SOURCES OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN SORORITY WOMEN WHO LIVE IN RESIDENCE HALLS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

BY

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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

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MOLLY SALISBURY

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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
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MAY 2014
ABSTRACT

THESIS: Sources of Social Integration in Sorority Women Who Live in Residence Halls

STUDENT: Molly Salisbury

DEGREE: Master of Arts

COLLEGE: Teachers College

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PAGES: 86

College students find belonging at institutions in multiple ways. For college women, the relationships they form through their involvements are important in their social integration. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the social integration experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls. This study was grounded in qualitative, phenomenological methodology. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with sorority women living in the residence halls who were at least sophomores.

The researcher found sorority women had positive experiences of community and enriched relationship opportunities through their involvement in their sororities and residence halls. The women studied referenced the few relationships they made with the other people who lived near them in the residence hall. While these relationships were important to them, they were not as important as the relationships formed with their sisters in their sorority. Sisterhood provides a deeper, more meaningful connection shared through the bond of ritual and tradition. Implications for practice and suggestions for future research were also suggested.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the support and encouragement of so many people throughout the process of completing my research, I am positive I would have not been successful. There are many people to thank for their unwavering support, challenge, and encouragement throughout this process. In no particular order:

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To my students – You are the reason and the passion behind my research and the work I do. Thank you for causing me to wonder, for giving me inspiration, and for supporting me in my academic endeavors. All of you are going to do great things.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Chapter One presents an introduction to the current study which examined the sources of social integration for sorority women living in residence halls. This chapter introduces the study. Additionally, this section includes a statement of purpose, research question, significance of the study, definitions of terms, and organization of the study.

Introduction of the Study

Tinto (1993) suggested in his Theory of Individual Departure from Institutions of Higher Education that various factors contribute to a student’s likelihood to persist to graduation at an institution. He suggested that a student goes through three stages of a transition – separation, transition, and incorporation – before he or she fully becomes part of a campus community. Tinto found students who were academically and socially integrated into their communities were more successful and more likely to stay at an institution.

Students choose to leave an institution for a variety of reasons. Some reasons include their lack of involvement or integration into the campus community (Tinto, 1993). However, there were many ways students can become integrated into their campus communities and can lead to increased persistence to graduation. For example, students became integrated to their campus communities through their involvement in their sub-communities such as residence halls or Greek letter organizations (Arboleda, Wang, Shelley, & Whalen, 2003; Cohler & Taber, 1993; Pike, 2003). Social integration and social relationships were particularly beneficial for college women who tended to need and benefit from social relationships more than men (Flaherty & Richman, 1989; Wohlgemuth & Betz, 1991).

Tinto (1993) suggested social integration came in multiple forms, but its effect on student
persistence was similar. Students who were integrated into their campus communities were most often successful in persisting to graduation. This study was created to examine the social integration experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls. The current study will examine the experiences of college women who belong to sororities and also live in residence halls. By interviewing sorority women who live in residence halls, this study aims to find more about the social integration experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls. Discussion from this study can assist campus professionals to better understand and meet the needs of sorority women who live in residence halls.

**Background of the Researcher**

I am in the final year of completing a Master of Arts degree in Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education. My work in Housing and Residence Life has allowed me the opportunity to interact with students on a deeply personal level and to witness their growth and development over their time in the residence hall community I work with most closely. I have had the opportunity to watch students get involved in different clubs and activities. My passion for this profession comes from witnessing the impact involvement and leadership has on students’ collegiate experiences. In my own experience, my involvements with different campus organizations and offices in my undergraduate career positively influenced my college experience. Through my graduate education and work experience I have the opportunity to give back in a way by providing college students with opportunities to have the same type of positive experiences I had.

As an undergraduate student I was actively involved in campus life areas such as residence life, campus ministry, student activities, student government, and sorority life. For me, the experiences that were the most influential included being an executive officer in my sorority
and serving as a Resident Assistant. These experiences brought me greater self-awareness and self-confidence, and challenged me to grow as a person and a leader. In my experience, I was able to be both an effective leader in Greek Life while also being actively involved in my residence hall community. Both experiences contributed to my persistence to graduation, while also aiding in my personal development.

I currently work with students who are upperclassmen. They are generally more established on campus, have a core social group, and have a set routine. While they may live in the residence hall, most often upperclassmen have social or academic involvements where they spend most of their time outside of the hall. While there is a large population of Greek affiliated students who live in the residence halls beyond their first year, I have noticed that many of our Greek students do not actively participate in the events or leadership opportunities offered through the residence halls. This piqued my curiosity and led me to consider the current research topic. Why are students who are leaders and actively involved in other organizations not active in the communities where they live?

The leadership experiences of college students remains at the center of why I do what I do, as well as why I am pursuing this research topic. I believe the college student experience is shaped by the different communities and environments they belong to, giving them the opportunity to grow and develop from their experiences. If I am to best serve my students in the residence halls, I need to better understand how to engage all of them in their living environments. If our Greek students are not participating in the residence halls, is there something stopping them? Or what can we do better to ensure they have the best experience possible? Student Affairs educators, especially those who work closely with Greek students who live in the residence halls, have an obligation to learn more about the experiences of this student
population in order to better meet their needs.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls. The interviews conducted in this study were used to gain a better understanding of their social integration experiences. The results of this study may help campus educators to better understand the experience of sorority women who live in residence halls. Additionally, the results of this study can be used to find practical ways for student affairs educators to better engage this population in both the residence halls and their sororities.

**Research Question**

This study addressed the following research question: How do sorority women who live in residence halls describe their experiences of social integration?

**Significance of the Study**

As demonstrated through Tinto’s Theory of Individual Departure, social and academic integration is crucial to a student’s success in college and likelihood to persist to graduation. At the institutional level, it is important to examine the individual reasons a student chooses to stay at or leave an institution. Furthermore, it is important to understand the different factors that contribute to those reasons.

Both residence halls and Greek organizations function to enhance the overall college experience for college students. Residence hall and student organization involvement have been shown to benefit college students’ development, make them feel more connected to their college campus, and help them persist to graduation (Arboleda et al., 2003; Berger, 1997; Pike, 2003). In this way, residence halls and Greek organizations are working to achieve similar goals; both attempt to provide ways for students to be involved and integrated in their campus community.
Additionally, both residence hall environments and Greek organizations attempt to teach students valuable skills and lessons in order to increase their maturity and development into adulthood. “Institutions of higher education should embrace their fraternity and sorority community as a place student development flourishes” (Cory, 2011, p. 192). Additionally, on-campus housing enhances a student’s connection within their own fraternity or sorority and within the campus community as a whole (Morettes, 2010).

The community where a student experiences belonging is important to his or her development. On-campus housing can be a symbiotic relationship which benefits and enhances the experience of organizational membership (Cory, 2011; Morettes, 2010; Tinto, 1993). Greek members are more likely to persist to graduation because they are involved in their communities (Blackburn, 2003). It is pertinent to explore if on-campus housing has an effect on involvement in other campus organizations. Furthermore, students who are connected not only to an organization but also to their peers are more likely to be successful in persisting to graduation (Thomas, 2000). This research is important in evaluating the effect of student connectedness on retention and persistence.

While research exists separately on both residence halls and Greek organizations, little research exists evaluating the experiences of Greek members who live in residence halls. There is a gap in the research regarding the experiences of Greek members who live in university owned housing. We are unaware of how Greek members function in their residence hall communities. Problematically, “few seek to understand the experiences of fraternity and sorority students” (Cory, 2011, p. 193)

Additionally, Arboleda et al. (2003) found women are not as involved in their residence hall communities as men. While their research did not give reasons as to why women were less
involved, it is worth exploring their residence hall experience to assist in their further development and success in college. Smith (1990) found the friendships and intimate relationships formed in Greek organizations help students to persist and succeed in their overall college experience. But, as noted by Cory (2011), higher education institutions and researchers have not sought to understand the experiences of sorority members who live in on-campus housing. Perhaps looking at the experience of sorority women who live in residence halls will offer a better understanding of residence hall participation, sorority involvement, and integration into the campus community.

**Definition of Terms**

**Residence hall** – A residence hall is a living facility owned and operated by a particular college or university. For the purposes of this study, a residence hall may also be referred to as on-campus housing. Residence halls are communities that provide social and learning environments on-campus for non-commuter students (Arboleda et al., 2003; Chiricosta, Work, & Anchors, 1996). A residence hall may also be referred to as a “dorm” or “dormitory.”

**Sorority** – A sorority is a social organization for women. Membership into a sorority is selective and voluntary. Sororities have established sets of rituals and values that members must abide by in order to be considered in good standing. For the purposes of this study, a sorority may be referred to as a Greek organization (Pike & Askew, 1990; Strange, 1986).

**Greek-affiliated students** – Greek-affiliated students are students who belong to a Greek organization. They may be members of a fraternity or sorority. For the purposes of this study, Greek-affiliation is in reference to social Greek organizations.

**Organization of Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. The current chapter is an introduction to the
study, research question, and terms. Chapter Two contains a review of literature related to Tinto’s Theory of Individual Departure, the role and purpose of on-campus housing, and the role and purpose of Greek organizations. Chapter Three describes both the design and methodology of the study. Chapter Four includes the major findings and implications of the study. Chapter Five compares the study’s findings to the research question and includes a summary, conclusion, and recommendations for future research. A comprehensive list of references and appendices are included at the end of this paper.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Summary of the Project

This study focused on examining the experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls. Specifically, the study examined how female sorority members were socially integrated into their campus community. The following chapter is organized in three sections. The first section examines Tinto’s Theory of Individual Departure and its effect on the persistence of college students. The second section focuses on the impact of on-campus housing on a college student’s experience. The third section explains the role of Greek Life within a college student’s experience.

Theory of Individual Departure from Institutions of Higher Education

Tinto (1993) examined the reasons why college students departed from institutions of higher education. He found students were often not retained between their first and second year of their undergraduate experiences. Many factors went into why students left institutions. Intentions and commitments were identified as factors to institutional departure on the individual level. An individual’s commitment to an institution or commitment to extrinsic motivators influenced the likelihood he or she would stay enrolled at a particular institution. An individual’s intrinsic and extrinsic intentions in relation to higher education also affected his or her likelihood to leave an institution. At the institutional level, Tinto identified four factors that led to student departure including adjustment, difficulty, incongruence, and isolation. A student’s experience with an institution can be affected by these four institutional factors and help determine whether or not a student decides to leave a particular institution. Additionally, Tinto identified finances and obligations as external factors contributing to a student’s individual
Tinto (1993) proposed ways institutions of higher education could support students who were at risk of institutional departure. He identified isolation and incongruence as barriers to a student’s feeling of integration into his or her campus community. Students who were academically and socially integrated into their communities were found to be more successful than their peers who were not socially or academically integrated. Part of Tinto’s Theory of Individual Departure focuses on how students go through the integration process and have an increased likelihood of persisting to graduation at an institution.

