. The researchers posed the question of "whether new members select churches of the size which makes demands consistent with their willingness to expend effort, since they tend to show the same church size difference is support as do established members" (Wicker & Mehler, 1971, p. 156). Despite all this information, new members of small and larger churches said that church size is not an important factor in the decision to affiliate with their current church (Wicker & Mehler, 1971). Wicker and Mehler (1971) stated in conclusion that, "church size probably does have some influence on the choice of a church, the immediate situation of undermanning or overmanning is undoubtedly also a critical determinant of levels of support" (p. 156). This information from church size and experience of their members was used in this study of chapter size affecting the sorority membership experience. Less opportunities are available in large churches and more in small churches and this issue could be relevant to the experience of sorority women depending on chapter size.

Small organizations may look up to large organizations regarding their impact on the industry (Eilert, Walker, & Dogan, 2017). Large organizations can offer more benefits to the community. Unlike small organizations, large organizations are more visible and members may be motivated by others to be socially responsible and set an example. Even though large organizations may feel pressure to be socially responsible, "findings show that organization size is not always positively associated with OSP (Organizational Social Performance)" (Eilert et al., 2017, p. 538). The researchers focused on organization size as a key factor in OSP. Little information is available regarding organization size and OSP. Previous research by Eilert et al. (2017) illustrated no clear findings between organization size and OSP but a meta-analysis found that correlation coefficients vary from positive to negative even within studies. Eilert et al. (2017) conducted the study with a sample of 302 organizations in higher education. Higher education was chosen because colleges

and universities have traceable interactions and are comparable to others. Higher education institutions have a large impact of their environment in the realm of sustainability and implementation of going green initiatives. The goal was to examine the correlation between organization size and social performance (Eilert et al., 2017). The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education noted that, "size matters… size relates to institutional structure, complexity, culture, finances and other factors' and impacts the 'campus environment, student population served, and the mix of programs offered" (Eilert et al., 2017, p. 538). Large organizations are more visible on a campus so the level of accountability the organization may face is closely watched, as well as, how it addresses social issues. Stakeholders also play a key part in this as they make demands that organizations are more than likely going to respond to depending on their influence. Larger organizations have more resources and can attract new consumers more efficiently than smaller organizations (Eilert et al., 2017). The researchers predicted that size played a major role in OSP. In the end, the researchers were, "unable to test the exact process through which organization size influences OSP" (Eilert et al., 2017, p. 547). Researchers that study FSL and chapter size may also research OSP and how outside factors contribute to the experiences members gain. As larger organizations have more of a presence in the community, so could large and extra-large sorority chapters. It would be interesting to see if the impact of small and medium size organizations is the same across the board.

A study on organization size is relevant to this study on sorority chapter size. A question the researchers set out to answer was whether a larger chapter size is necessarily better. Organizations vary by many different characteristics. Kalleberg and Van Buren (1996) found that, "of all organizational characteristics, size is 'the most important correlate of diversity in organization structure" (p. 47). The authors went on to state that organization size is the variable most studied in research focused on stratification (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996). The researchers

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found that only a few studies tried to assess the complete package of rewards based on small organizations versus large organizations.

Kalleberg and Van Buren's (1996) review of literatures provided seven different cluster variations that may be useful in looking at satisfaction for employees. The concepts identified in the study were "product market characteristics, relations between the organization and its institutional environment, job characteristics, and quality of the labor force" (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996, p. 48). The researchers stated the relationship between size and job rewards was not clearly explained previously and that different variables may help with the relationship (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996). Similar to large chapters, large organizations can be found in highly concentrated industries with greater market power to get higher profits from the product market. Large sorority chapters are often able to recruit more members because they have more resources available to do so. Small organizations may not have the same resources to offer their members or employees such as funding (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996). In the labor market, large organizations "pay high wages and provide more fringe benefits in order to elicit sufficient applications for job openings" (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996, p. 48). On the other hand, small establishments are more likely to be in small communities that may offer fewer employment opportunities. This can be related to chapter size as well. There may not be a lot of opportunities to join a different chapter depending on the university community the chapter is established in. Within the structure of the organization, "large organizations are more complex and exhibit greater horizontal and vertical differentiation compared to small organizations" (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996, p. 49). Additionally, more opportunities are available because there are more "slots within the organizations" (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996, p. 49). The conclusion of the study confirmed that larger sized organizations are better by stating, "is true in the sense that employees of large organizations obtain higher earnings and more fringe benefits and promotion opportunities than do

employees in small organizations" (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996, p. 62). On the flip side, small is appropriate, especially if a member wants autonomy and control (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996). The researchers used their seven established sets of variables which are not exogenous to size. A limitation that the researchers identified in their study was that there was only one respondent from most of the organizations that were used in the study. As a result, organizational and individual effects were not distinguished. Similar to large and small organizations, sorority chapters may relate to this research when assessing rewards, resources, and opportunities provided based on organization size.

According to Wicker, Breuer, Lamprecht, and Fischer (2014), "size is a central characteristic of organizations" (p. 266). The research conducted regarding organization size in sports is relevant for non-profit and for-profit businesses (Wicker et al., 2014). For sports clubs, even though there is a difference in size, these clubs have similar organizational problems such as recruitment, retention of volunteers, finances, and use of resources (Wicker et al., 2014). Wicker et al. (2014) continued to discuss that, "the pressure of organizational problems may differ among sports clubs of different size…research has shown that size had an impact on the functioning of sports clubs" (p. 266). The study conducted by Wicker et al. (2014) found that clubs with more members had its advantages such as what they could be offered to their members but found that there were other issues such as recruitment and retention of their volunteers. The purpose of Wicker et al. (2014) study was to, "investigate size effects on the functioning of nonprofit sports clubs" (p. 266). The researchers assessed how size effects the severity of the problems in sports clubs but realized that size is not the only critical factor to sports clubs. Two questions were established to help guide the study. The questions were focused on size, production costs, and organizational problems (Wicker et al., 2014). The study conducted a nationwide survey with nonprofit sports clubs in Germany and Switzerland. Wicker et al. (2014) acknowledged that there

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were no studies that consider economies of scope in a club sport setting. A concern that was identified in the research was the impact of optimal club sport size (Wicker et al., 2014). As club size increases, the cost for membership decreases and membership benefits will increase, but eventually decline at some point (Wicker et al., 2014). The benefits may decrease as the club size increases and becomes too congested. An example of congestion maybe when facilities begin to become overcrowded leading to lower utility for members (Wicker et al., 2014). Average club sizes identified in the study were 133–400 members. Larger clubs may be multisport clubs while smaller clubs may be single-sport clubs (Wicker et al., 2014). Members of the sports clubs are also expected to work voluntarily for the club to help with operations (Wicker et al., 2014). Similar to other organizations such as sororities, members are likely to volunteers for things when it goes in line with their own goals (Wicker et al., 2014). The researchers found that larger sports clubs had less problems regarding recruitment and retention of their members (Wicker et al., 2014). Regarding volunteers, larger clubs could employ staff which cut down on the need for volunteers (Wicker et al., 2014).

Another impact that club size can have is on finances. More members may lead to more financial resources. Lastly, size can influence the structural capacity. Unlike small organizations, large organizations have a well-structured administrative component (Wicker et al., 2014). This creates more levels of bureaucracy smaller clubs do not have to address. To conclude, the researchers stated that "there is no evidence for an optimal club size across sports, it can be recommended that policy makers support clubs of all sizes" (Wicker et al., 2014, p. 277). After reviewing this scholarly study on club sports size, there seemed to be a lot of information that can be transferred to other organizations such as sororities particularly in regard to the impact on members.

Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter provided the researcher's personal connection with sororities and a broad overview of the general history of sororities including the NPC and the some of the effects of joining a sorority. Additionally, theories were discussed as they relate to undergraduate women students.

Most of the literature focused on quantitative studies related to fraternity sorority life. The literature lacked any information related to chapter size and the impact on the membership experience. Although no research was found regarding sororities and chapter size, other sources were found. Information related to megachurches was included and organization size and its relation to organizational social performance. Three key themes were identified throughout the literature review. Those themes were the impact FSL has on its members, the internal and external benefit of being affiliated with a sorority, and the image of being a sorority member. Not only does this study affect the researcher's professional life as a Fraternity Sorority Advisor (FSA), but as a sorority woman as well. After reading multiple sources for the literature review, it was the researcher's intent to use the information gathered and results from this study to learn how to better advise chapters. Studies on chapter size and its impact on the membership experience is a topic that requires further research.

Based on this review of literature, which developed a unique conceptual framework by incorporating student development theory, moral development, and identify development, to understand what can support the sorority experience, there is sufficient reason for thinking that a study examining the impact that chapter size would produce socially significant findings. The literature review has provided strong support for this research project that addressed the following multi-part research questions: what is the lived experience of sorority members in regard to sorority chapter size; how chapter size influence sorority membership within the five identified

themes; and, how chapter size affects member experience and chapter size in a higher education

institution.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This qualitative study explored the perceived effects of sorority chapter size on the membership experience of sorority women. Cohen et al. (2016a) argued that the breaking point in membership is when sorority chapter size reaches 150 members. Sorority chapters are being pushed towards "total" which is the number of women a sorority can have in the sorority chapter based on other sorority chapters on the same campus. Total is defined by the NPC as "the allowable chapter size as determined by the College Panhellenic, and it includes both new members and initiated members" (NPC, 2017, p. 101). Callais stated that just because sorority chapters do not reach the total amount of women allowed in the chapter, does not mean the members are not having a good experience (M. Callais, personal communication, March 8, 2017). Cohen et al. (2016b) discussed how factors such as chapter size and leadership level within the organization, among other things, could impact sisterhood; however, further research is necessary to make this inference.

This qualitative study was based on Cohen et al. (2016a) to determine the perceived effects of sorority chapter size on sorority membership experiences. This chapter includes the research questions that guided the qualitative study and provides information about the research design and data collection process. The target population and sampling methods are also described within this chapter along with the instruments that were used to collect data. Lastly, validity, expected findings, and ethical issues are also described in this chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the perceived effect of sorority chapter size on the sorority membership experience. NPC officials (2016) wrote in the 2015–2016 annual report that the number of women joining sororities is increasing every year and some chapters are so large that membership effects the way the chapter operates. McCreary et al. (2014) mentioned in their

AFA presentation that the average sorority chapter size is 152 members currently and this includes new initiates. McCreary further stated that in sorority chapters with over 150 women, there may not be a deep connection amongst sisters such as accountability to their chapter, feeling of closeness to sisters, or a common purpose. (McCreary, 2015b). According to McCreary (2015b), an increase of large and megasorority chapters is here to stay, yet the current structure of a sorority is not developed to handle this size of sorority chapters. McCreary (2015b) reported that according to the NPC Annual Report, there was over "80,000 women joining sororities in the 2004–2005 school year, compared to 140,000 in the 2013–2014 school year, a growth of 43 percent" (para. 1). Even though there were numerous women joining sororities, there was merely a 10% growth and only 300 new sorority chapters chartered on campuses (McCreary, 2015b). Thus, making sorority chapter size a potentially important factor of the sorority member experience. Deeg (2015) posed the question of "have we grown beyond our current capacity to provide the care, direction, and support that our organizations need?" (p. 1). Deeg (2015) also mentioned that fraternity and sorority professionals need to recognize what problems come along with this growth and recognize ways to address these problems. McCreary (2015b) also mentioned that using small groups in fraternal chapters can provide greater internal connection between members. For the current study, it was important to find out the perceived effects sorority chapter size may have on members so that professionals can support chapters' members.

This study assessed personal lived experiences from collegiate women affiliated with an NPC sorority to explore whether their experiences were hindered or enhanced based on sorority chapter size. The goal of this research study was to determine perceived connections between sorority chapter size and the sorority member experience. This study was also designed to gain more perspective regarding how sorority chapter size may or may not affect the membership

experience. This study was analyzed using Cohen et al. (2016a) five categories of shared social experiences: belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine if sorority chapter size affects perceived member experiences such as shared social experiences, belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose (Cohen et al., 2016a). The researcher of this phenomenological study used only personal interviews with the participants. The following question guided this research study:

RQ1: What is the lived experience of sorority members in regard to sorority chapter size?

Sub-Questions

a. How does sorority chapter size effect the quality of the membership experience within the individual sorority chapter focusing on shared social experiences, belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose?

b. How does sorority chapter size effect the quality of the membership experience within the overall sorority experience on a college or university campus?

Research Design

A qualitative research design was used to collect data that was rich in content and examine the responses and sentiments of sorority members regarding their membership experiences. Callais stated that, "according to Merriam (1998), interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior and the feelings and emotions towards something" (Callais, 2002, p. 64). The qualitative approach required the inquirer to make claims based on constructivist viewpoints (Creswell, 2003). In this study, a phenomenological approach was administered regarding the experiences sorority women have as it relates to their sorority chapter size. Phenomenological research is defined as a, "common meaning for individuals' experiences of a share concept or cultural phenomenon" with a

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purpose to describe what the participants experience and how it happens (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). Creswell (2013) stated that "understanding the 'lived experiences' marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning as stated by Moustakas (1994)" (p. 16).

The concept of phenomenology began to develop as a philosophy in the 18th and 19th centuries (Converse, 2012). "The original thought behind the philosophy is that things take place in the mind rather than objective realities to be observed" (Converse, 2012, p. 29). Wilhelm Hegel viewed phenomenology as a path from natural consciousness to real knowledge (Converse, 2012), meaning that experiences are subjective. Continued research was conducted and the philosophy included text and conversations for interpretation along with setting aside culturally induced understandings of the phenomenology (Converse, 2012). Phenomenology can provide researchers with in-depth insight into lived experiences like that of the sorority women included in this research study (Converse, 2012).

Qualitative studies use participant knowledge along with open-ended interviewing (Creswell, 2003). The researcher in this study strived to gather relevant experiences that could help to explain the unique phenomenon of sorority experiences that only these participants could explain (Creswell, 2003). The research completed was not conducted to find a connection with sorority chapter size providing a lower quality experience for the sorority chapter members, but rather to better understand the effects that sorority chapter size has on membership experience. The researcher created questions based on sorority chapter size and experiences and conducted one-on-one interviews with the participants. The qualitative study design used throughout this study was phenomenology and the study focused on the lived experiences of those participating in the common phenomenon of sorority membership experiences.

Target Population and Sampling Method

The general population for this study were traditional undergraduate students that identified as women and were enrolled in a 4-year institution and affiliated with a recognized sorority across the Continental U.S. or Canada. The target population size for this study was 16–20 collegiate women. The participants had to meet the following criteria: identify as female, enrolled at a private or public institution, between the ages of 18–22, and active member of a NPC sorority. NPC serves as the umbrella organization for 26 Panhellenic sororities. The participants in this study had to be a member of one of the NPC organizations. The participants were active members of their organization per the national headquarter roster. Participants in this study were not involved with the military, not married, and did not have children. Participants with disabilities were deemed eligible to participate if they were 18–22 collegiate students and members of a NPC sorority in the U.S. or Canada. Race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status did not influence participation in the study.

Previous research revealed that 15 is the smallest acceptable sample size for qualitative research as long as saturation has occurred (Mason, 2010). Using 16 participants in a phenomenological study allowed for reasonable data collection, analyzation, and coding (Mason, 2010). Thus, the researcher planned to use 16 participants: four participants that identified with one of the four categories of sorority chapter size (small, medium, large, and extra-large). Using a small number of participants provided valuable information regarding the effects of sorority chapter size and the member experience. Green and Thorogood (2009) stated that, "the experience of most qualitative researchers (emphasis added) is that in interview studies little that is 'new' comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people" (p. 120). Over saturation could have occurred if too many participants were involved in the study. Saturation is defined as, "operationalized as collecting data until no new information is obtained" (Morse, 2015, p. 147).