**Social and Academic Integration**

Tinto (1993) suggested college students engage in a process of becoming integrated into the academic and social communities of a particular institution when they successfully navigate three stages – separation, transition, and incorporation. Separation occurs when a student was able to dissociate themselves from past norms. This means students are able to separate themselves from their peers, family, and past routines. In addition, a student should also be willing to accept his or her new college environment and the new norms he or she will experience. Transition occurs when a student successfully navigates the separation stage. Meaning, a student separated himself or herself but had not yet adopted any new norms in place of old norms. Transition is a time when students begin to explore their identity and values through different experiences. Students who successfully separate themselves from their past norms and adopt the prevailing norms of the institutional community are considered to be incorporated. Tinto found once students incorporate and assimilate to campus norms they are integrated on campus, meaning they adopt the values and norms of the broader campus community into their own value systems (Tinto, 2012).
Interaction of Campus Community and Student

Integration can take many forms based on the different experiences of students. However, academic and social integration are most important to a student’s college experience and his or her likelihood to persist to graduation. Tinto (2012) found the following:

The more students are academically and socially engaged with faculty, staff, and peers, the more likely they are to succeed in college. Such engagements lead not only to social affiliations and the social and emotional support they provide, but also to greater involvement in educational activities and the learning they produce. (p. 7)

Students who interact with their campus environments experience positive educational outcomes. Additionally, students who are involved build a foundation for future interactions with peers and faculty could enhance their academic and social affiliations (Tinto, 1993, 2012).

“Fraternities, sororities, student dormitory associations . . . for example, may all serve to provide individuals with opportunities to establish repetitive contact with one another in circumstances which lead to the possibility of incorporation into the life of the college” (Tinto, 1993, p. 99). When students are given opportunities for socialization, they are more likely to persist to graduation and more likely to be successful in their college experiences. Tinto explained that students could be part of a sub-community at a college or university which includes groups such as fraternities and sororities, residence hall communities, and cultural organizations. While it is important for students to feel integrated to the larger campus community, it is even more vital for students to feel integrated into their sub-communities. This allows students to “break down the university into smaller knowable parts where social integration is more readily possible” (p. 124).

By taking a closer look at the tenets of Tinto’s theory, Thomas (2000) found social ties
allowed students to experience social integration and also allowed them better social connectedness to campus as a whole. The researcher found students who were connected not only to their social group but also outside their social group performed better academically and were more likely to persist to graduation. “Activities and residential situations designed to encourage the development of student relations should also be designed to enhance cross-clique diversity and foster opportunities for nurturing and connecting emerging student leader” (p. 609). Connectedness to campus is an important factor in persistence to graduation. Furthermore, Milem and Berger (1997) indicated “subsequent involvement will influence the level of students’ institutional commitment which inevitably influence whether or not students become successfully incorporated into the college’s social and academic systems” (p. 390).

“The levels of student engagement in social activities, on the other hand, appear to be positively correlated with student probability of persisting as students with higher levels of social engagement persisted at a higher level” (Hu, 2010, p. 101). This suggested students who are socially engaged are more likely to persist to graduation. Additionally, Hu found students who are deeply engaged in a few activities instead of minimally engaged in many activities are more likely to persist to graduation. Tinto (1993) explained:

There appears to be an important link between learning and persistence that arises from the interplay of involvement and the quality of student effort. Involvement with one’s peers and with the faculty, both inside and outside the classroom, is itself positively related to the quality of student effort and in turn to both learning and persistence. (p. 71)

The research suggested when students are more purposefully engaged in the activities they are involved in, their overall college experience is more positive.

**Experience of Involved and Integrated Women**
Gender differences have an effect on social integration and institutional commitment because of the likelihood of women to seek and create deeper, more meaningful social bonds with the people around them (Deaux & LaFrance, 1998). Women also are more likely to take care of those included in their social networks (Kessler, McLeod, & Wethinton, 1985). Therefore, integration has been found to have a stronger, more positive impact on institutional commitment for women when compared to men because they tend to need and benefit from strong social connections (Jones, 2009). “Female students . . . appear to have greater need for the types of rewards and social support that come along with higher levels of integration” (p. 697). Jones found the more a female student was socially integrated the more likely she was to persist to graduation.

While women benefit from social connectedness, they can also experience problems during their college experiences. The experiences of women should be closely monitored by campus professionals. The lack of women represented in leadership roles at colleges and universities has made it difficult for women to fully relate at the institutional level (Kinzie, Thomas, Palmer, Umbach, & Kuh, 2007). Women found it more difficult to find same-sex role models and mentors with whom they could relate. Women who were active in single sex environments thrived, were more engaged, and formed better relationships with those around them when compared to women in co-educational environments. Women need and benefit more from social support, especially from other women (Flaherty & Richman, 1989; Wohlgemuth & Betz, 1991). Therefore, the more women are integrated into their environments on campus, especially with other women, the more successful they will be.

**Role of On-Campus Housing**

Historically, universities were forced to create dormitories, or residence halls, as an
option for students who attended colleges or universities far from home and had no other living
options. Faculty members lived in the residence halls and served as the main means of
supervision for students. The faculty and administrators who looked after students were seen as
substitute parents who supervised, disciplined, and cared for college students who were away
from home (Willoughby, Carroll, Marshall, & Clark, 2009). Over time, college and university
housing then transformed into a necessary and essential part of many colleges and universities.

**College Student Development**

Willoughby et al. (2009) suggested university housing has a significant impact on a
student’s development and success in college. Living in a residence hall community was
positively associated with the likelihood a student would eventually participate in a fraternity or
sorority. Living in a residence hall also increased the chances a student would persist to
graduation and feel integrated into the campus community. Li, Sheely, Whalen (2005) found
students who lived in residence halls and had high involvement in outside activities experienced
greater cognitive gains than other students. Additionally Arboleda et al. (2003) claimed “the real
advantage of living in residence halls is not necessarily derived from the place itself, but from
the activities and opportunities or socialization that students have by virtue of their shared living
space” (p. 518).

“Many of the forces assumed to foster the transition from adolescence to young
adulthood are highlighted in the American residential college, which is unique in its concern
with an integrated view of such personal and intellectual development” (Cohler & Tabler, 1993,
p. 71). Residence halls provided college students the opportunity to develop into mature adults.
Additionally, Cohler and Tabler suggested college students who live in residence halls are able
to transition gradually into adulthood with more freedom and autonomy than they may have
previously experienced while still offering a structured and purposeful learning environment. The researchers noted living in a residence hall allowed students to gain more holistic college experiences by enhancing their involvement outside the classroom. “The college house emphasizes the opportunity provided for attainment of personal and intellectual maturity” (p. 77). Residence halls provide college students with the opportunity for holistic social and intellectual development.

**Persistence to Graduation**

Students who live on-campus are more likely to receive social support and access to necessary resources when compared to students who live off campus. Students have a natural social support system from those they live in proximity to and have relationships with people who help them in battling stress, anxiety, and loneliness (Schudde, 2011). Students find solace in peers and form a close social network with whom they are able to exchange information in regards to classes, campus resources, and other necessary information. Additionally, students who live on-campus are more likely to use campus resources because they were either referred by someone who lives near them or by a campus professional they interact with in the residence hall. “Overall, living on campus may keep students ‘in the know’ by providing a network through which they can gain information necessary for retention” (p. 582). Furthermore, the researcher found students who live on campus experienced a 3.3 percent increase in the probability of persisting to their second year of college, which quantitatively suggests on-campus living is connected to retention.

“Students living in residence halls on campus are found to have higher retention than those who live off campus” (Tinto, 2012, p. 65). On-campus housing contributes significantly to institutional retention efforts. Students who live on-campus are more likely to feel socially
integrated to their college campus (Christie & Dinham, 1991). As a result of feeling integrated, students are more likely to become invested in their institution and persist to graduation. Additionally, they found students who live on-campus are more likely to be involved in campus organizations as compared to students who live off campus. The sense of community offered by a residence hall contributes to successful social integration, thus encouraging students to persist to graduation (Berger, 1997).

Benefit for Women

Many researchers have found young women face problems adjusting to college that are often different than their male peers’ experience. While opportunities for access to a college education and diverse job opportunities has increased for women, some young women have families who still encourage them to pursue career paths closely aligned with traditional gender roles. Baxter-Magolda (1999) found there is familial and societal pressure for young women, to find a mate in college. Furthermore, women tend to cope with stress and depression differently than their male peers. Women tend to revert to self-blame, crying, and also tend to seek assistance more than their male peers. Because of the differences women and men face, women are more likely to value and seek out female friendship and female social connections in order to feel supported during their transition to college (Enochs & Roland, 2006).

Living arrangements affect the social adjustment of college students. Residence halls have similar climates to families with boundaries, rules, and an atmosphere of care and concern. Residence hall staff can serve in pseudo-older sibling roles by providing mentorship and guidance during a student’s transition (Enochs and Roland, 2006). This type of environment is important for the adjustment of all students in college, especially for women. Kenny and Rice (1995) suggested women thrive with close, intimate relationships and socialization to aid in their
college experiences. Residence halls provide women with the environment necessary to create support systems and form relationships that help with their transition to college.

**Role of Greek Life**

Greek organizations have existed on college campuses since the eighteenth century. There are two main categories of Greek organizations – honor societies and social fraternities and sororities. Honor societies are typically tied closely to academic majors or programs, while social Greek organizations select members and exist for more social and communal purposes. Social organizations rely heavily on ritual, ceremony, and espoused values while ceremony and tradition are less of a focus for honor societies (Los de Reyes & Rich, 2003).

Mathiasen (2005) found social Greek organizations to be highly scrutinized in the literature. Greek organizations face much scrutiny from the public and from college and university administrators who question their purpose in the college environment and if they are causing more harm than good (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). The negative portrayals of Greek organizations in the media and movies have created negative perceptions surrounding these organizations (Grubb, 2006). However, Grubb found social Greek organizations have many positive benefits for students despite their negative portrayal in popular culture. Despite the legal issues Greek organizations have faced involving hazing and alcohol abuse, fraternities and sororities overall tend to have positive effects in the lives of college students (Baird, 1969; Grubb, 2006; Wilder & McKeegan, 1999).

**Social Integration**

Members of fraternities and sororities are at least as involved in on-campus activities as students who are not Greek affiliated (Pike, 2003). Additionally, Greek affiliation is associated with higher levels of organizational involvement over time. College seniors who are members of
fraternities and sororities report being involved in more on campus activities and programs than their peers who were not Greek affiliated. Overall, Greek students are more engaged and involved on campus than their peers. Their campus involvement makes them more integrated into campus culture and as a result Greek affiliated students are more likely than their peers to have positive connections to their institution.

The Greek system has been found to have a heavy influence on students’ social interactions and involvement. Their Greek membership allowed students to engage in positive peer interactions, develop listening skills, and clarify their values through meaningful discussions with their Greek affiliated peers (Dugan & Komives, 2010). Students who are Greek affiliated have a network of people with whom they are able to interact with on a daily basis, which ultimately allows them to feel more socially integrated to their environment. Their Greek brothers and sisters have an influence on their social interactions and provide them with relationships that are both intimate and supportive (Capone, Wood, Borsari, & Laird, 2007).

**Cognitive Development**

Membership in a Greek organization is positively related to cognitive development (Winston & Saunders, 1987). Students who are members of Greek organizations are assumed to be more cognitively developed than their non-affiliated peers. Students who are members of Greek organizations are found to be more involved and developed than their peers on a variety of measures. In particular, Pike (2000) found academic and cognitive development to be areas Greek affiliated students excelled above their non-Greek affiliated peers. He found a student’s social involvement and successful integration in college experiences is associated with gains in cognitive development particularly in students who are members of Greek organizations. Greek membership has a significant indirect impact on cognitive development in college students.
Leadership Development

Peer conversations are powerful in aiding college students to develop listening skills, clarify their personal values, and gain experience in socially responsible leadership. Furthermore, engaging in peer-to-peer conversations and addressing topics such as diversity, social issues, and politics, aids in students’ personal development. The most significant levels of development, in particular leadership development, are found in group membership settings (Dugan & Komives, 2010). Students who belong to a particular social group, such as a fraternity or sorority, are more likely to have higher levels of group-related leadership outcomes which positively influence their overall college experiences.

Greek membership is linked to positive outcomes on measures of leadership. In particular, members of Greek organizations experience gains in the leadership areas of civility, working towards a common purpose, and willingness to change when compared to their non-affiliated peers (Martin, Hevel, & Pascarella, 2012). Fraternities and sororities provide college students the opportunity to hone their leadership skills in a variety of areas. Additionally, members of fraternities and sororities are more likely to demonstrate socially responsible leadership. The researchers found Greek students are more likely to be connected to their campus and local communities, and more likely to work to effect positive change on said communities.

Benefit for Women

There are particular benefits for women associated with membership in an all-female organization such as a sorority (Martin et al., 2012). First, members of a sorority are more likely to be successful at building consensus and finding a sense of ownership in their work and membership than their non-affiliated peers. Sorority members are also better at facilitating
decision making processes within their organizations. Their leadership skills and abilities could be helpful in other on-campus organizations at college and universities. Sorority membership also afforded women unique leadership skills that could be easily transferrable to other organizations and future employment opportunities. All-female environments are associated with more positive leadership outcomes, which suggests sorority membership helps aid in female leadership development.

Another benefit of sorority membership for women is an increased awareness and sensitivity to gender norms and stereotypes. According to Robinson, Gibson-Beverly, and Schwartz (2004), sorority members endorse more non-stereotypical attitudes in areas of female political leadership and belief in differential work roles when compared to their non-Greek affiliated peers. Sorority women have positive attitudes towards women in the workplace and female political leaders. Some women in their study even report joining a sorority in order to become leaders and advance their future career success. This research suggested women in sororities support women’s empowerment and leadership development.

Summary

Tinto (1993) found students who pass through periods of separation, transition, and incorporation in order to align their values and behaviors with the norms of their new college environment are better integrated into their institutional culture. Social and academic integration was important to their personal development and success in college. In particular, students who are successfully integrated academically and socially were more likely to persist to graduation (Tinto, 2012).

Both the on-campus living experiences and Greek membership of college students affect their integration into campus culture. Students living in on-campus housing are more holistically
developed when compared to their peers (Cohler & Taber, 1993). Students involved in Greek organizations are more socially integrated when compared to their peers (Pike, 2003). Additionally, on-campus housing and sorority membership has particular benefits for women including social outlets for smoother transitions to college, social support, leadership development, and awareness and sensitivity to gender issues (Enochs & Roland, 2006; Martin et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2004).

Limited research is available that has studied Greek affiliated students who live in residence halls. Based on the research available both residence halls and Greek organizations worked to achieve similar goals such as providing opportunities for involvement, leadership, and friendship (Cory, 2011; Morettes, 2010). Additionally, they both provide opportunities for integration and aid in students’ persistence to graduation (Blackburn, 2003; Thomas, 2000). The connection between Greek membership and on-campus living needs to be further evaluated.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three outlines the methodology used in the current study to examine the primary source of integration for sorority women who live in university housing. This chapter contains a statement of purpose, the research question, design of the study, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls. The interviews conducted in this study were used to gain a better understanding of their social integration experiences. The results of this study may help campus educators to better understand the experience of sorority women who live in residence halls. Additionally, the results of this study can be used to find practical ways for student affairs educators to better engage this population in both the residence halls and their sororities.

Research Question

This study addressed the following research question: How do sorority women who live in residence halls describe their experiences of social integration?

Design of Study

Research Methodology

This study is grounded in qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodology was used because it is “inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 22). Qualitative research attempts to make meaning of the experiences of participants and provides context to their experiences through in-depth interviews or observation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This approach was chosen because the researcher
believed she would be able to learn more about the social integration experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls through in-depth interviewing.

Furthermore, this study is constructed through a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology “describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). The lived experience being evaluated in the current study is the experiences and social integration of sorority women who live in residence halls. Additionally, phenomenologists emphasize the “subjective aspects of people’s behavior” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 25). Phenomenology attempts to understand the point of view of the individual participants and to make meaning of their experiences. Thus, a phenomenological construct was selected in order to better understand the social integration experiences for sorority women who live in residence halls.

Setting

The institution selected was a mid-sized public institution in the Midwest. It was classified as a research based university with an undergraduate profile consisting of full time, four-year, residential and selective with a primary function of serving undergraduate students (Carnegie Foundation, n. d.). Graduate students benefitted from Masters, specialist, and doctoral degrees. To protect the institution and participants, pseudonyms were used in the data analysis of this study.

Population

The inclusion criteria established by the researcher were that the population included traditional college aged women, ages 18 to 24, who belonged to a sorority, held at least sophomore standing, and lived in a residence hall.

Sample
Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling chooses participants who meet the specific selection criteria (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the selection criteria included sophomore women or older who were members of a sorority and lived in a residence hall at the time of the interview. Snowball sampling asks participants who are interviewed to recommend others (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In the current study, the research selected seven sorority women who lived in residence halls through recruitment emails or snowball sampling.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected for this study through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they “offer the interviewer considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the subject a chance to shape the content of the interview” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 104). An interview protocol was created to help facilitate the semi-structured interviews with participants (Appendix A). The researcher used a set of predetermined questions in the protocol which she would ask, and then based on the participant’s response would ask follow up or clarification questions. Following a set of directions, the questions were divided into four sections and included questions about the participant’s overall college experiences, experiences living in the residence halls, experiences as a member of a sorority, and then the participant was asked to compare their experiences and describe if one experience had a more prominent influence on their social integration. While the interview protocol was organized with a particular structure, the participants were encouraged to share personal stories and experiences.

To improve the trustworthiness of the interview process, the interview protocol was reviewed by a panel of experts knowledgeable in both the research topic and qualitative methodology (Davis, 1992). The members of this panel included researchers skilled in
qualitative methodology and university educators experienced in Greek Life and university housing. The interview questions were revised based on the suggestions of the panel. After the revisions were made, the researcher conducted a pilot test with the assistance of women who were part of the population but not involved in the study. Final revisions were made to the interview protocol based on suggestions from the pilot testing.

The Institutional Review Board at Ball State University reviewed and approved the data collection process (Appendix B). Data were collected during the fall semester of 2013. Personal interviews with sorority women who lived in residence halls were conducted in order to collect data. The qualitative research techniques of purposive and snowball sampling were used to contact potential participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013). Participants in this study had to fit a certain criteria to be considered; all participants must be sorority women who lived in a residence hall at the time of the interview. The researcher obtained a list of sorority chapter Presidents from the Assistant Director of Student Life for Greek Life. Potential participants were contacted via email asking if they would participate in this study (Appendix C). Participants were then asked to give the researcher’s contact information to other potential participants who fit the research criteria.

Prior to the interview, participants received an Informed Consent Form and were informed of their rights as participants in a study (Appendix D). They also had the opportunity to ask any questions before the interview. Participants were then contacted on an individual basis to set up an interview at a time, date, and location that was mutually convenient for both the participant and researcher. Interviews were scheduled for 45 to 75 minutes. Interviews were digitally audio-recorded with the consent of the participant.

Following the interview, the investigator typed transcriptions based on the audio files.
The audio files were then destroyed. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and any personal, identifiable information associated with the transcripts was destroyed.

**Data Analysis**

The data were prepared and organized by using interview transcripts to analyze and find consistent themes among the participants. Transcriptions were used to provide the researcher with an accurate account of the interview and serves as the primary documentation of the interview (Shopes, 2011). The transcripts were typed and checked for accuracy using the digital recording. The researcher reviewed the transcripts and “uptalk” and “fillers” were edited out of the transcripts to make the participants’ messages more coherent. Cameron (2001) found “uptalk” and “fillers” to be declarative utterances found in discourse, especially in sorority women. These utterances were found by interactional sociolinguists to be unconscious and do not provide relevant information to the transcript. Utterances such as “like,” “um,” and “you know,” were edited out of the transcripts in order to provide clarity, economy, and precision to the written findings. The researcher carefully reviewed the transcripts before making edits and removed the utterances when they did not change the meaning of the discourse.

The researcher then used the transcripts to see if there were any common themes or answers to the research question. Madison (2005) suggested qualitative interviews offered the opportunity to interpret the experiences of participants. After the data were collected, coding took place. Coding means “reduction the data into meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments” (Creswell, 2013, p. 180). Two types of codes were used – a priori codes and inductive codes. A priori codes are codes developed prior to examining the data based on research and literature available. Inductive codes are developed after the researcher interprets the data (Johnson, n. d.). The codes were then combined into broad themes, or units of
information. After themes were identified, the data were interpreted and analyzed.