Sixteen participants was considered adequate enough for saturation and to gather adequate data (Mason, 2010). If saturation did not occur with the 16 participants, the researcher would have sought out more sorority woman to participate in this study.

Sources of Data

For the purpose of collecting data, the researcher chose to use personal interviews to address the research questions because interviews are common in qualitative research and allows for more personal and in-depth answers from the participants. Cohen et al. (2016b) used interviews in a similar study with collegiate sorority women to assess how they defined and hypothesized sisters; therefore, the current study used interviews as well. The researcher specifically designed the interview questions to illicit responses from current collegiate sorority women in NPC sororities (see Appendix A)**.** The interview also made it possible to gain a clearer understanding of sorority women's common experience concerning membership and helped identify any perceived effects related to chapter size (NPC, 2017).

For this research, individual interviews were scheduled with each participant. The emphasis of this research explored the perceived effects of sorority chapter size on the member experience. The literature that the researcher studied indicated that sororities had an influence on the lives of their members. Still, there was a gap in the literature which revealed a need to assess the phenomenon through the experiences of the collegiate members.

Data Collection

The researcher followed NPC submission requirements for research study approval. Once obtained, the researcher was given information from NPC and was allowed to contact sorority chapters and members to participate in the research study. The contact information was located on a secure login portal on the NPC website and on campus websites.

Informed consent for each participation was obtained before the interviews began. The researcher sent each participant the consent form electronically through personal email (see Appendix B) and reviewed the form with participants through WebEx, a video conference system, if the participants had questions. A review of the consent form informed the participants they may withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were selected based on the approval of NPC. NPC approval guided which organizations the researcher could seek out. The researcher developed interview questions about how chapter size effects the sorority member experience and were used in the personal interviews with the participants. All interviews with the sorority women participants were recorded with consent of the participant. The researcher recorded the interviews with WebEx. Patton (1990) wrote about the importance of the power of interview:

> Because qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal, because materialistic inquiry takes the researcher into the real world where people live and work, and because in-depth interviewing opens up what is inside people, qualitative inquiry may be more intrusive and involve greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other qualitative approaches. (p. 356)

During the interviews, the researcher asked all participants the same questions about their experiences. The researcher used the information and looked for themes among the information and categorized the data in five different categories: shared social experiences, belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose (Cohen et al., 2016a). Qualitative studies use strategies of inquiry such as phenomenology. Creswell (2003) stated that the responsibility of the researcher is to collect open-ended and emerging data with the purpose of developing themes from the data that was collected.

The interviews with the participants were conducted through WebEx, an online web conferencing system. Participants had 4 weeks to schedule and complete the interview. The

researcher sent out a schedule of available times through Doodle, an online scheduling system. A

reminder email was sent 2 weeks after the initial email and again a week before interview times

closed. The participants and their individual chapter designations were not used in the results. Each

of the participants were referred to by their first names only in the interviews and given a pseudo

name for the results. The interviews were informal, and it was the intention of the researcher to

make the participants feel as if they were taking part in a conversation about their experience as a

sorority member in a specific chapter size (University of Surrey, n.d.). The interviews and

transcriptions will be destroyed 3 years after the completion of the analysis. Recorded audio files

were deleted once the transcription of the interviews was completed.

Identification of Attributes

The attributes in this study were the five identified themes. The first theme of belonging

which can be the feeling of home away from home. The second attribute was shared social

experience. For the sorority women, shared social experience may be experienced through pictures

of sisters doing social events (McCreary, 2015). The third attribute is accountability. This attribute

may come in the form of holding each other to a higher standard. The fourth attribute is common

purpose and may be seen as working for a common goal (McCreary, 2015). Lastly, the fifth

attribute is support and encouragement. According to McCreary (2015) this may be sorority

women encouraging each other when they are down.

 Data Analysis Procedures

Validity and reliability of the qualitative data were addressed using member checking and

triangulating data. Per Murphy (2011):

Creswell recommends member checking as a way of increasing the validity of data

collection. In this process the researchers take their account, descriptions and themes in

qualitative research back to the members to check if this adequately represents their reality.

They ask members whether descriptions are complete and realistic and whether the themes

are accurate to include. They would also ascertain whether themes and interpretations are

fair and representative. (para. 3)

Therefore, the researcher triangulated the data to enhance accuracy of the study (Creswell, 2003).

Oliver-Hoyo, and Allen (2006) stated that triangulation "compares information to determine

corroboration; in other words, it is a process of qualitative cross-validation" (p. 43). In a study

about sorority women and gender strategies, Handler (1995) used triangulation to help analyze

data. Similar to Handler's research, triangulation was used to analyze data for this study.

Triangulation occurred through personal interviews, member checking, and when the researcher

compared participants with different viewpoints.

The researcher recorded the interviews with the participants and used the recordings to

transcribe each interview after it was completed. The researcher transcribed all the interviews and

analyzed the transcripts for themes. The researcher used the record feature on WebEx to record

each interview and transcribed the interviews word-for-word on the computer. After the interviews

were transcribed, the researcher contacted all participants and provided them, via email, a copy of

the transcript to begin the member checking process. This allowed the participants to provide

feedback, edits, or corrections. Member checking was used to verify the accuracy of their

responses. The participants reviewed the transcripts to make sure that their information was

correct. The data was analyzed along with the interview transcripts to help support emerging

themes within the research.

The researcher analyzed the data after the completion of the first interview to help begin

identifying themes and patterns, and to facilitate follow-up data collection. Denzin and Lincoln

(2018) referred to qualitative data analysis as a creative process. The van Kaam approach was used

when analyzing the data. The first step was to use the full transcription of each of the participant

interviews within the study. The researcher reviewed the interviews and wrote down specific

experiences that the sorority women described as it related to chapter size. The researcher

continued to review the interviews after they were completed and put experiences together that

related to each other, for example leadership opportunities or social opportunities. Similar

experiences or patterns were put together to help analyze the research in relation to sorority chapter

size. The researcher sought to understand the factors and effects of sorority chapter size on the

sorority membership experience, whether it was positive or negative. The Van Kaam method

confirms that this step is in the analysis progress by clustering and thematizing the information. It

was also suggested to check the information gathered in the interview along with themes with the

record of the sorority women participants (Moustakas, 1994). This is when member checking was

used. This study was completed in different phases, and because of that, multiple forms of

analytical methods were required.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design

Limitations to the study on the effects of sorority chapter size and the sorority member

experience included weaknesses that were associated with the demographics of this study, the

responses of the individual interviews, and the themes identified from the participants. The

interview invitations were sent out to the participants in a digital format and participants needed to

have access to technology to participate in the personal interviews. The questions in the individual

interviews may have been interpreted differently by participants, depending on their sorority

member experience.

A delimitation of this study was not using NPHC and MGC sororities. The NPHC and

MGC sororities were not included because, at the time of this study, these councils did not have

organizations that fit in each category of small, medium, large, and extra-large sorority chapter.

Validation

The research in this study involved validation of credibility of the data collected. The data in this study was credible because the sorority women participants have first-hand knowledge of their experience in a NPC sorority and the effects of their own sorority chapter size on their collegiate experience. Trochim (2006) stated that, "the purpose of qualitative research was to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participant's eyes, the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results" (para. 3). Credibility was established because the information was an accurate representation of the participants experience within their sorority chapter based on member checking. Triangulation also helped develop credibility by using multiple analysis including member checking. Murphy stated that, "triangulation in research increases the credibility of the research by drawing on multiple viewpoints" (2011, para. 1).

The interview questions were specifically created to produce supporting evidence. Questions were written based on information that was needed from the research questions identified previously in this study. The questions that were asked of the sorority member participants are located in Appendix A. Each of the participants were given the opportunity to check the transcribed notes of their interview to check for accuracy. Member checking was also used to clarify and validate themes from the participants. Triangulation of data was provided by using campus demographics and sorority chapter statistics.

To assist with validation of the study, a field expert panel reviewed the research questions along with the interview questions. These experts were individuals that work with NPC sorority women. The experts were either a campus advisor such as a fraternity sorority professional or as a NPC delegate serving their organization as an Area Advisor.

Expected Findings

  The main research question that guided this study asked about the perceptions of the sorority members' experience and sorority chapter size. The researcher anticipated that sorority chapter size would influence membership experience particularly for large and extra-large chapters. The researcher also anticipated that participants would report a better experience with a more manageable sorority chapter size and a greater understanding of sorority operations such as retention, effects on the campus, organizational procedures, and ritual. The researcher also anticipated finding more information linking member experience to campus benefits. One of the benefits of sorority membership "has long been linked to college satisfaction and retention" (Nelson et al., 2006, p. 61).

  Another expected finding was related to the quality of the member experience within the context of sorority chapter size. Nelson et al. (2006) stated that the "quality of the fraternity and sorority experience is most influenced by local factors and conditions such as housing, academic selectivity, organizational strength, and student leadership" (p. 62). This information helped answer the sub-question related to quality membership focused on themes of shared social experience, belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose (Cohen et al., 2016a).

  Another expected finding was the activities and benefits of the member experience on a national level as the researcher expected to find a connection between sorority chapter size, member experience, and the larger sorority network. Some of these benefits according to Mercuro, et al. (2014) are "leadership opportunities, participation in college activities, friendships and extended connections" such as networking with alumnae and other affiliated members (p. 59). The researcher also expected to find a correlation between these opportunities and sorority chapter size,

because some opportunities may not be given to all members based on availability and sorority chapter size.

The researcher also anticipated that the information would help the fraternal movement and NPC affiliated sororities and campuses to understand why chapter size is important to the sorority membership experience. The researcher expects that the information gathered in this study will help educate those invested in the success and growth of the sorority movement. The researcher also expects that stakeholders will have a better understanding as to how sorority chapter size impacts the sorority member experience, whether it is positive or negative.

Ethical Issues in the Study

To address ethical issues that may arise in the study, the researcher assured that participant confidentiality related to answers and sorority affiliation was protected and required all participants to sign consent forms. The participants were assured that any information that would identify them would will not be available to anyone not involved in the research study (Trochim, 2006). The researcher ensured all procedures were followed as it related to obtaining data for this study along with staying within the parameters of the outlined study.

Each of the sorority member participants were asked to sign a consent form to voluntarily participate in the study. Trochim (2006) discussed how participation in research should be voluntary and participants should not be coerced into participating. If at any time the sorority member participants wanted to discontinue their participation all they needed to do was contact the researcher to inform the researcher of their withdrawal from the study. This was explained in the consent form.

Possible negative consequences associated with participating in this study could have been the disclosure of sensitive or illegal information such as alleged hazing claims, sexual assault, use of illegal drugs, or underage drinking. If this information were to have been divulged and possibly

impact the study, the researcher was prepared in the proper way of handling these issues. The researcher followed any guidelines that NPC has set forth about policies and procedures about participating in these activities. NPC (2017) declared that it is against hazing and support all efforts to eliminate it within their member organizations. The federal law prohibits the consumption of alcohol under the age of 21 (Alcohol Policy Information System, n.d.). Lastly, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) is reviewing the Title IX policy as it relates to sexual assault on campus. According to the USDOE (2017), Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos stated that, "the Department of Education will follow the proper legal procedures to craft a new Title IX regulation that better serves students and schools" (para. 7).

Chapter 3 Summary

The researcher completed the current study by using qualitative methods to explore the perceived impact sorority chapter size has on the sorority member experience within NPC sororities. This study was based on previous research completed by Cohen et al. (2016a). The researcher used 15 affiliated members to participate in the study and the participants were selected from campuses approved by NPC. To explore the sorority member experience, the researcher used the process of personal interviews to gather information. This method was used to allow descriptive information about the participants' experiences within their sorority and to explore how the size of the sorority chapter impacts those experiences. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Member checking and triangulation were also used to help validate the information from the participants.

This chapter explained the process of the qualitative research study and how data collection for this study was conducted. Phenomenological methods were used to study a shared concept. The outlined purpose and methods helped illuminate various complexities included in this study: data collection process, data analysis, and ethical issues with respect to the relationships between the

members and their sorority sisters and the information that may be disclosed during the one-on-one

interviews.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of conducting this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and understand how sorority women perceived their membership experiences in a NPC sorority based on chapter size. The study findings may improve fraternity and sorority practices regarding chapter size, recruitment, Panhellenic total, and experience. According to Cohen et al. (2016a), a gap exists in the currently literature related to the sorority member experience and the authors explained a need for additional research that explores the impact of chapter size on the member experience. Limited information was available regarding the perceived impact of chapter size on the sorority member experience and a gap in research and literature exists. This study was conducted to add to the currently limited body of literature addressing how chapter size impacts sorority members' experience.

This study utilized a qualitative methodology for exploration of the phenomenon. Qualitative methodology permits the exploration and understanding of a phenomenon from lived participant experiences (Merriam, 1998). This is a way of understanding the meaning people have about their lived world. The qualitative approach requires the inquirer to make claims based on constructivist viewpoints (Creswell, 2003). Personal experiences were sought from the participants making qualitative methodology the best research method for a study of this nature.

The role of the researcher was to provide an opportunity for sorority women to discuss their sorority experience based on sorority chapter size. The researcher is an active member of the fraternity and sorority community and holds volunteer roles for the AFA along with volunteering for other FSL organizations. The researcher was also a fraternity and sorority advisor on a college campus. The researcher was motivated to conduct this study because of personal experience as a member of a small sorority chapter and working with small fraternity and sorority chapters. The researcher was interested in examining if chapter size has an impact on sorority members'

experience. The researcher deemed a qualitative research approach most helpful to gain detailed experiences from the participants that would help create an impactful resource for the FSL community. The researcher kept confidentiality with the participants and created a safe space for them to discuss experiences within the sorority chapter. The researcher's role was also to interview the participants, digitally record the interviews, accurately transcribe the data collected from the interviews, analyze the data in-depth, verify the information collected and analyzed, and interpret the findings.

The study was guided by the following problem statement: it was not known how sorority chapter size may or may not affect the sorority member experience. One main question guided the study which was: what is the lived experience of the sorority members and sorority chapter size? Two sub-questions followed the guiding question: how does sorority chapter size effect the quality of the membership experience within the individual sorority chapter focusing on shared social experiences, belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose and how does sorority chapter size effect the quality of the membership experience on a college or university campus. Data was collected from one-on-one personal interviews and the descriptions of lived experiences were obtained to answer the research questions.

The findings of the study completed for the research project are reported in Chapter 4. The researcher completed the data analysis using the van Kaam method. The results of the interview analysis were interpreted and includes a detailed discussion of the data and how this information contributes to answers the guiding research questions for the study. A summary of the results is provided along with each theme as it aligned to the research question.

Description of the Sample

Out of the six campuses that were used in this study, 4,636 women potentially had the opportunity to participate. There were 41 women that participated in the pre-screening survey (see

Appendix C). The women that met the requirements of the study were emailed a consent form and asked to fill out an online Doodle poll to set up an interview. Of the 41 women, 17 women completed the pre-screening. One of the 17 participants did not complete the consent form or the Doodle poll and another participant did not show up for her interview. In total, there were 15 participants who completed the study.

All the participants identified as women and were undergraduate college students between 18–22, an active member of their sorority, and a member of a NPC sorority. Demographic data for the sample population was obtained using a survey (see Appendix D) that resulted in the information presented in Table 1. To ensure confidentiality for the participants, each person was assigned a first name only pseudonym. The use of pseudonyms protected participant's responses and any identifying information so that the participants remained anonymous throughout the process.

Participants were required to meet the following criteria: (a) identified as female, (b) between the ages of 18–22, (c) enrolled in college, and (d) an active member of one of the 26 NPC sororities. Recruitment of participants was completed with the help of the campus FSAs. A recruitment email was sent to the FSAs to send out to the sorority community and can be found in Appendix E.

Additional characteristics were collected in a pre-screening survey such as chapter name, chapter size, if the chapter is located in theU.S.or Canada, and the percentage of women in the chapter that they knew. Table 1 displays the complete pre-screening survey results for all participants.

Table 1

Abbreviated Pre-Screening Survey

Participant	Are you a member of a NPC sorority?	What is your affiliation?	What is your age?	What is your chapter size?	Are you considered an active member according to your national organization's roster	Is your chapter in United States or Canada?
Lindsay	Yes	Delta Gamma	20	200+	Yes	Yes
Allison	Yes	Kappa Delta	21	200+	Yes	Yes
Kari	Yes	Alpha Omicron Pi	20	200+	Yes	Yes
Katie	Yes	Chi Omega	18	101–200	Yes	Yes
Chantelle	Yes	Chi Omega	20	101–200	Yes	Yes
Tessa	Yes	Alpha Delta Pi	20	101–200	Yes	Yes
McKenzie	Yes	Alpha Omicron Pi	20	101–200	Yes	Yes
Addison	Yes	Kappa Kappa Gamma	21	51–100	Yes	Yes
Maisey	Yes	Kappa Alpha Theta	22	51–100	Yes	Yes
Laurie	Yes	Pi Beta Phi	20	51–100	Yes	Yes
Elinor	Yes	Delta Gamma	21	51–100	Yes	Yes
Marian	Yes	Delta Zeta	20	1–50	Yes	Yes
Aimee	Yes	Zeta Tau Alpha	22	1–50	Yes	Yes
Chelsea	Yes	Delta Zeta	18	1–50	Yes	Yes
Christine	Yes	Delta Delta Delta	20	1–50	Yes	Yes

Lindsay. This participant is a 20-year-old sorority woman in a mega chapter. She is actively involved in her sorority. She also holds a position on her campus' Panhellenic Council and serves her chapter by being the Assistant Director of Special Events.

Allison. This 21-year-old participant holds the position of chapter president. She is in a mega chapter, as defined by this study. She is very involved in local community service because she grew up in the same city that she attends school.

Kari. Kari is a 20-year-old woman and is the current chapter president of her mega chapter. The current chapter size is around 400 women and her specific chapter had previously been the largest in the nation for her sorority. She is actively involved in her chapter and attends weekly chapter meetings to chapter events.

Katie. At the time of the interview, she was one of the newest members of her chapter. She is an 18-year-old woman and a freshman on campus. Katie currently does not hold an office but is involved by attending chapter meets and events. She is working closely with another member to gain leadership experiences within the chapter.

Chantelle. A member of a large chapter, Chantelle is a 20-year-old sorority woman. She has held positions in her chapter such as assistant recruitment chair. She is involved with many different aspects of her chapter such as attending events and helps plan Greek Week with Panhellenic Council.

Tessa. This participant is a 20-year-old woman that is a member of a large chapter. Her chapter has 138 members. She has held offices such as the Vice President of Recruitment and Marketing where she executed all aspects of recruitment for her chapter. Her leadership roles have helped her to get involved and feels very connected to her chapter.

McKenzie. She is a 20-year-old woman and serves as the chapter president of her sorority. She is a very involved president. She has served in many different roles within her chapter which has helped her to connect with other members. She is a member of a large chapter.

Addison. A 21-year-old woman and a member of a medium size chapter, Addison is actively involved and serves her chapter as the new member chairman. She is also on the Panhellenic Council for her community.

Maisey. A member of a medium size chapter, Maisey is a 22-year-old sorority woman. She made it clear that she identified with more than one race and that played a lot into her perspective. She does not serve on her chapter's executive board but being a part of her organization has allowed her the opportunity to serve on Panhellenic Council. She feels very connected to the whole sorority community because of this role. She also identifies as more than one race.

Laurie. This participant is a 20-year-old woman and is a member of a medium size chapter. She has served her chapter in various roles such as the sensor, which "is letting girls in the chapter and helping out with the initiation of girls" and the house manager. She also is the president of the Panhellenic Association for her community. She also identifies as more than one race.

Elinor. Elinor is a 21-year-old woman and is a member of a medium chapter. She has purposely chosen not to hold office in her organization, although she is a leader within the community. She has chosen to keep her experience as a place for personal development. She does hold a leadership position within Panhellenic.

Marian. A 20-year-old woman and a member of a small chapter, she has been actively involved in her chapter by serving as the president. She has also served the Panhellenic community as member of the executive board.

Aimee. This participant is a 22-year-old woman and is a member of a small chapter. She mentioned several times in her interview that she was a senior and was preparing to graduate so her experience has been different this year to past years. She no longer holds office but has in the past.

Chelsea. Chelsea is an 18-year-old woman and a member of a small chapter. She is also a freshman and new to her chapter. She attends philanthropy events and serves her chapter by being the Founder's Day chair.

Christine. As a member of a small chapter, Christine is the current president of her chapter and provides leadership for 34 women. She attends as many Fraternity and Sorority Life events as she can. Christine is a junior and is a 20-year-old woman.

Research Methodology and Analysis

Interview process. The researcher conducted semi-structured, opened ended, one-on-one interviews with each participant. Creswell (2013) stated that "understanding the 'lived

experiences' marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning" (p. 16). Phenomenological research is unique and is defined as a, "common meaning for individuals' experiences of a share concept or cultural phenomenon" with a purpose to describe what the participants experience and how it happens (Creswell, 2013, p. 76).

After the participants completed the pre-screening survey, Doodle poll, and consent form, they were sent an email with the scheduled date and time along with information regarding how to login to their interview meeting. The interviews were conducted through either WebEx or Zoom. WebEx and Zoom allowed for the meetings to be recorded and played back at a later time. This was used to transcribe the interviews. The interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

After the transcriptions were completed, the researcher sent the transcribed document to the participant. The document was sent electronically and was password protected. The interviewer and the participant are the only two with the password and access to the document. A copy of the email sent to the participants can be found in Appendix F. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) mentioned that it is common in qualitative research to use member checking because this helps with establishing credibility of the data. This process involved allowing the 15 participants the opportunity to review the information and change any information that was misinterpreted and reflected an accurate depiction of their sorority member experiences. All the participants were notified of this process at the end of the interview. The information was also restated in the email containing the password protected document. Additionally, the participants were informed to return the document with changes within seven days with corrections, if needed. If no response was given, the transcripts were assumed to be approved.

Most of the participants responded to the email within the seven days, except for four participants, with changes or approval. The 15 participants were informed at the end of the interview that the next step, in the process, was for the researcher to transcribe the interviews and they would have the opportunity to check over the information. The data from the four participants that did not respond was still included in the study.

Eleven of the participants did respond to the email within the set timeframe. One of the participants informed the researcher about the title of her leadership position and asked for it to be corrected. The information was sent back to the participant to member check again. Another participant had noted a few typographical errors, along with some incorrect use of terminology. The researcher made the changes and returned the transcripts to participants for a follow-up review. Both participants that made corrections approved the corrected transcript. The other nine participants did not indicate any revisions and approved their transcripts right away.

Once all the data was transcribed and approved, the researcher reviewed all the data to get a sense of experiences of the participants regarding sorority chapter size and member experiences. The data was coded by separating out any direct quotations from the participants in their own words. The researcher found that these quotes were an important piece in understanding the perceived impact of sorority chapter size on the member experience. The themes that were identified in Cohen (2015) were used through this study. Those themes were: shared social experiences, belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose. Each participant was asked questions related to the five themes. The themes also became the framework for this study. Data analysis was completed through the review of the five identified themes. Using direct quotes that were associated with the themes were used to describe the lived experiences of the sorority chapter size on the member experience.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how sorority chapter size may impact the sorority member experience. The researcher examined the data closely looking for statements that reflected the participant's experiences that aligned with the research questions. All aspects of the data analysis procedures matched what was planned in Chapter 3 and triangulation was used.

The preparation and analysis of the data consisted of the following items: transcription and member checking, coding, interpretation, theming, triangulation, and reporting. To analyze each item, the researcher used van Kaam's method of phenomenological data analysis as outlined by Moustakas (1994). The method provides a comprehensive guide to conduct the Van Kaam's analysis. The steps included: (a) listing and preliminary grouping of expressions, (b) reduction and elimination of ambiguous or redundant statements, (c) clustering and labeling of core themes, (d) validation of themes, (e) development of textural descriptions, (f) development of structural descriptions, and (g) constructing textural-structural descriptions of meaning and essence. The researcher was the only person that handled the data. To prepare the data, the researcher transcribed the individual interview recordings and validated the transcripts by member checking with the participants.

Listing and preliminary grouping of expressions. The coding process created different codes per participant. Phrases and words that were used to describe the member experiences as it related to chapter size were identified by circling the information. This tactic created several different codes per participant. The codes were interpreted and were found relevant to the sorority member experience. The researcher looked for similar patterns or differences throughout the data. For example, philanthropy, recruitment, involvement, and leadership was described by many of the participants as a way their chapters came together for a common purpose. After the first grouping

was completed, patterns of similarity were evident in how participants answered the posed interview questions.

Reduction and elimination of ambiguous or redundant statements. The second step in the van Kaam method was to reduce and eliminate statements. For a statement to remain, it needed to answer two questions. Olivia said the two questions were, "is this quote important to the participant's lived experience of the phenomenon and can this quote be reduced to its latent meaning" (Olivia, 2018, para. 3). If it did, the information was kept and if it did not, the information was eliminated. During the process, the researcher decided that any expression that was not helpful to understanding the experience or that was repetitive was eliminated. For example, "does that make sense" and, "I hope that answered your question was eliminated because it did not provide any substance to the experience." Any remaining expressions were clustered together as potential themes.

Clustering and labeling of core themes. This is the process of clustering the related invariant constituents of the participant's experiences into a labeled theme. The clustered and labeled constituents become the core themes of the lived sorority experience. Clustered expressions from the interview participants supported the pre-determined themes of accountability, shared social experience, common purpose, support and encouragement, and belonging. Each participant was asked specific questions directly related to the core themes. The themes and related interview questions can be found in Table 2. A full list of the interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

Table 2

Themes and related interview questions

Theme	Related Interview Question
Belonging	How does belonging play a role in your organization based on your chapter size?
Shared Social Experience	How are shared social experiences within your sorority related to chapter size?
Accountability	Tell me about a time accountability played a role in your organization as it is related to your sorority chapter size?
Common Purpose	Based on your chapter size, how does your chapter come together for a common purpose?
Support and Encouragement	How does your chapter size play a role in support and encouragement?

Validation of themes. The validation of themes was completed by reviewing the transcripts and identifying information from the pre-determined themes throughout the participants' interviews. The transcripts were read again to understand the meanings from the participants. The researcher created a table of pre-determined themes along with the definitions that can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Definitions of Pre-Determined Themes

Theme	Definition
Belonging	This schema of sisterhood involves a sense of connection that goes beyond friendship. Women who think of sisterhood in this way describe their sorority sisters as "family" and their sorority as their "home away from home." The connection is based on a sense of shared values and a feeling of being appreciated and accepted despite one's flaws.
Shared Social Experience	Described as "surface level sisterhood" this is a sisterhood that revolves around doing fun things together and always having someone to do something with. Women who think of sisterhood in this way see themselves as the recipients of sisterhood whenever they are doing something fun with their sisters. This type of sisterhood is greatly tied up in the emphasis one places on the social standing of their group, and women who joined their particular chapter primarily because of its place in the social hierarchy are more likely to think of sisterhood along these lines.
Accountability	When operating in this schema, women understand that sisterhood is best demonstrated when sisters make one another better women by holding one another to high standards based upon shared expectations.
Common Purpose	The highest notion of sisterhood, women operating in this schema understand the "bigger picture" and describe sisterhood as something transcending the individual and even the chapter. They describe sisterhood as a connection, rooted in the ritual, to all sisters past and present, and the nobility of working towards a common goal together.
Support and Encouragement	Women who think of sisterhood in this way give and receive sisterhood through demonstrations of support. "Sisters are always there for you" and "My sisters encourage me when I'm feeling down" are the most salient notions for women who see sisterhood in this way. (McCreary, 2015, para 6-10)

Development of textural descriptions. Using the themes that were pre-determined, the

researcher created individual textural descriptions of the participants experience within the chapter.

Individual textural descriptions are a, "narrative that explains participants' perceptions of a

phenomenon" (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015, p. 12). This step includes verbatim excerpts from the approved transcribed interviews from the participant interviews. Each of the themes are reported as follows:

   Belonging. Participants described ways in which they felt their chapter size played a role in belonging. For example, Laurie noted, "I think it plays a really important role in our chapter size." Elinor commented on a lasting sense of belonging, "since joining the house, I have continued to feel welcomed and appreciated for all that I bring to the table." Maisey interpreted belonging in her chapter as, "being accepted for who I am." These types of examples were interpreted by the researcher as significant experiences from the participants based on their sorority chapter experience.

   Shared social experiences. Participants in the study were asked to describe shared social experiences as they relate to chapter size. Participants described shared social experiences as sisterhood events and outings. According to Christina, a sorority woman, a sisterhood event is, "a time for sisters to gather together and spend time with one another. It allows sisters to bond and take time out of their schedules to enjoy each other's company while doing fun or relaxing activities" (C. Brown, personal communication, March, 7, 2018). These events are an opportunity for the women to be together and create relationships through the sorority. Maisey stated that sisterhood events are done, "either by member class or the whole house." McKenzie described her experience as standard, meaning that they are similar to other sororities. Another sorority woman discussed the use of a points system. This system requires the members to get a certain amount of points to be in good standing within the organization. Good standing can vary depending on the chapter. Women can get points for attending other fraternities and sororities events, sporting events, plays or musical on camp, and completing study hours that are assigned by the sorority.

Accountability. When the participants were asked about accountability, similar answers were provided regardless of chapter size. Most chapters have an internal governing board, such as standards. The standards board is an elected board that, "recommend discipline for any member whose conduct has been unsatisfactory or who fails to meet the requirements of good standing" (Delta Zeta Sorority, 2005, p.3). Good standing is defined by the individual chapter.

Common purpose. Participants were asked to describe situations where their chapter came together for a common purpose. The responses are described later in this chapter but there were two commonalities that emerged from the responses. The commonalities were recruitment and philanthropy. The NPC defines recruitment as programs that, "are planned to provide opportunities for the greatest possible number of women to become sorority members while protecting the rights and privileges of both the individuals and the chapters" (NPC, 2018, p. 87). Philanthropy opportunities are different for each organization. Each organization has a philanthropic partner that is unique to their members. Missouri State University (2013) defined philanthropy as, "a charitable project sponsored by an organization" (para. 11).

Support and encouragement. Participants described ways they felt supported and encouraged throughout their experience but also how the chapter supported and encouraged the members. Lindsay mentioned that her chapter has a recognition program for sisters who do well on a test that is given out during chapter meetings. Marian described her chapter as supporting members by attending plays or events that another sister is participating in. Half of the participants talked about sisterhood and how their sisters have their back in times of need or for celebration.

Development of Structural Descriptions. The researcher found that the data included some significant phrases. For a phrase to remain, it needed to meet two requirements: was it necessary for understanding and was it sufficient for understanding the expressed experience (Moustakas, 1994). Significant phrases were terms from the participants lived experiences that

provided meaningful descriptions to help answer the research questions. The phrases were found to be significant and were used to help construct the base of the participant experiences. Each of the participants had different experiences although most used the same phrases to describe their sorority member experience based on their chapter size.