“Interpretation involves making sense of the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 187). Themes were identified among the experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls to determine if a primary source of social integration in their experiences emerged. Once all of the themes were identified, a narrative of the themes and experiences shared by the subjects through interviews was compiled and is found in Chapter Four.

The data collected were evaluated through a number of methods to ensure its trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) evaluative criteria were used to evaluate the data collection and analysis processes used in this study. They suggested researchers use four areas of evaluative criteria – credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability – to demonstrate the trustworthiness of qualitative research. When these criteria are met through a variety of techniques, then the qualitative research can be considered trustworthy when also considering the limitations, delimitations, and recommendations for future research as discussed in Chapter Five.

The evaluative criteria were met in a variety of ways. For the current study credibility was established through triangulation. The researcher used a review of literature and semi-structured, in-depth interviews to gather information about the social integration experiences of sorority women who lived in the residence halls. Transferability was established through thick description. In Chapter Four, the researcher uses direct quotes from the subjects to enhance the report of the study’s findings. Dependability was established when the research advisor performed an inquiry audit of the raw data. Conformability was established through triangulation and reflexivity where the researcher kept a reflective research journal throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the social integration experiences for sorority women who lived in residence halls at a midsized, public, Midwestern university. Both their sorority membership experiences and residence hall living experiences, shared through in-depth interviews, contributed to the data analyzed in this phenomenological study.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Chapter Four presents the findings from this study which examined the experiences of sorority women who lived in residence halls. This chapter begins with a summary of the study followed by a detailed presentation of the findings. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings as they relate to the central research question.

Summary of the Project

This study examined the experiences of undergraduate, traditional-aged sorority women who live in residence halls. Their experiences were examined to find common themes and to learn more about their social integration into the campus community. Data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with seven undergraduate women who identified as being at least sophomore standing and lived in a residence hall at the time of the study. Each subject was interviewed during 2013-2014 academic year. Codes, themes, and findings were drawn from the subjects’ answers to the interview questions as represented in transcripts and were organized to answer the central research question.

Sample Demographics

The seven women who agreed to serve as subjects for this study had many of the same defining characteristics. All were traditional-aged undergraduate women, between the ages of 18 and 24, and who had attended college for at least one full academic year. Each attended the same Midwestern mid-sized, public research university. The identities of the subjects were protected with a pseudonym. While many of the women shared the same characteristics, they each identified different personal experiences associated with living in a residence hall and belonging to a sorority. Three of the seven subjects were Resident Assistants who held a
designated leadership position within the residence hall. The interview questions were framed in a way which allowed the women to speak of their residence hall experiences before and after their RA position. While they hold a leadership position within the hall, the researcher does not feel that this affected the responses of the participants. Additionally, the women interviewed represented four different sororities. While some of them belonged to the same sorority, there are four organizations represented in the data. The subjects are as follows:

- **Sarah** – a junior, Public Relations major. She joined a sorority her sophomore year because she was looking for more leadership opportunities. She was also a Resident Assistant.

- **Hillary** – a sophomore, Elementary Education major with a focus on Special Education. Her interest in joining a sorority came during the spring of her freshman year after she watched her close friends enjoy their sorority experiences.

- **Dottie** – a junior, Public Relations major. She joined a sorority after she decided to return to the institution for her sophomore year and was looking for ways to get connected to campus. She was also a Resident Assistant.

- **Chelsea** – a sophomore, English and Spanish major with a minor in Linguistics. She was interested in joining a sorority to meet new people and to feel more connected to campus.

- **Anna** – a sophomore, Journalism and Telecommunications double major. She was interested in joining a sorority in order to meet new people.

- **Elizabeth** – a sophomore, Psychology major with minors in Spanish and Psychology of Human Development. She was interested in joining a sorority immediately after arriving on campus.

- **Heather** – Heather is a sophomore, Chemistry major with a pre-physical therapy interest.
Her interest in joining a sorority was to get more involved on campus. She was also a Resident Assistant.

Sources of Social Integration for Sorority Women in Residence Halls

Creswell (2013) suggested qualitative data be interpreted and combined into more meaningful data sets, or themes. The transcriptions were prepared after the interviews were reviewed by the researcher. A list of a priori codes was created based on the literature and was reviewed. The researcher made a concurrent list of inductive codes while examining the raw data. The codes were then organized in a list and the researcher used recurring codes to determine the themes that emerged from the data.

Themes make meaning of the data and help to form the phenomenological explanations of the experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls. The themes demonstrated the lived experiences of the sample. The research question of the current study explored the sources of social integration for sorority women who lived in residence halls. Two themes of social integration emerged for sorority women who lived in residence halls – experiences of community and enriched relationship opportunities. The women had experiences in both the residence halls and their sororities associated with their experiences of community and within their relationships and their experiences are examined below.

Experiences of Community

The participants reported the sense of community felt in the residence halls and their sorority as important to their feeling of connectedness to campus. Each community they belonged to offered different experiences for the women and made them feel connected to the campus community in different ways. Residence halls and sororities offered the opportunity for women to feel more connected to campus and other students. A sense of community existed in
both the residence halls and sororities.

The women reported they felt a sense of community when they lived in the residence halls because they were located on campus and were close to campus resources and amenities. Additionally, the open door communities in residence halls made them feel connected to the people they lived near. The women spoke about the relationships they had with their Resident Assistants and how the relationship influenced their overall experience of community in the residence halls.

The sense of community the women experienced within their sororities was similar. The women talked about how they joined the Greek community when they joined their sororities. Joining the Greek community made the larger campus community feel smaller. Their sorority memberships made them feel more connected to other members of the Greek community. Additionally, it gave them the opportunity to participate in other student organizations and seek out different leadership positions.

**Community within residence halls.** Residence halls often provided the first sense of community students felt when they arrive to campus. For the participants, three different aspects affected their experience of community in the residence halls – their convenience and proximity to campus resources, the type of community, and the influence of their Resident Assistants.

**Convenience and proximity to campus resources.** Students living in university owned residence halls have many perks. Campus resources, food, and friends were in close proximity for those who live on campus. The subjects explained the various ways that living on campus was convenient for them. Many of the subjects identified the residence halls as being in a prime location on campus. Campus resources, such as the health center or the library, were closer to
them than to their friends who lived off campus. Sarah shared, “I like living on campus. It’s really convenient. Everything’s near you.” Hillary shared:

I like how close they are. Everything is here. If you want to go to the library at 10 p.m., you can . . . I don’t know. I like everything that is here. We have so many resources available to us that wouldn’t be available if you lived off campus.

Elizabeth also shared:

I love it. I use my meal swipe. I don’t cook. I don’t clean a lot. I’m lazy. So a pre-cooked sandwich? Yes. Give me that. The bathroom gets cleaned which is nice. I mean I’ll sweep and vacuum. It’s just nice to not have to clean. My classes are no more than ten minutes away, so if I sleep in, it’s not a big deal. And I feel safe in the residence halls, compared to if I lived off campus.

Additionally, their location on campus allowed the participants to get to classes or on-campus meetings quicker. Sarah shared “I think it’s nice if you have a little bit of downtime; it’s not a big deal to come back and change and freshen up.” The ease of access and proximity to their residence hall rooms made living on campus easy and convenient.

Another campus resource the subjects identified as being convenient for those living in the residence hall was its proximity to the on-campus dining locations. The subjects mentioned that the meal plan associated with their on campus housing contract was fast and easy for them to choose the food they wanted to eat without needing to prepare the food. Sarah commented on how convenient it was for her to have a dining location located in her residence hall. “The meal plan is really nice because you can just go downstairs and take care of your meal. I have really low blood sugar, so it’s immediately taken care of.”

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

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

Heather noted, “You would leave your door open in [a first year hall] and you would have so many people come and stop by. You leave your door open in [an upperclassmen hall] and you would see no one pass by.”

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

Influence of the Resident Assistant. While students may belong to many communities during their college experience, the communities formed in the residence halls offered students the opportunity to experience a wide variety of people. Additionally, the people who ran and developed their communities, their Resident Assistants, also greatly shaped how well the community functioned and the types of experiences students had in the residence halls. A student’s Resident Assistant, or RA, had a significant influence on the student’s residence hall experiences. For those who had a positive experience with their RA, the community thrived.

Dottie shared:
I’ve always lived on a good floor. Mostly sophomore year was the time I had the best impression of [living in a residence hall]. I switched floors, I had two really good RAs, and there were a lot of people on the floor who wanted to meet people.

Sarah also shared about her RA: “I think having an RA, especially if they are one that’s around a lot, can make a big difference on knowing where your resources are.” Additionally, it was her experience with her RA that made her want to become an RA herself. “I felt like my RA was very helpful, very involved, and was always checking up on me. So when I became an RA I guess I tried to resemble what she did for us.”

While good experiences with the student’s RA positively affected their experiences, negative experiences with their RA also shaped the residence hall environments. Chelsea explained her RA was rude and unhelpful in a situation involving her roommate who was sick and needed medical attention. Her RA did not help in the situation, and instead assumed the women had been drinking, so she treated them poorly. Chelsea explained this made her upset and made her feel uncomfortable when she interacted with her RA. Additionally, Sarah explained one of her RAs negatively affected her living experience: “[During] my second semester, my RA hated being an RA. It really impacted my experience of being on the floor. You could really tell the social aspect of the floor was gone.” The student’s Resident Assistant had an impact on the feeling of community in a residence hall.

**Community because of sorority membership.** While living in the residence halls offered the opportunity for students to meet different people, women who belonged to a sorority made connections to different people across the campus community. These experiences allowed them to meet different people, participate in other organizations, pursue leadership opportunities, and change their perceptions of the Greek community.
Connections to people. Many of the subjects noted the number of people they recognized across campus based on their involvement in Greek Life. They suggested they felt part of the greater campus community because of their sorority membership. Sarah said, “I think the fact you can see 100 people on campus is really nice. It kind of makes you feel like you’re more at home. You’re more familiar with different people.” Hillary shared some of the same sentiments:

You just have people everywhere. It sounds weird, but I don’t know. Throughout the day I can just walk and see a sister wherever I go. There are 120 of us. You can get anywhere on campus and see someone. I could be sitting in the Atrium eating lunch by myself, and a sister would just walk up and sit with me. It has definitely connected me. I feel like ever since I’ve joined, campus has gotten smaller and smaller. Especially as a sophomore. Now you see people. You may never talk to them, but you get so accustomed to seeing people and registering where people are from . . . It’s definitely the people. You just get to know them, and see them. It just makes campus seem small.

Chelsea said her sisters have given her connections to fraternity men:

I think I’ve definitely met a lot of friends through other girls because of the sorority. One of my friends is the sweetheart for a fraternity and I’ve gotten to meet a lot of those men through that. And I now see them as my good guy friends that I’m going to miss terribly when I leave.