Constructing textural-structural descriptions of meaning and essence. The last step of the van Kaam method is to develop textural-structural descriptions of the meaning and essence of the experience. Information from the participants helped the researcher understand their member experience within their sorority chapter size. The researcher looked through each description of their experience and to figure out if this had an impact on the member experience. The phrases stated by the participants allowed for the researcher to interpret the meaning and essence of the participant member experiences.

The researcher conducted individual interviews with the 15 participants. The method of data collection, allowed for the researcher to engage with the participants to obtain a greater understanding of their lived experiences with chapter size and sorority member experience. Interviews were between 10-36 minutes long, recorded, and transcribed. The interviews were schedule for no more than 60 minutes and none of them exceeded the allotted time. The interviews stopped when all the interview question had been asked and answered. The interviews were transcribed. The pages of the transcriptions data ranged from 6–10 pages, double-spaced in 12-point font for each participant (see Appendix G).

Even though the researcher used Cohen et al. (2016a) themes of belonging, shared social experience, accountability, common purpose, and support and encouragement, the participants still revealed that they had all experiences within the themes. Codes were determined based on information provided. For example, when asked about common purpose, the participants all discussed their experiences with philanthropy. Each participant had described this as something

that the chapter and members all came together for, whether it was for their own chapter or to support other chapters on campus. Each theme had a question that directly related to it. Those answers were analyzed and coded together throughout the process. This made it easier to find commonalities and differences between participants' experiences based on their chapter size.

Open-ended questions were asked of the participants. All the participants answered the questions based on their experiences but did not provide a lot of details about their experience. The researcher felt that the participants were willing to give information, but they were reluctant to go into detail. Some of the participants offered additional information after the researcher asked follow-up questions to gain further insight into their experiences.

Presentation of Data and Results

The following sections provide an overview of the themes that were used in the study on the perceived impact of chapter size on the sorority member experience from the perspective of the sorority women that participated in the study. A description of the limitations will also be provided after the results.

The researcher did not include all 15 participants' responses for every question in the results of the study. The researcher used one response per category, small, medium, large, and mega for every question. A lot of the information was similar throughout the interviews so instead of being repetitive, the researcher selected different participants for the questions to present results for. Saturation was reached in this study after the completion of two interviews per category. The information did not change and the other interviewees provided similar information about their experiences. The results are presented by linking the themes together from each interview. By linking the themes together, it also connected the ideas from each interview.

Theme 1: Belonging. Each participant was asked how belonging played a role in their organization based on chapter size. Each participant valued the sense of belonging, but some noted

that there are cliques in the chapter. The participants in larger chapters felt that there were many cliques and a member has to find the group that they fit in with. The same was said for smaller chapters. One participant described her experience with being bullied in the chapter house. When she described her experience, she stated that the bullying was a few people in the chapter rather than the whole organization. Once the members left the chapter, moved out of the sorority house, or graduated, the bullying stopped. Bullying decreased the sense of belonging according to the participant. Once the bullying stopped, the participant said she began to feel a sense of belonging within the chapter. Another participant talked about how being in a small chapter influenced belonging. Aimee stated:

> Since we are such a small chapter I think that we all belong well just because we are all so different and we all bring something unique to our chapter. So, like I feel like we all have a sense of belonging in our chapter which is unique for being a small chapter. Um, and like there are cliques but they are not like, I can't think of the word. There not like, nobody is permanently in one place. I can't think of the word I am trying to use. There are little groups that people hang out with. It's not like you are stuck in that group. We all hang out with each other.

Marian had a similar experience to Aimee's in stating, "…in a small chapter you know everyone and are getting more of a personal experience." Elinor's experience with belonging in a medium size chapter also played an important role within her experience, stating:

> From the first day that I went through recruitment as a potential new member, I have always felt that Delta Gamma was my home on campus. I saw the women that I look up to in my organization. I saw my teammates. I saw that one girl that I met that one time and she was just really, nice to me and I really appreciated that. I saw people that were speaking up in class even before I knew they were Delta Gammas or I chose them or they chose me

to be a sister. Since joining the house, I have continued to feel welcomed and appreciated for all that I bring to the table and I am sure that would happen in a larger chapter in a larger school but I like that I know stories of these women and their appreciation of me feels personal because they know me and cherish me as an individual.

In contrast, Maisey's perspective related to more than just fitting in and finding the right place. She described her sense of belonging based on chapter size from a political and racial perspective. Maisey stated:

So, I think that our chapter size does play a role in that but since we are at a smaller university and a smaller chapter, I do feel good in my area and accepted in my area. I was just thinking there are points of contention with identity. That may come in and that's the only thing that I can ever think of. It's just fine lines you don't initially see someone and think that maybe they think that way or feel that way about people. I think that's about it. I think that's a historical moment that we are living in because once Trump was elected people were sharing their political views on Facebook and it was 'whoa, I didn't expect my sister to support this person. I didn't expect her to be supporting someone like that sort of thing.' Especially when sexual assault allegations came out but this is the only thing that contention or not feeling like you belong or like I belong. How can someone be my sister and support something so black and white.

Katie is part of a large chapter with about 132 members. She said that she feels she can be herself within the chapter but feels more at home with her pledge class. She found a home within the chapter. She did state that it is hard to get to know everyone in a large chapter, but even if they do not have a personal relationship with everyone, they still have a mutual respect for on another. From a mega chapter perspective, Kari described her experience as:

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I think belonging plays a specific role with our chapter in that we do smaller group

activities, so I feel like people feel like they belong to a larger group, however, it just ends

up people finding a specific friend group which makes them feel like they belong and

having that sense of comradery with one other person in the chapter.

In a similar experience, Allison said that the experience is different for everyone because

she is in a mega chapter. She mentioned that the effort members put in will impact their

experience, saying, "I think that the experience is different for everyone so you know, if you are

more on the shy side or have a hard time putting yourself out there than a big chapter size might

not be for you because you're going to have a hard time finding your group if you don't put

yourself out there a little bit. It's more of a 'you get out what you put in." The experience from

each of the participants was very similar in that no matter what chapter size they were a part of,

they felt they belonged in their chapter.

Theme 2: Support and encouragement. Support and encouragement plays a big part in

the sorority experience. Sorority women are proud to say that they feel supported by their sisters.

After interviewing the participants, one commonality that emerged was that the women reported

feeling supported within the chapter and that their sisters would do anything for them.

Christine said that it helps belonging to a smaller chapter, stating, "We can support each

other in different aspects on campus. We have a lot of music majors so if they are in a

performance, sisters will go watch them." Many of the women stated that they have chapter

traditions that promote support and encouragement.

Laurie discussed how her medium size chapter uses accountability buddies. The

accountability buddies are specifically selected based on majors, classes, or pledge class. An

accountability buddy, "checks in with us through the semester. I think that's important and

knowing you can talk to your sisters about anything and they won't judge you about anything.

They will keep it confidential." Another experience for a medium size chapter is that they support each other by going to other sisters' events. Addison described support and encouragement as, "…if my friend is holding an event for her positions. So, her big [sister] will come and her big's friends will come. Her little and her littles friends will come." In many sororities, a big and little pair is similar to a mentoring program which is implemented in the new member process where a new member is paired up with an initiated member. In this program mentors may be referred to as big sister/little sister (Lambert, n.d.). Maisey said, "I feel like the smaller the chapter the more support and encouragement. In a way because you have the ability to know and connect with everyone and not just half of your chapter and not know the other half."

Chantelle offered a perspective from a large chapter. She mentioned that due to having so many sisters in her chapter, she can always find someone to support or encourage her to try something new. Allison said that her experience with support and encouragement has been positive and that her chapter excels in this area because it is a mega chapter. She said:

Having so many people there is always someone you can count on and encourage you. There are so many more great members that will be there for you then there are that don't care so we really excel in that area because we just have so much more support and everywhere you turn there is always someone who wants you to do the best that you can do. For everyone person not rooting for you there are ten that are.

The participants valued the support and encouragement that their sisters provided them during their sorority member experience.

Theme 3: Shared social experience. Defined as surface level sisterhood, shared social experience is an important concept within sorority life. Most NPC sororities are social sororities, so this experience is expected for members. Social experiences can come in all forms. Some chapters might plan socials such as formals and semi-formal dances. Some chapters may get

together to foster sisterhood. Examples of sisterhood might be movie night, dinners, or just a chance to hang out. These social experiences also offer the opportunity for women to capture the moment by taking pictures and posting them on social media. Representing their experience on social media has also become a major part of the image of the chapter and may be used as a recruitment tool. Sharing social experience can also include opportunities to hang out with other organizations such as fraternities on campus.

Christine described the shared social experiences of her small chapter as difficult. She stated that her chapter is the smallest of all the chapters on campus and that their presence on campus is not as much as larger chapters. Christine stated:

A lot of the other chapters have a bigger presence and we can see that through the photos that they share online through social media. For us it's the same seven or eight girls that are supporting. So, I think, you know, having a smaller size chapter is definitely a burden on that aspect. You have so many women busy with other organizations, work, school, we can't really have a huge presence at events or on social media.

Marian expressed her opinion about chapter size and how it impacts membership experience. She said, "I feel with more people you would have more connections but with all PC sororities the same size, you are getting the same experience within the chapter."

Aimee mentioned that since her school is so small, shared social experiences happen all the time. They all hang out together rather than specific organizations. Whereas Maisey, who is in a medium size chapter, described shared social experiences as being completed by individual member classes or the whole chapter. The point of doing it as member classes is so they can create relationships on a more personal level rather than generically. Maisey stated that, "in relation to chapter size, the larger you are the harder it is to go out and stuff, but my chapter size is perfect. We can do everything. It's definitely doable."

Chantelle described her experience as being different because her chapter is so large that they are unable to get quality time with the members. Chantelle shared that, "When we have those big events, we have 120 people plus everyone brings dates so that is upwards of 250 so that's a lot of people. You don't get to spend quality time with people like a philanthropy, formals, or grab-a-dates." For a large chapter perspective, McKenzie discussed how even in a large group setting, it is still broken up into smaller social groups, declaring:

> So, speaking to that a little bit, I mentioned we have monthly big sisterhoods and weekly smaller sisterhoods. Those monthly ones generally get better attendance. Those are generally everyone in a big group does something like we have Galentine's day this month. We are just going to sit in our basement and watch movies and eat pizza on Valentine's Day. So those are generally ok. I think they are ok at breaking people out of their social groups. The smaller events tend to be that one group will decide they want to go and all their members or friends in a smaller group tend to go and hang out with each other. Which is fine. I am glad that they are going. That does tend to be what I noticed. Those don't bring people out of their comfort zones to get people to know people that they might not know as well. But other than that, we do things, a couple things at chapter. Oh, we'll talk to people at the table where you can't know people well on either side. Or have people group up by fam[ily], your big and your little. Or you get to know your grand big for a day or something like that. Which can be good in general, but I feel our really big events are smaller social groups hanging out together while we are all in the same room. Which is not always the intent but it's definitely hard to get away from that.

From a mega chapter, it also seems to be broken down into smaller groups. Having 400 people at one event in a chapter house might not be feasible. Kari said that in her mega chapter, they do

things by chapter size. She described the break down into specific groups most often, pledge class, executive board members versus committees, or cabinet positions.

Theme 4: Accountability. Accountability was very prevalent throughout the interview data. This theme repeatedly presented itself and appeared to be a consensus amongst participants. Some of the similarities were using a points system for events that were mandatory for members to participate in or having the standards or conduct council monitor members' social media accounts to make sure they are not posting anything inappropriate. The only difference on holding members accountable was the procedure of how the chapters implement it. Some of the chapters had mandatory events that were moved to non-mandatory because the sorority women would just pay the fine instead of having to do the task such as recruitment practice or study hours. One chapter decided to take away privileges such as attending formal if the sorority women is below a specific point value. For a small chapter, one issue that stood out was grades. Most organizations have a required GPA to be initiated, good standing as a member, and hold an elected office. Aimee described that because she is in a small chapter, grades are a big issue. If one sorority woman has a low GPA, it can bring the whole chapter average down compared to a mega chapter with 400 women. A low GPA would not impact the overall chapter GPA as much as it does in a chapter of 30 women. In a similar size chapter, Marian said, "that it is easier to hold the members accountable because she knew who they were with and what they were doing it. If it was an event, she knew who was in charge and who was on the committee." Addison mentioned as a medium size chapter, they have direct contact with the women in which their accountability system for grades is broken up by grade level at the institution. She proclaimed:

If the GPA is below our minimum she will contact the girl and get an explanation and talk to her committee. Which is an executive committee. All the juniors have one. All the seniors have one. The new members don't have one yet because they are not initiated and a

member at large. So, she will go to her committee and say this person is below our GPA for this reason and this reason the committee will talk about a period of care. So, if the committee agrees, one person on the committee will be assigned to her in the same major or if it is your little or something like that.

Maisey shared her experience with accountability and how important accountability is in a medium size chapter. She explained that because her chapter is on a smaller campus everyone knows everyone. Maisey said "you can't just freeze into the background. I guess accountability is a very big thing and women must take accountability for their actions. If they do something outside of their moral context or moral high ground, they will get called out for it. People would know about it."

Similar to other chapters, Katie said that her large chapter breaks up accountability within the roles. Her chapter's scholarship chair maintains a list of all the members in the chapter and their major. Then, the experienced members can help mentor the new members. Katie described her experience with accountability and the role of the executive board, saying, "The exec board does a good job keeping everyone accountable because they always check in with all the members multiple times throughout the semester. The bigger chapter does help with accountability." Chantelle mentioned that for her large chapter, they have multiple people monitor the actions of their members. They have two people that manage the chapter members' social media to make sure they are not breaking rules or posting inappropriate video, pictures, or posts. She said "they are usually making sure we are not portraying a negative image of the house." If it does happen, the member is brought up to the conduct or standards board and a meeting is held on how to improve their actions. Tessa had a similar experience within her chapter, stating that:

Being a part of a larger organization, there has to be more rules and regulations to keep everyone under control so then those are more accepted. Where, if I was in a smaller

situation, I would think I could by pass the rules a little bit because I know everyone, and I

am like so close with everyone but when you realize to keep everyone in line since there

are so many people, there are more strict rules and kind of more understandable.

Allison stated that in a mega chapter it is harder to keep the members accountable because

there are so many people. She said "there is always going to be someone out of your reach or

something that slips away from you because you're so busy" Allison also talked about how

balancing accountability is important. Some parts of accountability may be strong while others are

lacking.

Theme 5: Common purpose. Two different points came out of asking how the chapter

comes together for a common purpose. One reason was philanthropy, and the other membership

recruitment. Both, philanthropy and membership recruitment were identified as a common purpose

for the sorority women during their member experience.

Chelsea mentioned that her small chapter really supports everyone if they are passionate

about it. She said "if we have someone passionate about a situation, we all come together to

support it. We will help, pushing them, always right behind her. There is never a time that we fully

disagree with each other." Christine discussed how her chapter has a strong connection to their

philanthropic work, but the members also come together promote sorority values and friendship.

Aimee also echoed that sentiment because her chapter values philanthropy, and it is something

their chapter women are passionate about. Lastly, Marian said:

We come to a common purpose for our philanthropy and recruitment. We all have one

goal. We come together and strategize together. Everyone's input is considered because it

affects everyone in the chapter. There are not many opinions. There are not many people to

get on board. The common goal is like one. We are all moving it together. If it was a 100

plus chapter maybe only a few are affected but with 34 people, you need everyone's input. There are not that many people to please.

Elinor also stated that her chapter comes together for philanthropy. The chapter divides up the responsibility for their annual event which is the largest philanthropic event on campus. She said that, "if we were a smaller chapter could not put together such a large event and if we were a larger chapter not everyone would be able to be as involved." A recruitment perspective from a medium size chapter came from Laurie. She said that because of their chapter size, they all must participate in the success of recruitment. Each of the tasks are divided up so this can be accomplished. Since they are a smaller chapter on their campus, the sorority women cannot blow off their responsibilities. It takes everyone in the chapter to accomplish their goals.

Tessa mentioned that her chapter comes together for recruitment. By recruiting new members, they are pushing their organization into the future. Her chapter gets together a week before recruitment to begin practicing for the event. This is a special time for her chapter because they can create personal relationships with members in the chapter. Chantelle said that her chapter really rallies around philanthropy. Her chapter is passionate about Make a Wish. Not only do they have a sorority sister that was a recipient of Make a Wish, but they take pride in being able to help others wishes come true.

Lindsay stated that her mega chapter comes together for philanthropy events and to raise money for others. She did mention that not everyone has a good attitude when it comes to philanthropy, "but that is what we are here for." Allison also mentioned how her chapter comes together for a big philanthropy event on campus. They have a lot of people involved from the community, so it is very important that the whole chapter shows up to support the event.

A sub-theme that was found throughout the interviews with the participants focused on leadership. Each participant held some type of leadership role within her chapter or the Panhellenic

community. The participants also answered several questions related to leadership opportunities and how they are available to members of the organization. Women that were a part of small or medium chapters stated that leadership opportunities were easy to attain since there were not a lot of women competing for them. Aimee said that it was easier to gain a leadership role because there were less women to choose from whereas Chelsea mentioned having to network within her small organization to gain leadership roles. Women that were in large or megachapters stated that leadership positions are hard to get, because there are so many women trying to get the roles.

One participant explained that in her chapter current leadership would seek out new leaders for leadership roles and nurture that relationship, so they would be ready to take on roles once elections happened. Maisey discussed her view on gaining leadership positions in a large chapter, saying, "I think it's more difficult, but it depends on the leadership position. If you want to be on exec board, there is only seven of those (positions) so obviously those top tier leadership positions, that's going to be hard to get because how many women want those." Chantelle said in her chapter that it was easier to get unofficial leadership positions because there are only a few titled roles for almost 200 women. Tessa stated that there is, "a good amount of competition going for positions especially executive board positions." One participant even described it as being a small fish in a big pond.

Lastly, another sub-theme was involvement. The literature review stated that the, "Students' direct involvement in chapter management and leadership opportunities allows for practical experience that complements classroom instruction" (Nelson et al., 2006, p. 70). In support of this research, Christine stated, "I think one of the best things a small chapter has given me is more opportunities to grow as a person especially in leadership roles." Hevel et al. (2015) stated that fraternity and sorority members reported more engagement and involvement by their

senior year. As a rising senior, Elinor stated her involvement in her chapter has led to other involvement opportunities on campus. She stated:

> I am a head resident on my campus which means I oversee 10 resident assistants and 300 residents. In my interview for that position they asked me who was a leader that I looked up to and what was it about them that I admire so much, and I said my chapter's Chapter Management Team (CMT) and how I admired how they led with grace and how they weren't afraid to do the right thing for our group. That's an experience that I wouldn't have had I not joined the sorority.

Addison discussed her interest to be involved on campus and hold a leadership position within the sorority. Hevel et al. (2015) wrote that sororities can influence involvement and found positive results within those organizations. Addison stated, "I knew I wanted to study abroad in college. I wanted to go spring or fall of my junior year. When I realized if I went in the spring, I wouldn't be able to have a major leadership position, so I went in the fall."

The researcher asked each participant if they believe their experience would be the same had they been a part of a different size chapter. Most of the participants reflected on their experiences and agreed that their experiences would not be the same if they belonged to a chapter of a different size. Some of the participants discussed that they might know more people if they were in smaller chapters and some discussed how it would be a tighter knit community. The participants explained how their experience in a different size chapter might result in more opportunities to get involved on campus, a bigger presence, and ability to make a larger impact on the community. Kari described diversity in a larger chapter and Maisey described an experience with group think which led her to get involved to make a change in her chapter. Each participant's response is important and reflected within this section.

Lindsay.

I do think it would be different. I would know a greater percentage of my chapter. I feel like I know between 60%–70% of my chapter right now. If I was in a smaller chapter, I would know more people. I feel like the experience is very similar just on a larger scale. You are going to have friendships, philanthropy, and sisterhood events. It's just the size that it is different.

Lindsay believed that her sorority experience is a good fit for her. She also thought that she would know more of her sorority sisters if she were in a smaller chapter.

Allison.

I think my experience would be different. I feel like I would have more involvement on campus rather than just my Greek involvement. I would want to have a bigger presence on campus. At our university you are either involved on campus or in your organization. It's hard to do both. If I was in a smaller chapter I would be more involved on campus and branch out more because I would have more time.

Similar to Lindsay's experience, Allison stated that her experience would be different. A different chapter size would allow for her chapter sisters to have a bigger presence on campus.

Kari.

I think we have a lot of room for diversity. There is no way 400 people can be stereotyped or grouped into one specific personality or interest. I think that is a strength in certain ways. If we hold events there are always people with different talents and abilities that can help with certain things. In a smaller chapter, it would probably be more difficulty to find people to do certain jobs because there is not a wide range of talent.

Kari believed that her experience would be very different in a mega chapter. She said that a large chapter would have a lot of diversity which is different from her current chapter.

Katie.

> As someone from out of state, I would have felt really like an outsider if I was in a mega chapter. I would have felt a little more alone because I would not be as connect. I feel in a small or medium chapter the same thig could happen. I like the size chapter we are now. Being in a bigger chapter than what I have now would be confusing. I feel it would be harder not knowing everybody. It would be nice always meeting new people, but it could have its downfall. I feel like it's very different and I'd feel more of an outsider and smaller chapter I couldn't connect with many people.

Katie's perspective of her experience within her chapter size to be different than most because she is new to the state. She believed that her chapter is the best size for her and allowed her to create quality relationships with her sorority sisters.

Chantelle.

> I think being in a smaller chapter would have been interesting. I probably would have known everyone in the chapter on a deeper level than I do now. In my size chapter there is a wide range of people. In a mega chapter, I might be a little overwhelmed. I am an extroverted person and I like to get to know a lot of people. I'd be overwhelmed by the pledge class let alone the whole sorority.

In Chantelle's experience, she described how her chapter size is perfect for her but she saw the benefits of being in a smaller chapter.

Tessa.

> I think that if I was in a smaller chapter, the community would maybe feel tighter knit. Since there are so many people and everyone is doing different things and being super involved. We all support each other like that and it because more of a community just within ourselves. If there was only 30–40 people, I might reach out to other groups to get

involved. For a mega chapter, it might take that effect to the extreme and consume my life and I might feel like since my sorority is so big and a part of the campus.

Like Chantelle, Tessa enjoyed that size chapter that she is a member of. She also saw the benefits and downfalls to other chapter sizes.

McKenzie.

I really enjoy being in a chapter of this size. I don't think I would enjoy being in a mega chapter as much, just because I have a lot of very strong opinions as a person which is how I became chapter president. I think that I would feel that same lack of connection with my executive board if I was in a mega chapter. I really like my chapter size personally. I feel like I can know and recognize everyone. I feel like our chapter is very diverse and I feel that diversity is very encouraging for A. our chapter having diversity in the future and B. for people to get different experiences in the chapter.

McKenzie described how she felt a perfect fit in her chapter. She knew that a bigger chapter would not allow her to gain the experiences she desires.

Addison.

Smaller, last year, my little missed initiation because she had to go to initiation at another school. It was a much smaller chapter. If we had 80 members last year, they had 40. It was so much smaller. I felt weird, Closter phobic almost. Everything was a lot more streamlined because it was smaller, but it was like cliquey within because it was fewer people. There were friend groups that were more evident. I think for larger chapters, my friends told me at her school, it sounds very strange to me, but she doesn't know half the people in her pledge class.

Addison's perspective is unique in her comparison between her experience and a friend's experience. She liked having the opportunity to know all of her chapter sisters.

Maisey.

I think those small, medium, and mega chapter lend itself to different types of institutions like Big 10 schools with megachapters. It seems the bigger the schools the bigger the chapters. If I was in a big school with a colossal FSL system, my experience with my chapter would be totally different. I might be afraid to speak up and say some things and not feel as comforted like they are all my sister and there is like 500 of them. If I do see someone wearing my letter I don't know if I can confide in her. I think it's a totally different experience versus a small chapter which may be more inclined to stick together and have this team mentality where we are all in this together. If you go down, I go down. It shapes the experience and the outcome after these four years.

Maisey described her experience as an opportunity for her to develop herself into a great leader but also being able to have confident relationships with her sorority sisters.

Laurie.

Yeah, I think it would be different. If it was 30 women, it would be a narrower range of personalities and that might be harder for some people to have that experience if you don't have that personality and then if it was a 400-chapter size. I think that there might be too many and there might be a disconnect with that chapter size. I feel it would be harder to have that relationship with older sisters and classes.

In her experience, Laurie described feeling very connected within a smaller chapter and a lack of connection in a 400-person chapter.

Elinor.

I think that if I was in a smaller chapter I don't necessarily feel that being part of my chapter would be as big of a deal in my college experience. Joining a sorority was the best decision that I made since starting college. I can't imagine my college experience without my

sorority. I can't imagine if I went to a massive state school and joined a chapter with 400 girls and I didn't know 250 of them. When I walk in to my chapter on Sundays, I am being greeted by between 70–100 faces that are so glad to see me and can't imagine what their experience would be like without me because they value me.

A sorority experience can be a major part of the college life. Elinor described her sorority experience as just that, a major part of college. She also discussed the importance of knowing her sorority sisters on a deeper level.

Marian.

I think it would be. I guess it would be more sisters. We could do more things like have a bigger chapter house. That would be fun. Ours is so small and it's hard to do stuff even with the small group we have. I guess I never thought of it because we are so little. I never think about what it would be like to have 100 sisters. If it was smaller, it would be more in-depth because of less people and more sisterhoods.

In Marian's answer, she described the benefits of having more sorority sisters and how that can create more resources. These resources, such as funding, can help the sorority women plan more events for the women to participate in.

Aimee.

It would be so much less personal since it is such a large group. I think I would be in it for the experience and the resume booster rather than the friendship. In a big chapter, I don't think I could build those relationships. I feel it would be more businessy than what I have now. As much as I love being in a small chapter. I think that we are too small. There are so many things that have to go on in a chapter and like, having a small number of people puts a burden on all those people, like ordering t-shirts. Since we have such a small number.

They are so expensive. Whereas bigger chapters can do that because they have so many members. Being in a small chapter has been good for me.

Similar to Marion's experience, Aimee discussed resources as well. She also talked about how a large chapter may lose the small chapter charm that she enjoys in her chapter.

Chelsea.

I think it would be more intimidated just because I am a new member and you must learn your way into the sorority. I have a friend who is at another university. There are so many girls. She's such a small person in the sorority. She can't make a change but in ours, we come together for something bigger than what it is. I love having a small sorority. When we do something it's different from what a big sorority will do. We make it feel bigger and more personable.

Like several other participants, Chelsea described how it is important to learn about the sorority and to make change. She talked about how change can happen easier in a small chapter rather than in a large chapter.

Christine.

I think one of the best things a small chapter has given me is more opportunities to grow as a person especially in leadership roles. In a bigger one, I might be competing for the same spot and might not have those opportunities. I think it might be nice to be in a big chapter in terms of presence. It is hard being in a social sorority on campus where Greek life is starting to slow down, and you are the smallest chapter and trying to maintain that presence, where a big chapter, you can just go out and everyone knows who you are already.

Christine talked about opportunities, like some of the other participants. She mentioned that size of chapter can lead to a bigger presence on a campus but that a large chapter might lead to less opportunities. Each of the participant offered a unique perspective on their experience within

sorority chapter size. None of the participants discussed wanting to be in another chapter size and felt that they were in a chapter that was the right size for them.

The guiding research question for this study was: what is the lived experience of the sorority members and sorority chapter size? Each participant described their lived experience within their sorority based on the chapter size. Each question used one of the themes, accountability, belonging, common purpose, shared social experience, and support and encouragement, allowed for the participants to describe their lived experiences in a sorority as it related to chapter size.

These questions were answered in each of the one-on-one interviews with the research participants. The participants were each asked about their individual lived experiences within their sorority based on chapter size. The sub-questions were not directly asked to the participants but were infused into the interview questions throughout the study. Aspects of overall sorority experience on a national level were not addressed in the interviews by the participants. The women discussed their experiences within their chapter and on their campus rather than considering questions from a national perspective. The findings may be similar if a future study were conducted on sorority life as an alumna member of the organization as women are involved on a national level.

Two sub-questions followed the guiding question. They were: how does sorority chapter size effect the quality of the membership experience within the individual sorority chapter focusing on shared social experiences, belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose and how does sorority chapter size effect the quality of the membership experience within the overall sorority experience on a college or university campus?

The first sub-question was answered through five interview questions relating to the five themes but still connected to chapter size. The questions were:

1. How does belonging play a role in your organization based on your chapter size?

2. How does your chapter size play a role in support and encouragement?

3. How are shared social experiences within your sorority related to chapter size?

4. Tell me about a time accountability played a role in your organization as it is related to your sorority chapter size.

5. Based on your chapter size, how does your chapter come together for a common purpose?

The participants reflected on their membership experience thus far and shared how each of the themes played a role in their experiences.

The second sub-question was how does sorority chapter size effect the quality of the membership experience within the overall sorority experience on a national level? Interview questions related to this research question were asked of all 15 participants and gave women the opportunity to think outside of their lived experience and think about how their membership could be different if they were members of a different chapter size. The results of this question are noted above. Most sororities offer weekend leadership programs or conventions for women to attend. At these events, women are put together with other members of their organizations no matter their chapter size. This is an opportunity for women to gain insight regarding what it would be like to be a part of another chapter. The women that were in small chapters also went to small schools and the same for megachapters being associated with large schools.

Summary

This chapter explored the perceived impact of sorority chapter size on the member experience. Phenomenological interview methods were used to gain information from the participants to understand their individual perspectives about their member experience and if chapter size played a role in individual experiences. Through comparison of interviews, use of the van Kaam analysis methodology, and coding, the researcher used the five themes identified by

Cohen et al. (2016a) as the basis of the study. The themes were belonging, shared social experiences, accountability, support and encouragement, and common purpose along with two sub-themes of leadership and involvement. Through the description of the lived experiences of the participants, the researcher did address the research questions. The following chapter will provide a summary and conclusion to the entire study. The next chapter will review the research study topic and explain how the results contribute to fraternal movement and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the results of the study on the perceived impact of chapter size on the sorority member experience. Outlined in this chapter is the summary and discussion of the results, limitations of the research, implication of the results for practice, policy, and theory, and recommendations for future research. Chapter 5 provides a detailed conclusion of the study.

A qualitative phenomenological study was conducted to discover the perceived impact of sorority chapter size on the member experience. A sample of 15 sorority women from 18–22 years old that were active in a NPC sorority were used as participants for this study. Based the five themes of accountability, belonging, common purpose, shared social experiences, and support and encouragement, these women described their experiences as it related to sorority chapter size. The participants recalled descriptive insight into the perceived impact of sorority chapter size on their individual experience.