Many of the women talked about how their sorority sisters allowed them to feel more connected to campus just based on the number of people they knew. They felt they recognized more people on campus through their sisters and involvement in the Greek Life community.

Connections to other campus organizations or events. The subjects noted that if it were
not for their sorority membership, they probably would not have gotten involved in the larger campus community. For instance, Dottie noted:

I feel like I do more because I am in [a sorority]. Even though I have a connection to Riley Hospital because of my family, I don’t think I would have joined a random team for Dance Marathon because it’s more Greek Life organizations that do Dance Marathon. So because of [my sorority] I am involved in that. And my brother got involved with it at our high school. That was one of the things. It just motivated me to get involved with [another student organization]. One of the girls that is in [my sorority] is the Executive Director of [the student organization] so that motivated me to apply and now I’m an Account Coordinator.

Through her leadership position, Sarah was able to reach out to other campus partners:

They gave me PR Chair because they knew how involved I was with [a student organization]. So I took that in a different direction and wanted to connect faculty with us. So we had lunch with [the President of the University] last year. Right away when I was there, [my sorority] was really focused on two fraternities that they helped with and I helped them expand out and make connections with some of the guys we wouldn’t normally connect with. We do community service with guys we’ve never teamed with. And just small events where we could get to know people better. So I think being involved with that kind of changed my position.

Hillary talked about how meeting her sisters gave her the opportunity to get involved in things she never considered:

It’s like people you would never expect to talk to. We have two [dance team] dancers. The chances of me ever talking to a [dance team] dancer are pretty slim. So, I don’t
know. It’s the fact that we’re all so different but like we all come together for this one thing.

Chelsea noted the support she felt from her sisters in her outside involvements and how she got involved with their involvements too:

I probably wouldn’t have known to get involved with Dance Marathon if I didn’t have so many sisters on committees that were so attached and committed to it. And I think vice versa they wouldn’t have gotten involved with Relay if they didn’t know I was a part of it. Yeah. I think it makes me more aware of generally things that are going on around campus. And then, just little things like if you go to meet up with one of your friends in the library and they’re with one of their friends and they are like “hey” and then they become your friends. You kind of look out for your friends’ friends even if you don’t know them, it’s kind of that deal.

The connections subjects made because of their sorority memberships were important in their overall development. It allowed them to feel connected to campus and to integrate socially into the campus environment.

**Leadership opportunities.** Another effect of sorority membership was how the women used their experiences and involvements in the sororities to jumpstart their leadership in the campus community. Dottie mentioned her involvement in her sorority gave her more confidence to pursue other leadership positions on campus:

I think that getting involved in [my sorority] pushed me to get more involved in Housing because it gave me more confidence. That sounds stupid. But getting involved here, once I got the [RA] job, makes me feel more connected to [the institution] through people looking to me as a resource.
Sarah pursued an executive position on the campus’s Panhellenic Council, a Council comprised of representatives from each Panhellenic sorority on campus. She said this about why she wanted to apply for an executive position:

I really liked the idea of all the sororities working together on one council. It was no longer working to make just your sorority better, but to make Greek Life on campus better. So that was really interesting to me. And we had had one representative from our chapter last year. But I felt like if we wanted to keep growing and keep being recognized as a top chapter then we needed to push for more representatives. [Now] we have two . . . And that was something I thought was really important.

Their leadership experiences motivated the women to increase their involvement within their communities.

*Changed perceptions.* Many of the women noted their hesitance in joining a sorority based on misconceptions they had about the Greek Life community before they were a part of it. They suggested the negative perceptions from the media and other sources portrayed Greek Life as full of alcohol, drugs, and partying to be a reason why they were not originally interested in joining. Anna said:

I never even considered [joining a sorority] before. It was not the kind of person I wanted to be. I guess I had really stereotyped women who were in sororities, and that was really unfair because I had not really had any personal experience with it whatsoever – no one in my family was Greek, none of my close friends were Greek.

Heather reasoned:

It is like that saying where you can’t explain to people what Greek Life is unless they try it out. And it’s hard, because you always have those stereotypical people who think
you’re in it just to party, and get drunk all the time, and do drugs. But it’s not like that at all. And that’s the negative part about it, because people look at you differently based on their experience with it. I just think that the better you present yourself, the better image your sorority will have. That’s what we stress in [my organization] – you as one person can represent our entire chapter.

The participants suggested it was after they spent more time in their sororities and formed deeper, more meaningful relationships with their sisters that their perceptions about the Greek Life community changed. It was their experiences in sororities that changed the way they experienced and perceived the Greek community.

**Enriched Relationship Opportunities**

The women referenced the relationships they formed with the people they lived close to in the residence halls and with their sorority sisters as being important to their college experiences. They noted their relationships with the people around them helped them cope with their college transition, provided them with new opportunities, and offered a support network of women on whom they could depend.

In the residence halls, the relationships the women formed were convenient because they were close to their friends who often lived right down the hall from them. They met women who they would not have otherwise met, but the residence halls offered them the opportunity to meet and become friends with a variety of people. Since the women lived in close quarters, they have a group of people who were physically close to them and can offer support if necessary. The women often talked about the relationships they formed in the residence halls as being their first connection to campus.

The relationships the women formed with their sorority sisters were deeper and more
meaningful. The amount of time and energy spent on the relationships made the women feel closer to their sisters than the people they lived with in their residence halls. The experiences of going through recruitment and sharing in sorority ritual were often discussed as reasons why the women felt closer to their sorority sisters.

**Relationships in the residence halls.** Often the relationships formed with the people who lived near a person in a residence hall became important to a person’s sense of connectedness. Residence halls provided a unique environment for women to create and maintain relationships. For the participants, the convenience of being close to friends and exposure to diversity were important aspects of the relationships they formed in the residence halls.

**Access and location of friend group.** Living in the residence halls was convenient for multiple reasons, many of which were previously explored, including the location and access to campus resources. The participants also acknowledged the residence halls provided them with the opportunity to live close to their friends and to form close relationships with the people around them. They said there were always people around to hang out with and those people typically lived next door or down the hall. Chelsea noted:

> When I got the email that I got into my study abroad program, I tried to call my mom and she didn’t answer. Tried to call my dad, didn’t answer. No one was answering. So I just ran down the hall and there [are] four other girls who are in our sorority, as well as my roommate. And I ran down there so I could celebrate with them. And I ran down and was like “Dottie!” It’s so convenient to have people there when you need it. Like when you have a bad day, I can come downstairs and already be crying.

Additionally, for those women who living in living learning communities, they were able to get
to know the people around them who were also in the same classes. Hillary shared:

A lot of people I had classes with, so I got to know people that way. And then the girls that lived next door, I actually live with now. It was just kind of like networking I guess.

You just see these people all the time.

Many of the women commented on the relationships they built with the people who lived around them were beneficial. There was always someone to talk to, share exciting news with, vent to about a bad day, or even check your outfit for you. The convenience of always having people living around was a perk of living in the residence halls.

**Exposure to diversity.** Another benefit of living in a residence hall was that it gave students the opportunity to live in close proximity to people they would not normally interact with or talk to. Chelsea said:

I think sometimes living in the residence halls allows you to meet people that you wouldn’t have met otherwise. Or get close to people you wouldn’t have met otherwise.

You really are exposed to a lot of different people – people that are different than you and what you’re used to. And it can be a really beneficial thing to hang out with people who have different views and different beliefs. I like it. I like meeting new people.

Sarah noted the community aspect of living in a residence hall was good for college students like her:

I was used to differences in people, but I guess I wasn’t used to people being so in your space, so that was kind of interesting. If you’re in a house, no one’s going to come up to your door and ask you for sugar or anything. It’s not common at least. And so that was really weird for me. I was an only child, so I wasn’t used to people coming to our room all the time and people just walking in randomly. But it sparks conversation. At first it
may be kind of surprising. But after that, it kind of gets you adjusted to the college mentality of getting to know people and you make good connections.

Students were able to meet and get to know different people in the residence halls whom they would not have otherwise had the opportunity to meet.

**Relationships because of sorority membership.** For many of the participants, the relationships formed in their sorority were the most influential on their college experience. The sisterhood which was fostered through ritual and recruitment was important to the overall social integration experiences of sorority women.

**Bonds of sisterhood.** Many of the women cited their favorite and most meaningful part of their sorority experiences were the deep connections they made with their sisters. The participants believed they felt most connected to the university because of their relationships with their sisters through the rituals of their sororities. They were truly committed to the sisterhood and to the relationships they formed with their sisters. Sarah said:

The difference is the deeper connections. Yes, you’re not going to like everyone in your sorority. You may not love all of them, but you care about them. I can honestly say that if anyone, even if it was the girl I don’t get along with the best, if she called me and needed something, I would drive to [get] her at 2 a.m. if she needed, whereas if it was someone on my floor, there’s not that deeper connection. There’s not that family obligation feel to it. I probably wouldn’t drive and get them. It’s just like, I guess, you worry more about your sisters. Even if you don’t know them really well you would do a lot more for them than you would for a random person on your floor.

She went on further to explain an almost familial obligation to her sisters over her feelings towards her residence hall neighbors:
I guess the best way to compare is like a family. So you really value your family members. So even if it’s your aunt that really drives you crazy, even if she needed you or she had a loss, you’re going to be there for her. Where if it’s your neighbor, you’ll say something to them, like “hey if you need something let me know,” but you don’t have that value and the aspect of the family setting . . . I think ritual plays a lot into it. It’s the sister aspect you invest in the second you get in has a lot to do with it.

Chelsea described her relationship with her sisters as “lifelong friendships and then some.” She went on further to explain what her sisters meant to her:

It’s a support system. It’s really like a family. And we’ve gotten to know each other’s families through Mom’s Day and Dad’s Day and hanging out. I love that my parents love my friends, and that my friends love my parents. If I’m on the phone with my Mom, my friend will take the phone and say, “what’s up Mamma D.” And I’ll be like “ok, stop.” It’s more than just a friend. I wouldn’t say, “Oh she’s my friend.” I would say, “Oh she’s my sister.” We share more than that. We share ritual. It means more. My friend, she goes to [another university], and she’s like, “It’s weird that you call them your sisters. I just say that’s a girl in my sorority.” And I’m like, “No, it’s more than that. They are my sisters.” It’s a different kind of bond.

Furthermore, Chelsea described how her commitment to sisterhood motivated her to be a better version of herself because she was representing her whole sisterhood:

I think being in a sorority has really encouraged me to be a better person because I know I’m not just representing myself, but I’m representing the other women on campus, the women across the country that share the same organization . . . You want to hold yourself in the best light, because I would never want something I do to reflect poorly on Dottie,
or my roommate, or the other girls in chapter. I think that’s neat. I think that’s something that people don’t normally think of when they are in sororities. But really just [asking] “Is this a good representation of myself? Is this a good representation of my chapter?” To me my chapter means so much more to me than a stupid picture, or a tweet you shouldn’t have sent, or something like that.

It is the sisterhood and the commitment to their relationships that encouraged the women to hold themselves to a higher standard. Their dedication to their sisterhood was how they made meaning out of their collegiate experiences and contributed to their social integration.

**Experiences of recruitment.** Many of the women discussed how recruitment made them feel closer to their sisters, and how it enhanced their bond of sisterhood. Recruitment, in Greek Life, is the process organizations go through to recruit new members. For women, this process can be time consuming with many hours of practice and preparation for the various parties and events they hold to show off their organization for potential new members. For Anna, going through recruitment solidified her relationships with the women she called sisters:

I think it really boils down to recruitment, because we would have recruitment practices so often. We were together way more than in the past. It kind of reminded me of getting ready for a show, and having rehearsal and preparing and encouraging each other to do their best. I guess I hadn’t see that my freshman year. I was like we go to socials and dress up for that – kind of meaningless things. But when you go through recruitment, you really get to understand your sisters, and why you’re in this, and understand the deeper meaning to it all. You understand it more and it becomes a lot less frivolous.

Anna went on to further explain “recruitment is all about talking to sisters you don’t talk to everyday. And understanding everyone and how we work together as a whole.”
While many of the other women shared the same sentiments as Anna, Hillary had a slightly different experience with recruitment. When asked to describe her most vivid memory of being a member of a sorority, she described her experience recruiting potential new members to join her organization:

I’ve never been through it on the other side. I was recruiting, and I don’t know how I felt about that. I just had very mixed emotions about it. It was just a very different process and everyone was so into it. I feel like you’re either into recruitment, or you’re not. It was just, obviously you’re scoring girls or whatever, and that’s totally against me. I would just rely heavily on other people and be like, “what did you get?” So I think the recruitment was one of the biggest things. In the middle of it I had a huge meltdown.

When asked to explain more about her emotional breakdown, she said:

Girls are girls. I’ve always had my brother growing up, so I kind of just hung around his friends. So normally I really don’t care, but no one sleeps during recruitment. And it’s just a really long process, and everything happened at once. All the girls I lived with were just trying to get through it. And then it was fine. It was just the combination of the three days, and getting no sleep, and being stressed out. Because of course you have recruitment, but then you have school going on, and then you have practice all leading up to it. I think I was just overwhelmed.

She went on further to explain her sisters surrounded her and supported her through her emotional breakdown. She felt supported and loved, even though she was having a difficult time with the experience.

The bonds and relationships formed through the participants’ sorority experiences greatly contributed to their feelings of connectedness. The relationships they made through their
sorority allowed them to feel socially integrated into a community of people, and allowed them to feel like they had successful experiences in college.

**Patterns of Social Integration**

The research question of the study evaluated how sorority women who live in residence halls experience social integration. The women experienced stronger patterns of social integration depending on how their experience was framed. The pattern suggested women felt more connected to campus as a whole because they lived in the residence halls, whereas they felt more connected to people through the relationships they formed because of their sorority membership.

**Social Integration to Campus**

The participants were asked if living in the residence halls or being a member of a sorority made them feel more connected to campus. Most of the participants answered the residence halls made them feel connected because of their on-campus location and their knowledge of campus events through in hall advertisements. Heather said:

> Being in a residence hall and being an RA – you hear about everything that’s going on on-campus. Which 100% helps in feeling connected to [the institution]. I couldn’t imagine feeling more connected living off campus than living on campus. There’s no way. Being on campus definitely improves the connectedness as a whole.

Elizabeth answered:

> Just because I guess, this is [campus] housing. It’s all about doing things related to [campus] activities . . . We advertise for the Casino Night, or [student government], and [program board]. Whereas in the sorority, it’s like here is what this sorority is doing or what this fraternity is doing, and occasionally here is what [campus] is also doing.
Chelsea shared:

Residence halls are where you get to meet people that you probably wouldn’t have known. You’re literally right across from someone. My mom always said, “you never know who you’re gonna meet brushing your teeth in the bathroom.” As a way of connectedness, I guess, I can’t count the people I’ve met. In terms of numbers, I’ve probably met more people through my sorority, but I still have made some strong connections that I have maintained through my residence hall experience.

The women shared the friendships they made in their residence hall experience were important in their freshmen years, but it was their knowledge of and proximity to campus resources and on-campus events helped them to feel connected.

**Social Integration in Sisterhood**

While the women showed patterns of connectedness by living in a residence hall, they experienced a deeper sense of connection based on the relationships they made in their sorority.

Anna had considered not returning to the institution following her freshman year. However, it was her sorority membership which helped her to come back:

Both make me feel connected to [campus], but I would say being in a sorority makes me feel more connected. That was a big thing drawing me back to [school]. There are [sorority] chapters everywhere. It’s not like I was drawn to being in a sorority, I was drawn to this particular chapter. I could technically transfer and be [a member] anywhere. But I wanted to be [a member] at this specific chapter, at this specific school. I think the two of them are closely connected. I don’t think I would feel as home as I do here at a different school because every chapter is different.

Sarah said:
I feel like the sorority probably helped me feel more connected. It’s a larger number of girls; you’re going to connect with more. In a residence hall, maybe you’ll connect with three or four on your floor, but it’s not going to be as much as community that’s strong. Seeing that many faces on campus, you know, and you have at least have had a few deep conversations, you’re likely to lean on them than on someone you haven’t connected with. I guess my personal experience is that you connect with girls on a way deeper than in the residence halls. If you attend a program that your RA puts on, you’re likely to connect with a few girls, you’re likely to come together to do an activity but it’s not gonna happen every week because that initiative is not there. I think the initiative of how the sorority is set up and how it’s run helps because you have more things going on and you’re going to see each other more frequently.

Hillary answered:

I would say they both make me feel connected, but being in a sorority definitely makes me feel more connected. It’s just the relationships. It’s not even your sisters, but you get to know other sororities and fraternities when you’re paired with them. I mean you meet a lot of people in residence halls, but when you’re in a sorority it’s much more out reached.

You just reach a lot more people.

Heather noted there was a difference in connectedness between the two experiences:

I would say that living in a residence hall and being an RA makes me feel more connected to [the institution] as a university. I would say that being in a sorority, and being a leader in the sorority, makes me feel more connected to [campus] in a different sense – as in activity wise.

For the participants, the stronger pattern of social integration in relationships was found in their
sorority membership and the relationships they made because of it. They felt more connected to other people on campus through their sorority membership.

Summary

Throughout Chapter Four, several themes discovered through the interviews were discussed. The sources of social integration of sorority women who lived in residence halls were found in their experiences of community and enhanced relationship opportunities in both the residence halls and in their sororities. Social integration was found through community in the residence halls because of their proximity to on-campus resources. The deep, meaningful relationships formed through sorority membership also allowed the women to experience social integration to campus. Both experiences were important for the women, just in different ways. The findings will be discussed further in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Five presents a summary of the project, discussion, limitations and delimitations, implications and recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Summary

This study examined the experiences of social integration in sorority women who lived in residence halls. The theoretical construct used to frame the study was Tinto’s (1993) Theory of Institutional Departure which focused on the importance of social integration in a college student’s experience. A thorough review of the literature and in-depth interviews with seven participants provided information on the social integration experiences of the sample. Data collected through in-depth interviews were reviewed to find common themes in the experiences of sorority women who lived in residence halls. The data were analyzed to answer the question: how do sorority women who live in residence halls describe their experiences of social integration?

Discussion

The following section contains a discussion of the influence of community on connectedness and the importance of relationship for sorority women who live in residence halls.

Influence of Community on Connectedness

The community experiences of sorority women who lived in residence halls are influential in their feelings of connectedness and belonging to campus. The more positive experiences the women had in their residence halls or sororities, the more likely they were to feel connected to campus. The communities the women belong to are important in their transition to college, but also throughout their experiences in college. When women find a community – be it
through the residence halls or through their sororities – they find a home. It is the feeling of home and closeness that allows them to feel connected to the larger campus community.

The participants in the current study had two main communities they belonged to – their residence hall community and the Greek community. Their experiences in each community provided positive social integration. The women found a home in their residence halls and other women to connect with in their sororities. The more socially integrated the women became through their residence hall and sorority experiences, the more connected they felt to the campus community as a whole. Their closeness and proximity to campus resources influenced how they felt connected to campus. Additionally, their network of people they knew expanded the more they got involved in their communities. The more sorority women who live in residence halls were socially integrated, the better experiences they had with their communities.

Tinto (1993) suggested students who were socially integrated into their campus communities were more successful and more likely to persist to graduation. Their transition into college might be difficult, but if they are successful in their pursuits to get involved and find a community to suit their needs then they will have a successful experience. He noted both residence hall communities and Greek organizations give students the opportunities to integrate into their communities by providing them with a subgroup of people who shared similar identities and values (Tinto, 2012). Thomas (2000) found social integration helped college students feel better connected to campus. The current research supports the findings from Tinto (2012) and Thomas (2000). The women found their involvement in their residence hall and sorority communities make the campus more knowable because there are people with whom students can easily identify and communicate. Throughout the interviews, the subjects noted the various communities they were involved in and the impact of both their residence hall
experiences and sorority membership. Both living in a residence hall and being a member of a sorority were sources of social integration which allowed the women to feel in some capacity connected to campus.

The women interviewed noted the importance of their residence hall communities. While they experienced varied levels of involvement and closeness in their relationships, each participant spoke about the influence that living in a residence hall had on their college experience. Their experiences were not always positive, but each of them still connected to at least one person in their residence hall community. Christie and Dinham (1991) noted the contribution that living on-campus has towards a student’s successful social integration, and the subjects would agree. Most of the participants talked about how living on-campus provided them with the “typical” college experience and allowed them to feel connected to campus based on the proximity of the residence halls to everything on campus.

Students experience social integration in a number of ways, and once they are socially connected to campus then they are typically successful in their persistence to graduation. Arboleda et al. (2003) and Pike (2003) discussed the importance of students becoming integrated and connected to campus through the sub-communities of residence halls or Greek life. Cohler and Tabler (1993) suggested those students who lived in residence halls to have more holistic college experiences. For the participants, both their residence hall and sorority experiences affected their sense of social integration. Some of the women remain in contact with people who lived on their residence hall floor their freshman year. Creating communities, like in residence halls or through sorority membership, is important in making students to feel connected to the institution.