Summary of the Results

This study began to investigate the perceived impact of chapter size on the sorority member experience. The research questions that guided the study were: what is the lived experience of the sorority members and sorority chapter size and the two sub-questions followed the guiding questions were: how does sorority chapter size effect the quality of the membership experience within the individual sorority chapter focusing on shared social experiences, belonging, support and encouragement, accountability, and common purpose and how does sorority chapter size effect the quality of the membership experience within the overall sorority experience on a national level? The study was explored using descriptive phenomenology. Creswell (2013) described that understanding the lived experiences of the participants identifies the phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method and the process includes using a small number of participants to identify patterns and relationships of meaning. The van Kaam methodology was used to analyze the data. The pre-

determined themes were accountability, belonging, common purpose, shared social experiences, and support and encouragement which were a continuation from Cohen et al. (2016b) study regarding sisterhood. The individual interviews provided insight on how each of the themes played a role in the sorority experience, but not necessarily chapter size. The study was conducted using 15 participants from various campuses with varying chapter sizes.

Since the beginning of this study, no published research has been completed to fill in the gap in literature relating to chapter size and the sorority member experience. There has been research regarding belonging within the FSL community but it is not connected to chapter size and Cohen et al. (2016b) suggested that chapter size may impact sisterhood, but additional research needed to be conducted to further examine the phenomenon.

The results of this study did not reveal that chapter size impacted the sorority member experience. Important information that emerged from the study was that the 15 participants were very active in their chapter or within the Panhellenic community and their experiences were very positive. Studies have proven that sororities can influence involvement and members reported positive results (Hevel et al., 2015). The participants felt their experiences would be different if they belonged to a different size chapter. However, they also felt that their experiences were as expected and expressed satisfaction with the size of their chapter. In this study, the researcher explored how each participant's lived experience were similar despite being in different sized chapters on different campuses. The participant interviews confirmed these similar experiences with the participants. In one interview within this study, Lindsay said, "everything is done the same way just on a larger scale. So, I think the experience would probably be very similar. You are going to have friendships, philanthropy, and sisterhood events, all of that. It's just the size that it is different."

Discussion of the Results

The results of the study did not reveal a perceived impact between chapter size and the sorority member experience. Even though the sorority women, in this study, were in different size chapters, their experiences tended to be the same. The sorority women talked about only two things when it came to common purpose: philanthropy and recruitment. The participants' considered these to be two major aspects of the sorority experience, but none of them discussed how their chapter size impacted these aspects, except for the level of difficulty to manage 30 or 60 women versus 200 or 400 women. The Fraternity Advisor (n.d.), lists five pillars of brotherhood/sisterhood and philanthropy is one of the pillars. According to the NPC, in 2016, sorority women belonging to their council completed over 2,900,000 philanthropic/community service hours (NPC, 2016). Aimee stated that she could not wrap her mind around getting 250 women to participate in a service project. She wondered if chapters broke up the way community service is completed by new member classes, years in school, or bigs/littles.

Each of the participants had a positive experience thus far in their sorority member experience. Addison stated, "I have had a great experience in my sorority." The women reflected upon their member experience in relation to their chapter size on the five pre-determined themes of accountability, belonging, common purpose, shared social experiences, and support and encouragement. Throughout all the interviews, a strong sense of ownership was expressed when discussing experiences. The participants knew that their experience is what they were going to make of it and it did not matter if they had 30 women in their chapter or 400 women. Allison said that "the more you put in the more you get out of it."

Since the participants all held some type of leadership role, either within their chapter or the Panhellenic community, the researcher recommends using participants that do not hold leadership roles within their organization or community for future research. Cohen et al. (2016b) stated "the

body of existing research related sorority involvement has shown both positive and negative outcomes but has generally revealed that membership in sororities leads to more positive, and less negative" (p 32). Using women who are not as active in the organization might also render varied results. Hevel et al. (2015), discussed the influence sororities have on psychosocial outcome and found higher positive results of involvement; therefore, using women that are not as involved may provide a different view of chapter size regarding the sorority member experience.

The study did, however, reveal an impact between involvement and the sorority member experience. Cohen et al. (2016b) discussed that existing research related to sorority involvement has proven both positive and negative outcomes. The interviews from the current study participants support the current body of research based on involvement and satisfaction. In current research, Nelson et al. (2006) has linked college satisfaction and involvement within fraternities and sororities. Each of the participants were involved in their sorority experience whether they were new members or members about to graduate. Involvement opportunities may be different in the individual chapters, especially leadership roles on executive boards, but the participants discussed the five themes in relation to involvement rather than chapter size. This information also supports Nelson et al. (2006) findings regarding involvement in the chapter and leadership opportunities, and how it complements the classroom instruction. Essentially, women can apply their skills in different areas of the college experience.

The current study attempted to address the gap in the current research on sorority chapter size and the perceived impact it may have on the sorority member experience. Currently, there is no available literature that addresses chapter size and the sorority member experience. Cohen et al. (2016b) found that features such as chapter size may impact sisterhood and the member experience, but additional research is necessary to be certain. This study is a contribution to the additional research that Cohen et al. (2016b) suggested is necessary to fill the gap in the literature on the topic.

Future studies need to be conducted to fully examine sorority chapter size and its effects on member experience based on the recommendations for further research provided by the researcher. Still, this research can be the basis of future conversations about chapter size on the member experience for those in the fraternity and sorority life community. The chair of the College Panhellenics Strategic Initiatives Committee which oversees the mega chapter work group, Julie Johnson, stated that, "working together, our organizations can provide support for the best membership experience possible in these unique situations" (NPC, 2016, p.11). In 2017–2018, NPC is supposed to, "…develop best practices and strategies for member organizations and College Panhellenics that operate on campuses with large chapters" (NPC, 2016, p. 11).

The focus of this study was the perceptions of sorority women's experiences and the perceived impact of chapter size. While chapter size can vary depending on campus total and may have an impact on the member experience, this research did not result in significant findings; however, it still may help the fraternal movement in other ways such as involvement.

Limitations

The lived experiences described by the sorority women indicated that all the women had positive experiences within the organization based on chapter size and their role within the organization and the fraternity and sorority community. The participants felt that they were in the right size chapter but when it came to discussing chapter sizes, they felt that they would not get the same experience. The participants felt this would be different because of the number of members needed to gain the experience they were seeking. A limitation for this study was having only 15 sorority women from different chapters that were leaders within their organization. The study did not accurately reflect the lived experiences off all sorority women in small, medium, large, or megasorority chapter size. To address this limitation, the researcher suggests future research using participants from the same organization, but in different size chapters along with using members

that are not elected leaders within their organization. Using women that are in the same organization would provide consistency on organization and structure of the sorority along with similar governing by-laws. Using members that are not in leadership roles may provide more insight into members' experiences. Since they that are not responsible for leadership roles, they may be able to describe how it feels to be a regular member within the organization and how their experience is impacted by being in a small, medium, large, or mega chapter size.

Another limitation was the lack of equal response from all chapter sizes. For the mega chapter size, the researcher made several attempts to get four participants but after multiple failed attempts, three participants were used so the study could move forward. This is listed as a limitation because the fourth person in this category may have been able to provide impactful information to this study on her experience within a mega chapter. Using NPC sororities for studies, approval needs to be gained from the NPC. Approval was given only for specific colleges and universities that were given to NPC. The researcher fully understands NPCs concern with using specific chapters, but it may have been beneficial to get a general approval for sorority women rather than specific campuses. This was pursued in the approval process but at the time of the study, it was not approved. General approval may be more beneficial in future studies, especially if doing research at large conferences, such as AFLV, where a lot of fraternity and sorority members are in attendance.

Another limitation that was not noted before the study began was the use of newly initiated sorority women. Since these women are new to the experience, it was difficult to gain in-depth information. They did not have a lot of experiences to draw from versus the participants' who were sophomore, juniors, or seniors. To strengthen the study, it is recommended to use members that have more experience within their organization rather than newly initiated women. The information that was received from the two members was appreciated but did not lend itself to

greater insight into the women's experience within their organization because they only had a few weeks of being a member. It is difficult to describe the lived experiences of a sorority women when there are few experiences to reflect upon. Members that have been in the organization longer gave more insight into how accountability, belonging, shared social experiences, common purpose, and support and encouragement played a role in their sorority experience based on their chapter size.

Lastly, the process of gaining access to participants was a limitation. Two institutions had the information go out to the whole community, while one only gave their Panhellenic council the opportunity to participate and the other institution only sent it out to the chapter presidents. The researcher believes that if she had general access to chapters, she may have been able to gain information from those members that did not hold leadership roles. In future studies, it is recommended that the researcher looks for members that are not elected leaders in the organization, and general members who would be willing to participant. This will make it possible for the researcher to obtain a more accurate description of how chapter size can play a role in the sorority member experience.

Four of the interviews were conducted at AFLV, which was at the request of the Fraternity Sorority Advisor. These four interviews were face-to-face which allowed for more of a conversation with the participants rather than just question and answer. Due to the amount of information gained from the in-respond interviews, the use of virtual interviews was a limitation; the researcher recommends conducting face-to-face interviews to gain more information. Information from the four women that were in face-to-face interviews revealed more information, rapport was built through the interviews, the participants were more comfortable sharing their experiences, and the researcher was able to ask more follow-up questions as the conversation flowed more organically.

Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

While the descriptive phenomenological findings in this study cannot be generalizable, they can be transferable. The methods revealed that all 15 participants had very similar experiences within their sorority despite their chapter size. Based on this data from the study, several implications for practice are discussed, along with policy and theory.

Practice. The information that was gained from this study is important to the practice of fraternity and sorority life. The implications of the study were broken into two categories, groups and involvement.

Groups. The participants in the study described several instances of small group interactions. The events that the chapter hosted were broken down by new member groups, class, or families. This breakdown allowed for smaller group size, especially for megachapters. The use of smaller group size allowed for chapter women to create more relationships that were authentic than with large group events. According to Thumma and Peterson (2003), megachurches had programs to meet the needs of new members such as small groups and new member classes. This can be connected to sorority experiences as well. The megachurches broke down the large size environment into a small group setting to create more authentic relationships. This information regarding groups was a similarity from all 15 participants whether they were in small, medium, large, or megachapters.

Involvement. The participants in the study also revealed that no matter what the chapter size was, the members decided the level of involvement they would have. Members who were more involved with their chapter experienced stronger connections and sense of community than their counterparts. Being a part of an organization requires effort and the participants felt that when they put in more effort they felt more a part of their sorority. Asel et al. (2009) conducted a study that found a correlation between sorority membership and involvement. However, in a small

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chapter it may be easier to get involved versus being in a larger chapter because of the number of leadership roles and offices that are available to the sorority women. Astin (1984) also provided information regarding involvement in a sorority and the positive impact towards retention and Long (2012) found that involvement in a sorority led to positive benefits such as friendship.

Policy. It is important to note that chapter size is a topic worthy of research given the increase of potential new member and the recent changes to the way sororities are structured. NPC has created a committee under the College Panhellenics Strategic Initiatives committee that oversees the mega chapter work group (NPC, 2016). Chapter total was developed to help, "College Panhellenics to keep chapter sizes comparable and support the continued growth of smaller chapters" (NPC, 2016, p. 12). NPC also established a mega chapter work group in 2016. This was because, "the number of women joining sororities continues to grow each year, and on some campuses, chapters are so large that it affects the way they operate — and even the operations of the College Panhellenic" (NPC, 2016, p. 11). In 2015–2016 NPC reported that there were 144,183 new initiates, and in 2016–2017 it was reported that 155,357 (NPC, 2016, p. 14; NPC, 2017, p. 19). As the number of new members increases, so will chapter size. The researcher knows these conversations are being discussed on a national level and more people will be interested in the perceived impact chapter size has on sorority members' experience.

Theory. The researcher used several theories when developing the research questions as the conceptual framework. The first was Josselson's (1996) theory of identity development in women which refers to the participation in college activities and the achievement identity. The theory of identity development in women was used in the form of identity achievement and moratoriums. Support for this theory was identified through the interviews when the participants discussed their journey into leadership roles and ability to make a change within their organization. Chelsea described her journey with identity development by learning her way into her chapter.

Multiple participants described their journey as they began to identify as a leader within their sorority. McKenzie described her experience becoming a leader when she was studying abroad. She knew that she needed to hold a leadership role before she left the country and made a plan to study abroad the semester before she would hold an executive leadership role within her chapter. This example is related to Josselson's theory of women's development through commitment two, identity achievement. These sorority women are paving the way and breaking ties to their childhood to find a sense of self and identity. These women are committing to who they are in relation to who is around, their sorority sisters. The individuals are finding ways to contribute to others and their lives (Josselson, 1996).

The second theory that helped structure the framework is Gilligan's (1982) theory of women's moral development. This theory was applied to the personal value system of sorority women in relation to the sorority experience. The theory of women's moral development was intertwined with the women's answers to accountability. This was reflected in knowing what they should be doing in the chapter versus breaking the rules but also knowing the personal commitment the women made when they accept their bids to join the organization. This was identified through the women's interviews when they discussed serving others. Gilligan's theory uses goodness as self-sacrifice as level two in the theory which is seen as care for others. The women continued to describe this theory when they discussed the responsibility they had as a member of their organization. The participants described how they took care of their sorority sisters along with participating in events that supported those in the community.

Another theory that guided the study was Chickering's (1969) theory of identity development in the seven vectors. The seven vectors of development all play a role in the development of undergraduate students. According to Student Development Theory (2016), Chickering's focus was on, "managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature

interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, and developing purpose" (p. 1). The researcher found a lot of similarities between the women's experiences and Chickering's transitional theory. The participants ranged from freshman to seniors. The new members were still trying to transition into the college experience as well as their organization. Participants, who were sophomores and juniors were in the phase of moving through their experiences and the seniors were moving out. Aimee mentioned several times in her interview that she was a senior in her last semester and was no longer holding a leadership position since she was preparing to graduate. She was transitioning her way out of the organization as a collegiate member. This also allowed for those moving in to find a place within the organization. Chelsea, a freshman on campus and a new member in her organization discussed how she had to learn her way into the organization. Meaning that she needed to learn about her organizations before she could transition into a new phase or hold an elected leadership position. Several participants described their experiences with transition by learning from other members in their organization.

The last theory that was used was Astin's Student Development Theory (1984). Astin's theory is based on the idea that the more students are involved, the better experience they will have in college and are more likely to stay until graduation. This theory was evident in participant responses based on the interviews and the positive experiences the women had by being involved within their organization. Elinor described her experiences within her chapter as great even saying that she did not know what she would do without her chapter and her sorority sisters. She said, "I can't imagine my college experience without my sorority. When I walk into chapter on Sundays, I am being greeted by women who are glad to see me and can't imagine what their experience would be like without me because they value me."

Recommendations for Further Research

The researcher has several recommendations to further this research. First, this study should be conducted again using non-executive board members on chapter council or within the Panhellenic council. Leaders in the organization have a different experience because of their involvement. Using non-elected leaders within the organization may provide a more accurate description of chapter size and the sorority member experience. In longitudinal research, a panel study would be effective to accomplish this recommendation. A panel study involves sampling a cross-section of individuals within the study (Cherry, 2017). This could be used for gathering leaders and non-leaders within the sorority chapter. Another suggestion is to use a cohort for the study which would be selecting specific people such as leaders or non-leaders within the organization (Cherry, 2017). A cohort study would focus on groups of sorority women as they make their way through their collegiate sorority experience.

Secondly, it is recommended that this study be done face-to-face to build rapport with the participants and to gather more in-depth information. Conducting the research in this manner would provide more information on nonverbal expressions and body language. It could also help in providing more context to the information. The researcher found that the four interviews that were conducted at AFLV and were face-to-face provided more information than those completed through an online platform. The results of the study verified that involvement impacts the sorority member experience; therefore, the researcher suggests a study be conducted regarding the impact of chapter size on sorority involvement. A longitudinal study would allow for observations to be made within the study using the same sorority over an extended period of time (Cherry, 2017).

The next recommendation the researcher suggests is a quantitative study regarding the perceived impact of chapter size on the sorority member experience. Using this method of study would allow for more participants to be included. A quantitative study could be used for one sorority

and dispersed to all the collegiate women in all of their chapters. A quantitative study is a better tool for gathering and analyzing large amounts of data. Similar to Cohen et al. (2016b) work on conceptualization of sisterhood, they recommended using quantifying data to measure sisterhood. This concept could be used to measure the perceived impact of chapter size on the member experience.

Another recommendation for future research could be to conduct a qualitative study on how the membership experience can impact retention, similar to Nelson et al. (2006) study that focused on membership, recruitment, and retention. This could be done as a longitudinal study over the course of the members' 4-year undergraduate career. This would allow for researchers to use consistent participants and see the direct impact of membership on retention.

Finally, subsequent studies should consider using one sorority that has chapters in all four categories of chapter size: small, medium, large, and mega. The researcher is confident that using the same sorority with chapter size in all four categories will be more consistent and could provide more in-depth and accurate depictions of sorority chapter size and member experience. A longitudinal study was most suitable and is a research technique that involves studying the same group over an extended period of time (Cherry, 2017). This type of study would allow for the researcher to use one sorority's members over an extended period of time.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study focused on the perceived impact of sorority chapter size on the member experience. Fifteen active sorority women participated in this study that ranged in sorority affiliation and chapter size. Four of the participants were members of a chapter between 1-50 members, which was identified as a small chapter according to this study. Four participants were part of a medium sized chapter with 51–100 members, four participants were from a large size chapter with 101–199 members, and three participants were from a mega chapter size of 200 or more

members. The women were members of a NPC sorority on their campus which ranged from the east to west coast of the United States of America. The information the participants described in their one-on-one interviews revealed that sorority member experience is impacted by member involvement but not necessarily by chapter size. The researcher is confident that chapter size has an impact on member experience but believes that because the women who participated in this study were leaders in the organization, the information may have been biased due to their high level of involvement within the sorority.

The women that participated in this study had similar experiences and the findings suggest that involvement has an impact on the member experience more so than chapter size. The connection between sorority member's involvement and experience should be examined in future studies. As one participant indicated, you get out what you put into the organization. Based on the results of the study, if a sorority woman chooses to be actively involved, no matter what her chapter size is, she will have a more positive experience than that of a member that is not actively involved.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. How are you engaged with your sorority? For example, holding an office, participating in chapter events such as philanthropy, service, social, and attending national events.

2. How do you feel when someone wearing your letters walks past you and you do not know who they are?

3. How does belonging play a role in your organization based on your chapter size?

4. How does your chapter size play a role in support and encouragement?

5. How are shared social experiences within your sorority related to chapter size?

6. Tell me about a time accountability played a role in your organization as it is related to your sorority chapter size.

7. Based on your chapter size, how does your chapter come together for a common purpose?

8. How does small or medium chapter size compare to large or extra-large chapter size in relation to the sorority member experience?

9. How does large or extra-large chapter size compare to small or medium chapter size in relation to the sorority member experience?

10. Do you think your sorority membership experience would be different if you were in a larger chapter? If so, why and how? (This question will also be used for those that are in small or medium chapters.)

11. Do you think your sorority membership experience would be different if you were in a smaller chapter? If so, why and how? (This question will only be used for those that are in large or extra-large chapters.)

12. Because of your chapter size how are you able to gain leadership experiences? Leadership positions, conferences, etc.)

13. Please share an experience you have had within your membership based on your chapter size.

Appendix B: Consent Form

Research Study Title: The Perceived Effects of Sorority Chapter Size on the Member
Experience: A Qualitative Study
Principal Investigator: Jodi Jabs
Research Institution: Concordia University- Portland
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Audrey Rabas

Purpose and what you will be doing:

The purpose of this survey is to interview woman that are a collegiate member of a National
Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sorority to explore their sorority membership experiences including
social, academics, leadership, networking, and sisterhood experiences within the chapter. I will
begin enrollment on October 1, 2017, or when NPC approves the study, and end enrollment on
June 1, 2018. To be in the study, you will need to be a current member of a NPC sorority and you
need to have access to a computer and internet connection. The interview will be conducted as a
virtual meeting. WebEx will be used for the virtual meeting to record audio and video of the
interview. You will need to select a time to be interviewed. The participants must be honest about
their sorority experience and how chapter size may have had an impact on their experience.
Participation in this study should take no longer than 2 hours of your time. I will record the
interviews and after the interview, participants in the study will be given a password to access the
password protected Google Doc file of the transcribed interview and will be asked to verify the
transcript for editing purposes. The audio tape will be transcribed as soon as possible. As soon as
you, the participant, has reviewed the transcript for accuracy and has deemed accurate, the
recording will be deleted. This destruction of the study information is allowed for the audio tape
recording, but please be aware that all other study documents will be maintained for 3 years after
the study ends.

Risks:

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, I
will protect your information and not publish any information that may lead to deductive
disclosure. I will record interviews. The recording will be transcribed, and the recording will be
deleted when the transcription is completed. Any data you provide will be coded so people who
are not the investigator cannot link your information to you. Any name or identifying information
you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption on my password protected computer
locked inside the cabinet in my office. The recording will be deleted as soon as possible; all other
study documents will be kept secure for 3 years and then be destroyed.

Benefits:

Information you provide will help understand how chapter size has an impact on the sorority
membership experience. The participant could benefit by sharing your experience within your
chapter. Sharing your experience can help you make sense of your experience and how your
chapter size may play a part in the overall sorority and educational experiences. Another benefit of
participating in this study is that the information may be presented at professional conferences

which may help the fraternal movement. As members of fraternities and sororities continue to evolve, this information might help organizations better support their chapters and members by providing the best experience possible. Your participation might help future members have a great experience in sorority life.

Confidentiality:
This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us about hazing or sexual assault allegation or participating in illegal activities, or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety or the future sorority women within the chapter.

Right to Withdraw:
Your participation is greatly appreciated, but I acknowledge that the questions I am asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, I will stop asking you questions.

Contact Information:
You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Jodi Jabs at [Researcher email redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch.

Your Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_____   _____

Participant Name   Date

_____   _____

Participant Signature   Date

_____   _____

Investigator Name   Date

_____   _____
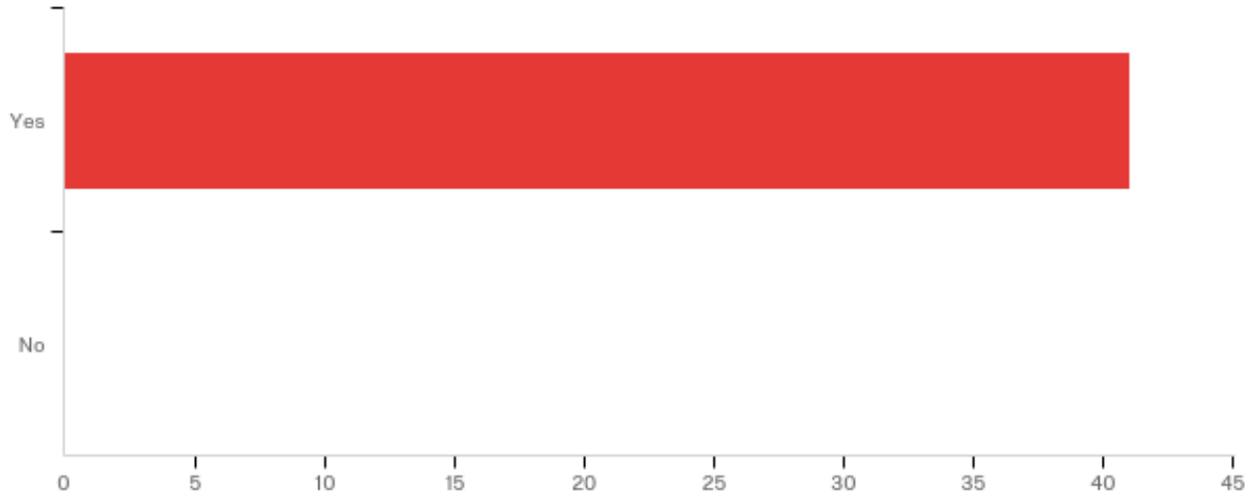
Investigator   Signature   Date

Investigator: Jodi Jabs email: [Researcher email redacted]
c/o: Professor Dr. Audrey Rabas
Concordia University – Portland
2811 NE Holman Street
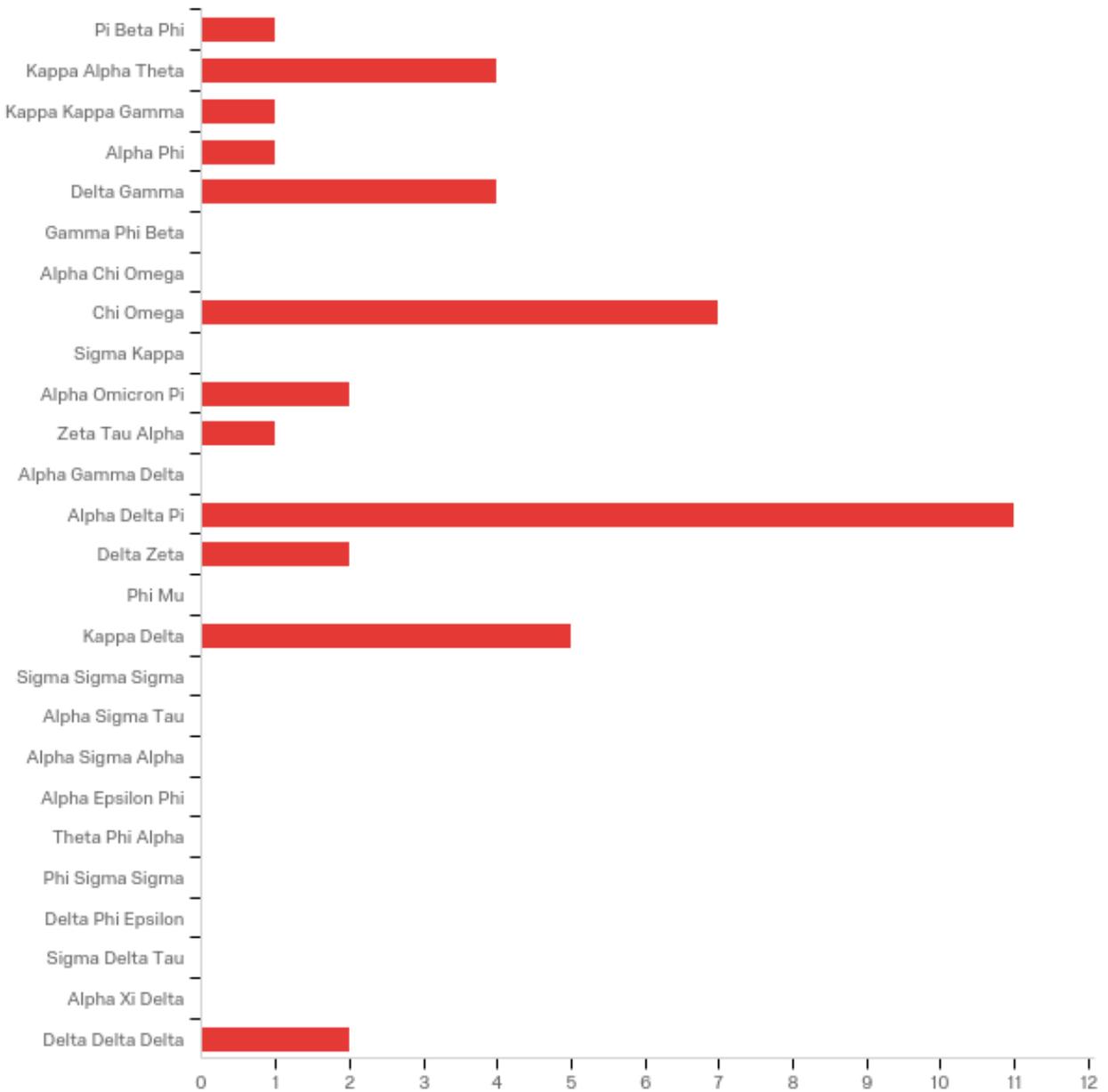Portland, Oregon 97221

Appendix C: Pre-Screening Survey

Q1 - Are you a member of a National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sorority?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	100.00%	41
2	No	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	41

Q2 - If so, what is your affiliation

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Pi Beta Phi	2.44%	1
2	Kappa Alpha Theta	9.76%	4
3	Kappa Kappa Gamma	2.44%	1
4	Alpha Phi	2.44%	1
5	Delta Gamma	9.76%	4
6	Gamma Phi Beta	0.00%	0

7	Alpha Chi Omega	0.00%	0
8	Chi Omega	17.07%	7
9	Sigma Kappa	0.00%	0
10	Alpha Omicron Pi	4.88%	2
11	Zeta Tau Alpha	2.44%	1
12	Alpha Gamma Delta	0.00%	0
13	Alpha Delta Pi	26.83%	11
14	Delta Zeta	4.88%	2
15	Phi Mu	0.00%	0
16	Kappa Delta	12.20%	5
17	Sigma Sigma Sigma	0.00%	0
18	Alpha Sigma Tau	0.00%	0
19	Alpha Sigma Alpha	0.00%	0
20	Alpha Epsilon Phi	0.00%	0
21	Theta Phi Alpha	0.00%	0
22	Phi Sigma Sigma	0.00%	0
23	Delta Phi Epsilon	0.00%	0
24	Sigma Delta Tau	0.00%	0
25	Alpha Xi Delta	0.00%	0
26	Delta Delta Delta	4.88%	2
	Total	100%	41

Q3 - What is your legal age?
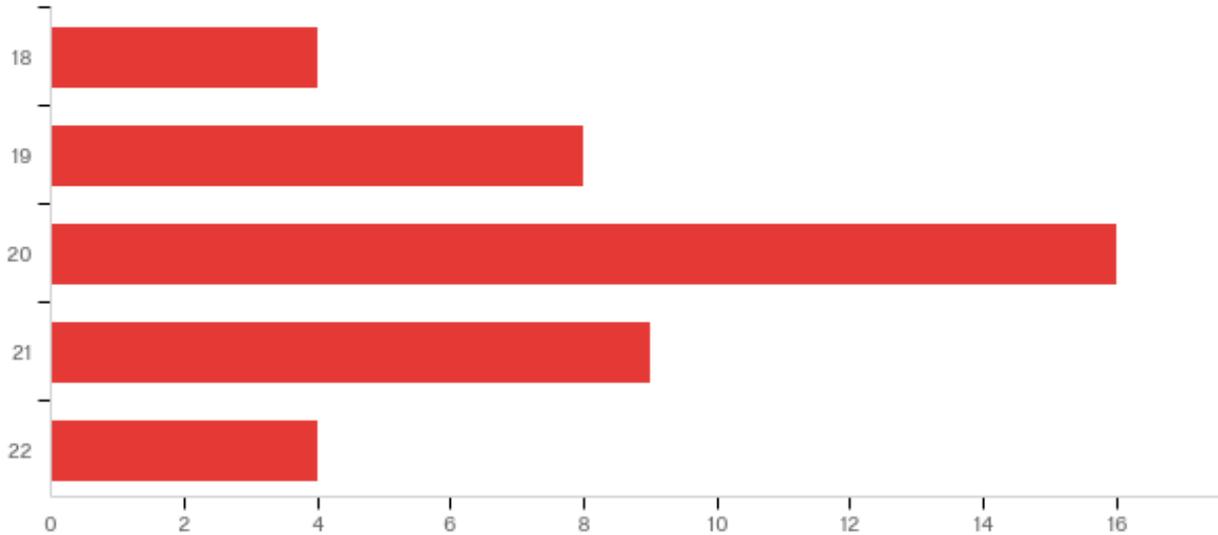
#	Answer	%	Count
1	18	9.76%	4
2	19	19.51%	8
3	20	39.02%	16
4	21	21.95%	9
5	22	9.76%	4
	Total	100%	41