The sense of community women experience through their residence hall communities is
important in the transition to college. Women who live in active residence hall communities experience smoother transitions into college as compared to women who find it more difficult to connect with those who live near them. The residence halls often serve as a college student’s first point of contact to the campus community. Those who live on floors with open doors and interactive communities form relationships with other women who live near them. However, if the women live in communities where room doors are often closed and the hallways remain empty and quiet, the women find it difficult to find belonging in their residence halls. The level of activity and resident-to-resident interaction influences how women perceive their level of connectedness to their communities. Resident Assistants can also be influential in how a woman perceives her residence hall experience. For women who had RAs that were actively involved, their experiences with living in the residence halls were more positive. Women found RAs who build community through social and educational programming and who also demonstrate genuine care and concern for their residents to be influential in shaping their residence hall experience. Women who had RAs who did not seem to care about them or the floor community felt less connected to the residence halls. RAs serve as the primary facilitators of residence hall communities and can make or break the experiences of sorority women who live in the residence halls.

Beyond the residence halls communities, sorority women also belong to the Greek community and the community of sisters in their sororities. These communities are also influential in how sorority women connect to campus. While the residence halls provide a solid foundation of friendships in the beginning of their college experiences, sorority women felt more connected to their sisters and the Greek community as they became more involved in their sororities. As they spent more time in their sororities and with their sisters, they began to feel
closer to the community created because of their sorority memberships. When women join a sorority they are instantly put into a community with a large group of women. They also then become members of the larger Greek community. As sorority women become more involved in their sororities and in the Greek community, the campus community becomes more knowable. The women more easily recognize their friends and sisters across campus. Their sorority membership made a large campus feel smaller and provided them with a home away from home.

In addition to their sorority sisters, the women also interact closely with other men and women in the Greek community. Their sorority membership gives them access to an even larger community – the Greek community – that they can now say they are members of. When the women are connected to others on campus because of their Greek memberships, the campus seems smaller and they feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves. Membership in the Greek community provides sorority women the opportunity to interact with their own sisters as well as other men and women on campus who share similar interests and values. Being part of the Greek community provides women with additional social and leadership opportunities not available to others who do not belong to the community.

**Importance of Relationships**

Sorority women who live in residence halls experience a sense of community and belonging which is influential, but the relationships they formed within their communities are also important to their social integration experiences. The close relationships they make with the people who live near them in the residence halls and the deep connections they form with their sorority sisters were important in making the women feel like they are part of campus. The relationships they form during their time in the residence halls and in their sororities are meaningful to their collegiate experiences. The support and friendship they receive through their
relationships allow them to have success in college. The social integration they experience because of the relationships they form is influential in their college experiences.

For college women, the relationships they form because of their involvements are important in making them feel connected and integrated to campus (Deaux & LeFrance, 1998). Social relationships are important for women and their persistence to graduation. Therefore, the deeper and more meaningful connections they have, the better their collegiate experiences are (Jones, 2009). The relationships the women formed in their residence halls and sororities were important in their collegiate experiences. While living in a residence hall community and belonging to the Greek community are important in making the women feel connected, it is the relationships they form in each community that influence their social integration experience the most. The friendships they make with the women on their residence hall floors as well as with the other women in their sororities help them to feel part of the campus culture. Their relationships with others impacted their collegiate experiences.

Residence halls provide the opportunity to live in close proximity to people. Women interacted with their roommates and neighbors in the hallways, common areas, bathrooms, and dining facilities. Enochs and Roland (2006) found female friendships help women transition into college. The casual interactions with the people who live around them often turned into more meaningful friendships the more time the women spend together. Attending residence hall programs or just hanging out in each other’s rooms are ways the women got to know the people around them. Kenny and Rice (1995) found residence halls provided women with socialization opportunities to make their college experiences meaningful.

Through this study, the researcher found the residence halls serve as a sort of home away from home, and the people they lived with represented a pseudo-family during their time at
college. The women find themselves spending time with their roommates or other neighbors when they first arrive at college. The women find they can depend on their newfound friends for support through their transitions to college. Since they lived near their friends, it was easy to share their excitement or disappointment when they have good or bad news. Baxter-Magolda (1999) cited extra social pressure college women face when transitioning into college. However, residence halls provide built-in support systems through the friendships the women made with the people who live around them.

Researchers previously found women tended to benefit more than their male peers from close, social interaction. Different transition issues emerge for women when they first enter college and they benefit from the support of the people around them, especially from other women (Flaherty & Richman, 1989; Kinzie et al., 2007; Wohlgemuth & Betz, 1991). Many of the participants noted their transitions into college were different than they expected. They found solace and comfort when they interacted with the other people in their residence hall communities who were often experiencing some of the same issues as them. They were able to form a support system and a network of people they could rely on to help them in their transition to college. The women experienced social integration in their residence hall communities, which then led to further social integration experiences. The communities formed in their residence halls based on shared experiences served as the foundation of series of experiences that allow sorority women who live in residence halls to feel connected to the campus community.

Sororities provide the opportunity to form deeper and more meaningful relationships with their sorority sisters. Experiences such as recruitment, chapter meetings, social events, and ritual events provide the women the opportunity to get to know their sisters on a different level. The more time the women spent with their sisters, the closer they feel to them. Dugan and Komives
Martin et al. (2012) cited many benefits for women who are involved in all-female organizations such as sororities. The opportunities for development, relationships, and leadership are important to the experiences of sorority women. In conjunction, while the relationships the sorority women formed in the residence halls their freshmen years are important to their original integration onto campus, the relationships they have with the women in their sororities tend to last beyond the relationships formed in the residence halls. The women could imagine themselves still interacting with their sorority sisters in the future, but did not share similar sentiments when talking about the relationships they had with the women they lived next to in the residence halls.

Often, when the women lived on campus beyond their freshman year, they choose to live with their sorority sisters. Living together adds another dimension to the relationship the sorority sisters already shared. When the women live with their sorority sisters, they are able to enhance their already established friendships. They learn more about their sisters when they lived in the residence halls with them – including their strengths, weaknesses, and habits. Living in the residence halls provides them with the opportunity to learn about their sorority sisters in a different way and gives them the opportunities to solidify their existing relationships.

**Implications and Recommendations for Practice**

The findings and discussion of this study, as demonstrated in Chapters Four and Five, examine the experiences of sorority women who live in the residence halls. Understanding their experiences can affect the work of Student Affairs educators. Both Greek Life and residence hall
staffs could benefit from examining the experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls more closely.

The women studied referenced the few relationships they made with the other people who lived near them in the residence hall. While these relationships were important to them, they were not as important as the relationships formed with their sisters in their sorority. Sisterhood provides a deeper, more meaningful connection shared through the bond of ritual and tradition.

So, how do Student Affairs educators wrestle with this deep seeded need for connection and lack of involvement in the residence hall?

There are a few options based on the experiences shared by the women who were interviewed. Many of them referenced specific philanthropy or hall events as standing out as their most vivid memories in the residence hall or with their sorority. Professionals can think of ways to incorporate the sorority women who live in their residence halls to collaborate on events; the residence hall where a sorority woman lives can sponsor her team at her sorority philanthropy event, or her RA takes a group of residents from her floor to attend an event sponsored by her sorority. The women talked about the importance of community and connection in their experiences. It would be beneficial for Student Affairs educators to explore the ways to connect the residence hall and Greek communities.

Additionally, it is worth considering providing housing options for sorority women to live together on one floor in a residence or have an entire residence hall available for sorority women to live in. While these housing options exist at some institutions, it is not the norm. The current research found how the relationships between sorority sisters were enhanced when they lived together in the residence halls. Living together in a residence hall provides a different type
of opportunity for women to experience their sorority sisters. Residence halls provide women the opportunity to form deep relationships with the people who live around them. Additionally, a lot can be learned from living in close proximity to another person. For campuses with large numbers of sorority women who live in residence halls, it would be worth considering designating space for them to live together in one area. If this were to happen, it would also be beneficial to have an RA who worked to facilitate community building specifically in the hall. If the sorority women lived near their sisters, they could potentially be more interested in participating in residence hall activities and programs.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg, and Tarule (1997) argued:

Educators can help women develop their own authentic voices if they emphasize connection over separation, understanding and acceptance over assessment, and collaboration over debate; if they accord respect to and allow time for knowledge that emerges from firsthand experience; if instead of imposing their own expectations and arbitrary requirements, they encourage students to evolve their own patterns of work based on the problems they are pursuing. (p. 229)

Looking at the experiences of women and giving women opportunities to share their voices is important for their personal development. As Student Affairs educators, we have an obligation to allow the students we serve to have their voices heard. In particular, if we allow sorority women who live in residence halls to speak of their own experiences, it gives life to our own understanding and moves us closer to finding ways to engage women, to help in their social integration, and to get them connected and involved in their communities. Offering opportunities for women to share their experiences and voices is something important for educators to consider. Giving college women the opportunity to speak their truth will not only
help in their personal development, but it also brings greater understanding for Student Affairs professionals.

The researcher had an advantage in understanding Greek Life culture since she identified as a member of the population. However, there are many Student Affairs educators who do not identify as part of the population and do not understand the culture associated with Greek Life. Unfortunately many experiences with Greek affiliated students may be negative for those who do not work closely with the Greek population. The perception of Greek Life generated by the media may also create negative perceptions for Student Affairs educators. However, in order to better understand the Greek population, it is critical to understand the good that comes from their service, leadership, and friendship. While there may be students who choose to participate in negative behaviors, there are many benefits to Greek membership which are often overlooked. Additionally, it is important to understand the benefits to living on campus. Both Greek Life and residence halls provide experiences to women which greatly affect their collegiate experiences. It is important for Student Affairs professionals to recognize the importance of both in the experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

**Limitations**

There are a few limitations to this study. First, the sample was limited in its lack of representation in basic demographic areas. All subjects presented as ethnically White during the in-person interviews. While little demographic information was asked, experiences involving race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and religious affiliation could have also had an influence on the experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls. Second, this study was conducted on one college campus that gave just limited experiences of sorority women who
live in residence halls when compared to the experiences of women at other institutions. While there were four different sororities represented to give a variety of experiences within the campus, all of the women attended the same institution which could have influenced how the women experienced social integration. In the future it would be interesting to see this study conducted in other campus environments.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations represent the boundaries of this study based on the context of how the study is being carried out (Kitchen, 2004). There are a few delimitations to be considered: First, the sample of subjects was limited. A small sample in qualitative research allows for more in-depth and intentional analysis of the subjects’ experiences, but the findings cannot be generalized outside of the sample. The findings in this report are not meant to serve as a final evaluation of the experience of all sorority women who live in residence halls, but instead of the experiences of the women who were studied.