Q4 - What is your chapter size?
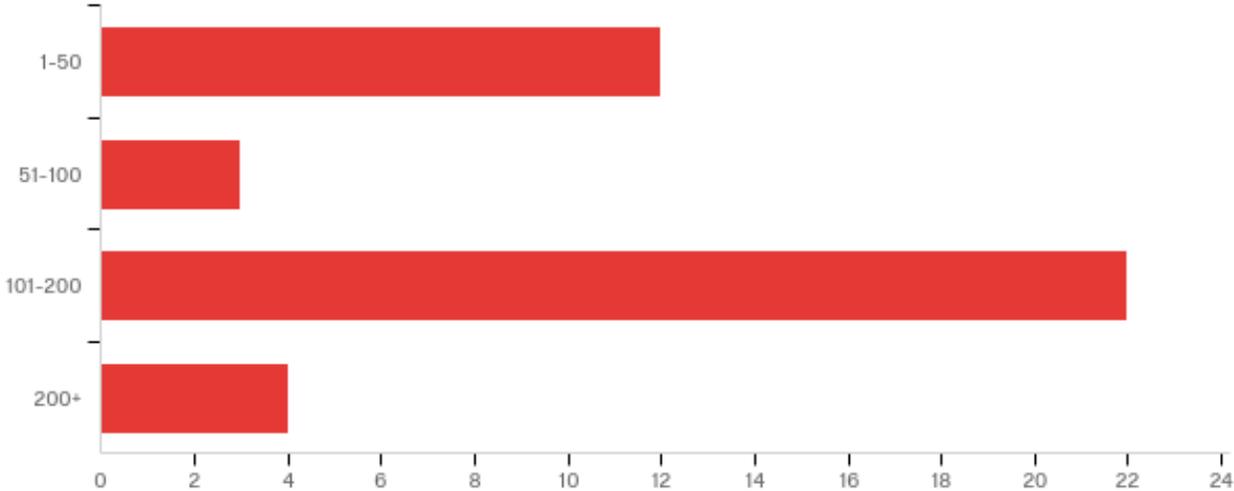
#	Answer	%	Count
1	1-50	29.27%	12
2	51-100	7.32%	3
3	101-200	53.66%	22
4	200+	9.76%	4
	Total	100%	41

Q5 - Are you considered an active member according to your national organization's roster?
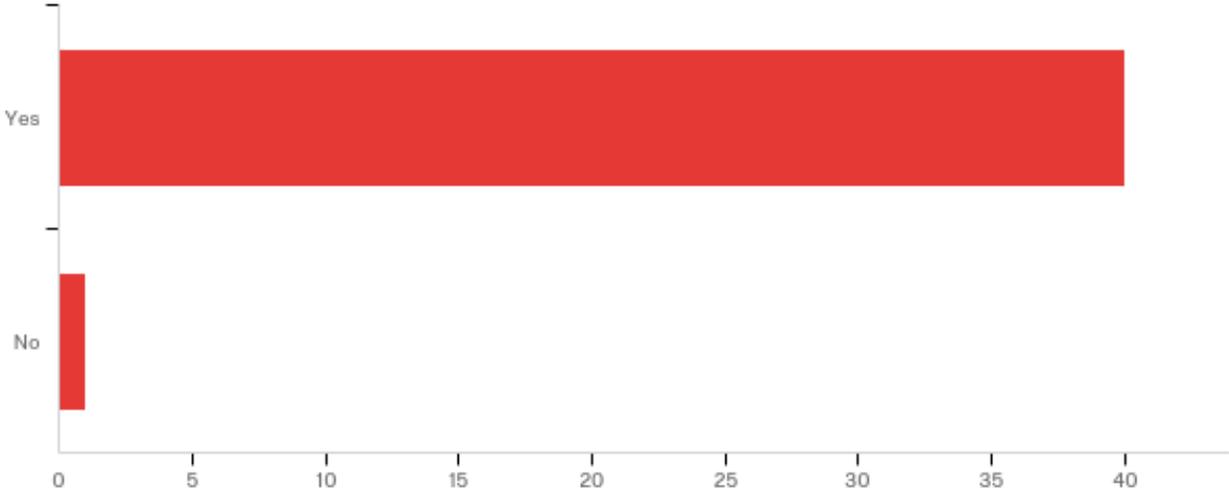
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	97.56%	40
2	No	2.44%	1
	Total	100%	41

Q6 - Is your chapter in the United States or Canada?
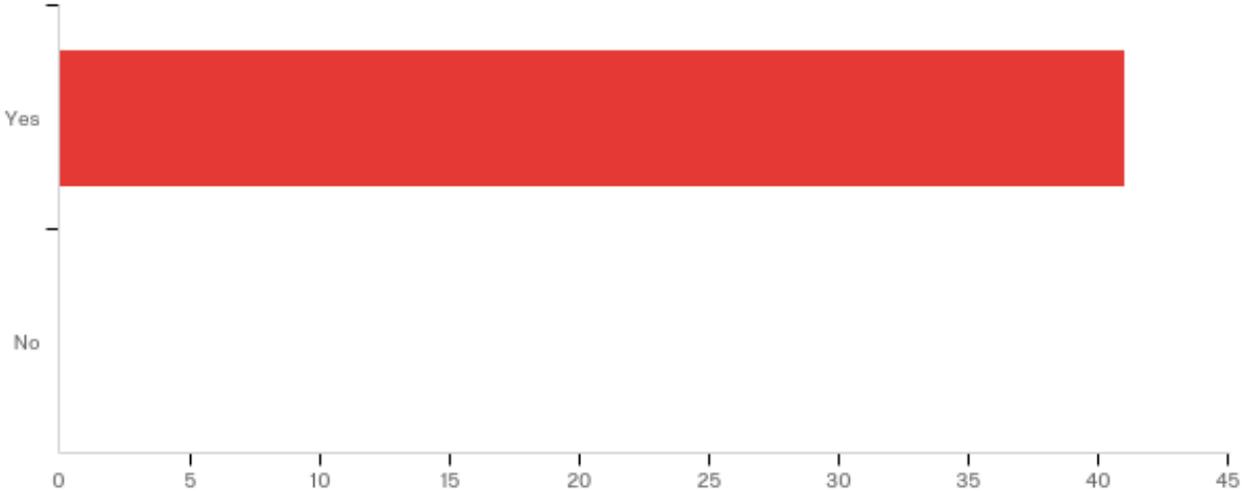
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	100.00%	41
2	No	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	41

Q7 - Do you know all the women in your sorority?
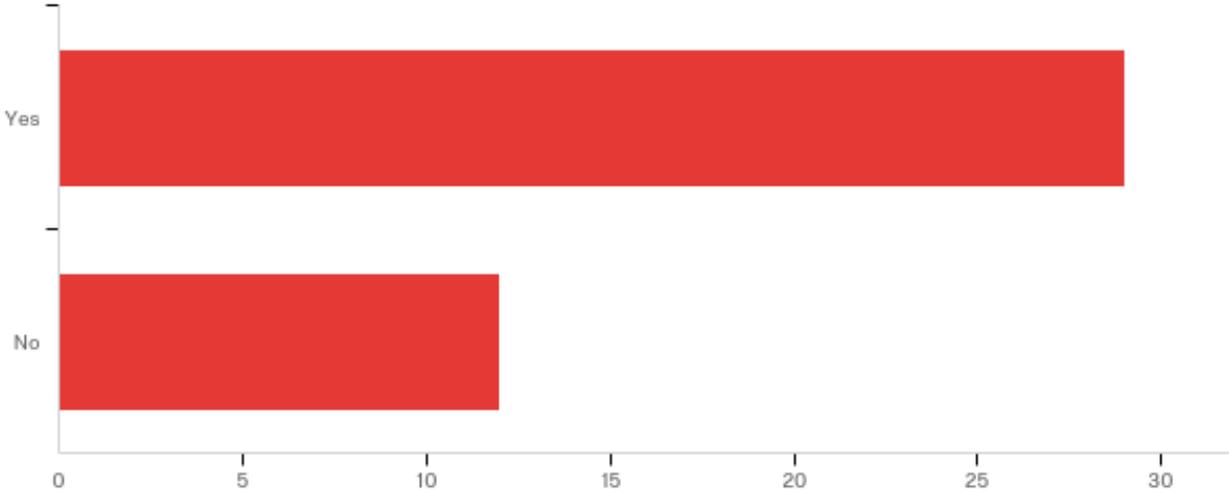
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	70.73%	29
2	No	29.27%	12
	Total	100%	41

Q8 - Out of your chapter, how many women do you know?
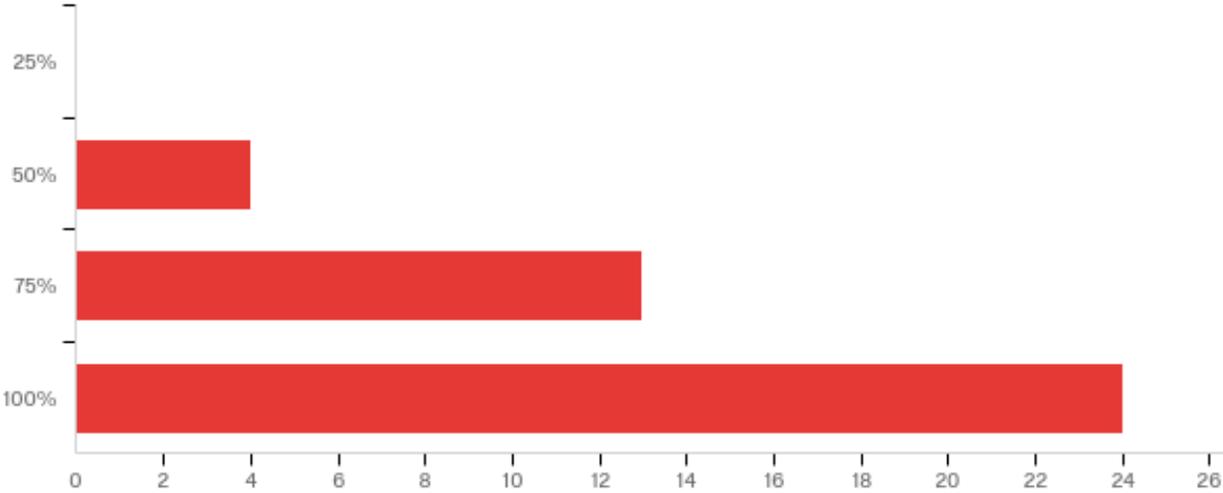
#	Answer	%	Count
1	25%	0.00%	0
2	50%	9.76%	4
3	75%	31.71%	13
4	100%	58.54%	24
	Total	100%	41

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Pre-Screening Questions:

14. Are you a member of a National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sorority?
Yes
    No

15. If so, what is your affiliation
  __ Pi Beta Phi
  __ Kappa Alpha Theta
  __ Kappa Kappa Gamma
  __ Alpha Phi
  __ Delta Gamma
  __ Gamma Phi Beta
  __ Alpha Chi Omega
  __ Chi Omega
  __ Sigma Kappa
  __ Alpha Omicron Pi
  __ Zeta Tau Alpha
  __ Alpha Gamma Delta
  __ Alpha Delta Pi
  __ Delta Zeta
  __ Phi Mu
  __ Kappa Delta
  __ Sigma Sigma Sigma
  __ Alpha Sigma Tau
  __ Alpha Sigma Alpha
  __ Alpha Epsilon Phi
  __ Theta Phi Alpha
  __ Phi Sigma Sigma
  __ Delta Phi Epsilon
  __ Sigma Delta Tau
  __ Delta Delta Delta
  __ Alpha Xi Delta

16. What is your legal age?
  __ 18
  __ 19
  __ 20
  __ 21
  __ 22

17. What is your chapter size?
  __ 1–50
  __ 51–100
  __ 101–200
  __ 200+

18. Are you considered an active member according to your national organization's roster?
  __ Yes
  __ No

19. Is your chapter in the United States or Canada?
    __ Yes
    __ No

20. Do you know all the women in your sorority?
    __ Yes
    __ No

21. Out of your chapter, how many women do you know?
    __ 25%
    __ 50%
    __ 75%
    __ 100%

Appendix E: Recruitment Email

Hello,

     My name is Jodi Jabs and I am a doctoral student at Concordia University. I am an active member of Alpha Sigma Alpha and have served multiple roles for my organization. I have also served as a Fraternity Sorority Advisor (FSA). My passion for sorority life came while I was a collegiate member and has led me to many great opportunities but my work as a FSA has inspired me to take a deeper look into sorority membership and chapter size.

     I am recruiting active collegiate sorority woman to participate in my dissertation research on the perceived effects of sorority chapter size on the member experience. If you are interested in participating in this study, please reply to this email or send your response to (researcher's email address) If you meet the requirements, I will schedule a one hour one-on-one interview about your experiences as a sorority member. The requirements to participate are being a collegiate student between the ages of 18-22. You must be female and affiliated with one of the twenty-six National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sororities. You also must be an active member of their organization based on their national organization's roster.

Thank you in advance. I appreciate your willingness to help me with my research.

Jodi Jabs

Appendix F: Email to be Sent With Interview Transcript

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in my research study on sorority membership and chapter size. Below this message, you will a link to the password protected transcript of your one-on-one interview conducted on (DATE TO BE INSERTED FOR EACH LETTER).

Please review the transcript in detail. If there are any changes you wish to make, please note the changes directly on the Google document. If there are no edits to your transcript, please reply to my email and approve the transcript.

Please submit your edits and/or approval to me no later than 72 hours from the date of this email. If you do not respond in 72 hours, as the researcher, I will assume no changes are needed.

 Link to your password protected transcript (TO BE INSERTED FOR EACH PARTICIPANT):

 Password: (TO BE INSERTED FOR EACH PARTICIPANT)

Thank you again for your time and participation.

Jodi Jabs

Appendix G: Summary of Interview Data

Summary of Interview Data

Participant	Interview Time	Transcript pages	Member checking	Corrections
Marian	22:16	6	N	N
Aimee	17:05	6	N	N
Chelsea	17:05	4	N	N
Christine	13:42	8	Y	N
Addison	19:13	10	Y	N
Maisey	20:35	8	Y	N
Laurie	10:44	6	N	N
Elinor	14:09	8	Y	N
Katie	35:23	8	Y	N
Chantelle	12:44	6	Y	N
Tessa	14:18	6	Y	Y
McKenzie	24:45	10	Y	N
Lindsay	19:35	8	Y	Y
Allison	16:13	6	Y	N
Kari	22:34	6	Y	N

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does "fraudulent" mean?

"Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.

What is "unauthorized" assistance?

"Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University- Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*
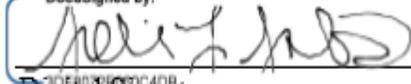
_____
Digital Signature

Jodi Jabs
_____
Name (Typed)

6/3/2018 4:39:15 PM PDT
_____
Date