Second, the institution where the study was conducted does not currently have sorority housing for every recognized sorority at the institution. This may have also affected the results and data collected. In the future it would be pertinent to study the experience of sorority women who live in residence halls on campuses that also have sorority housing. It would provide a different perspective to the overall experience of sorority women.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Further research is recommended for this subpopulation of students because their experiences are important for Student Affairs professionals to understand. The researcher has identified a few areas that could be further studied in the future.

One way the current research could be advanced would be by conducting a series of
interviews and making the study longitudinal over women’s entire sorority and college experiences. In hearing the experiences of the women and about their relationships, leadership pursuits, and how their feelings towards their sororities changed over time, it could be beneficial to extend the research to see how their experiences continued to change. This could potentially include their reasons for moving off campus or why they chose to continue to live on campus.

Since three of the participants were Resident Assistants, further research could be conducted to determine if the student’s role as an RA has an additional effect on their social integration. It would be worth exploring how their leadership position within the residence hall affects their overall residence hall experience. Additionally, it would be interesting to see how the student’s identity as an RA intersected with her identity as a sorority woman. The same research could be conducted with fraternity men who are RAs.

Another area that could be researched is the influence of media on the perception of sorority life. In some of the interviews, women mentioned they were hesitant to join a sorority at first because of the negative perceptions they had because of the media. However, they noted once they were sorority members, they realized the messages from the media about Greek experiences were biased and often untrue. In future research it would be interesting to explore the idea of media influence and perception on the Greek experience.

The last area to consider for future research would be to look at the experience of fraternity men who live in residence halls. The current study highlights the experience of women, but in the future the research could be expanded to include the experiences of both sexes. It would be interesting to see if the experience of men differs from women, and if it does it would be relevant to explore why the difference exists.
REFERENCES


Morettes, E. T. (2010). *Fraternity member’s perceptions of the benefits and limitations of on-


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Interview Protocol

Thank you for meeting with me today. This study is being conducted to better understand the experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls. Because your personal experiences are important to this study, I hope you are as open and honest as possible in your answers. You are encouraged to provide personal stories and experiences throughout this interview as this information will be helpful in learning more about the social experiences of sorority women living in the residence halls.

Before beginning, I would like to inform you of your rights as a research participant. Your identity will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be assigned and your identity will not be revealed in the final study or any published materials. Additionally, any other names or location listed during the interview will be assigned pseudonyms. You may choose to refrain from answering any of the following questions and you reserve the right to withdraw from this conversation at any time and for any reason.

Additionally, your answers will be used to draw conclusions for this study and may be used in published material. To ensure I record your answers are recorded accurately, I would like to ask your permission to digitally record this interview. I will be the only one who has access to the recording, it will be destroyed after I transcribe this interview, and no one will know you participated in this interview. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

Have you had a chance to review the Informed Consent Form I provided to you earlier? Do you have any questions about the form?

I have prepared a list of questions to help guide our discussion, but please do not hesitate to share experiences, stories, or information you think will be relevant. We will talk about your experiences in college so far, specifically your experiences in a sorority and in a residence hall. Do you have any questions before we begin? Ok, let’s get started.

Part One – Let’s begin with a few general questions
2. Did you know a lot of people at Ball State before you came to Ball State?
3. Describe your transition to life at Ball State?
   a. What is easy or difficult?
      i. What made it that way?
   b. How did you make friends?
      i. Was that easy or difficult?

Part Two – Thank you, you are doing a nice job. Now let’s talk about what it is like to live in a residence hall.
4. Let’s talk about your overall impression of living in a residence hall. Is it generally positive or negative?
   a. Why?
5. Do you like living on campus?
   a. Why or why not?
6. Describe your involvement in the residence hall.
   a. What types of activities are you involved in?
   b. How often do you attend hall events or events put on by your RA?
   c. Why do you participate in residence hall activities?
   d. Why do you not participate in residence hall activities?
7. Describe a favorite memory of living in a residence hall.
8. Describe your relationship with the hall staff, so your RA or Hall Director.
9. Describe the relationships you have made with the people living near you.

**Part Three** - *Now let’s talk about what it is like to be a member of a sorority.*
10. Let’s talk about your overall impression of being a member of a sorority. Is it generally positive or negative?
    a. Why?
11. Why did you choose to join a sorority?
12. Do you like being a part of a sorority?
    a. Why or why not?
13. Describe a favorite memory of being in a sorority.
14. Describe your level of involvement in your sorority.
15. Describe the relationships you have made by being in a sorority.

**Part Four** - *Now let’s reflect some on how these two experiences, living in a residence hall and being a member of a sorority, compare with each other. I am specifically interested in hearing your observations about how these two experiences helped you connect to Ball State University.*
16. Has living on campus has influenced your connectedness to Ball State?
    a. How or how not?
17. Has being a member of a sorority has influenced your connectedness to Ball State?
    a. How or how not?
18. Please compare or contrast these two experiences: how are they similar or different?
19. Does one of these two experiences, either living in a residence hall or belonging to a sorority, make you feel more connected to Ball State?
    a. Why or why not?
20. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about this topic?
21. Is there anyone else you suggest I contact to participate in this study? Would you be willing to give them my contact information?

*Thank you so much for taking time to talk with me today. This conversation will be helpful in better understanding the experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls.*
APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
The Institutional Review Board reviewed your protocol on October 7, 2013 and has determined the procedures you have proposed are appropriate for exemption under the federal regulations. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol, and you are cleared to proceed with the procedures outlined in your protocol. As an exempt study, there is no requirement for continuing review. Your protocol will remain on file with the IRB as a matter of record.

Exempt Categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal education practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under category 2, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) Federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Research involving the collection of study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, If these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 5:</td>
<td>Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of Department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate or otherwise examine: (I) public benefit or service programs; (II) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (III) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under these programs.</td>
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<td>Category 6:</td>
<td>Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (I) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (II) if a food is consumed which contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Editorial Notes:**

1. **Modification Approved**

While your project does not require continuing review, it is the responsibility of the P.I. (and, if applicable, faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. **Any procedural modifications must be evaluated by the IRB before being implemented, as some modifications may change the review status of this project.** Please contact (ORI Staff) if you are unsure whether your proposed modification requires review or have any questions. Proposed modifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (http://www.bsu.edu/irb) for review. Please reference the above IRB protocol number in any communication to the IRB regarding this project.

**Reminder:** Even though your study is exempt from the relevant federal regulations of the Common Rule (45 CFR 46, subpart A), you and your research team are not exempt from ethical research practices and should therefore employ all protections for your participants and their data which are appropriate to your project.

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Bryan Byers, PhD/Chair  
Institutional Review Board

Christopher Mangelli, JD, MS, MEd, CIP/Director  
Office of Research Integrity
APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT EMAIL
Hello –

My name is Molly Salisbury and I received your name as your chapter’s President from the Office of Student Life. I am a graduate student in the Student Affairs in Higher Education program and I am conducting research for my graduate school thesis and I’m looking to interview sorority women who live in the residence halls. If you could please forward the following message onto your sisters, I would greatly appreciate the help. Additionally, if you could CC or BCC me on the email you send to them so I know when you send it out, that would be helpful!

Thank you, and let me know if you have any questions:

______________________________

I hope your year is off to a good start! My name is Molly Salisbury and I am a graduate student in the Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education program. I am conducting research interviews for one of my graduate classes, EDST 660 – Ethnography in Education. I was wondering if I could have your help!

My project is aimed at exploring the experience of sorority women who live in residence halls to gain a better understanding of their social integration during their college career. I will be conducting interviews to gather data for my project.

Are you a sorority woman who live in the residence halls? I’m curious if you would be willing to participate in my research. You would be asked to participate in one interview which will last approximately 30 to 75 minutes. The interview would take place at a time, date, and location that is convenient for you.

If you are willing to participate, I would be happy to send you more information about participating in this study. Please email me back at your earliest convenience.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration,

Molly

**Molly Salisbury**  
Kinghorn Hall Assistant Residence Hall Director  
Ball State University  
Muncie, IN 47306  
mlsalisbury@bsu.edu  
765-285-3147
APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT
Sources of Social Integration for Sorority Women who live in Residence Halls
Principle Investigator: Molly Salisbury

Purpose and Rationale:

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of sorority women who live in residence halls and see if one of these experiences provides a stronger sense of social integration. The exploration of this topic will help further the understanding of this population of students who live in residence halls and help professionals to better understand their experiences. This study is a project for a graduate course offered by the Educational Studies Department. It is EDST 660 and entitled Ethnography in Education. It is taught at Ball State University and occurs from August 19, 2013 to December 13, 2013.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

To be an eligible participant, one must be over the age of 18 years old, female, and live in on-campus housing.

Participation Procedures and Duration:

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in one, sixty minute interview. The interview will be conducted a time, date, and location most convenient for the participant and investigator.

Digital Recording:

For the purposes of accuracy, the interview will be digital audio recorded. The audio recordings will be transcribed and used in the data analysis process. Once the data has been transcribed, you will be assigned a pseudonym so that no identifiable personal information will be used in the narrative. Do I have your permission to record the interview?

Data Confidentiality:

This data will be kept confidential. Only the principal investigator, Molly Salisbury, and the faculty advisor, Dr. Thalia Mulvihill, will have access to the interview recordings and transcriptions.

Storage of Data:

All electronic data will be stored on the principal investigators password protected flash drive. All paper documents associated with this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the principal investigator’s office. All recordings will be destroyed once transcription is complete. The data will be kept indefinitely for continued use and analysis.

Risks or Discomfort:
There are no anticipated risks or discomforts from participating in this study.

If you develop uncomfortable feelings during your participation in this research project please contact the Ball State University Counseling Center, located in Lucina Hall room 320, 765-285-1763.

**Benefits:**

There are no anticipated benefits from participating in this study.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study. You can contact the principal investigator, Molly Salisbury, at mlsalisbury@bsu.edu or 765-285-3147. You can contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Thalia Mulvihill at tmulvihi@bsu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.

**Consent:**

I, ___________________, agree to participate in this research project entitled, “Sources of Social Integration for Sorority Women who live in Residence Halls.” I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

__________________________________________  ______________________
Participant’s Signature                          Date

Principal Investigator:                         Faculty Supervisor:
Molly Salisbury, Graduate Student             Dr. Thalia Mulvihill
Educational Studies                           Educational Studies
Ball State University                         Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306                              Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone: (765) 285-3147                     Telephone: (765) 285-5463
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