SISTERHOOD RELATIONSHIPS AND SELF-AUTHORSHIP

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Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
In partial fulfillment of
The requirements for
The Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
May 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Date of Degree: May, 2017

Title of Study: SISTERHOOD RELATIONSHIPS AND SELF-AUTHORSHIP

Major Field: Education

Abstract:

Being a member of Greek organizations has numerous developmental outcomes due to the density of the peer-interaction environment and cultural thickness. While groupthink has been observed and documented as detrimental to an individual's development of decision-making capacity, little attention has been given to informal mentoring in the social sorority dyadic of the big/little relationship. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the dyadic big/little relationship's impact on meaning-making of self among sorority members. This study utilizes self-authorship as a theoretical framework. A narrative case study shapes the methodological design of this research that includes document analysis, observations, and face-to-face interviews of eight women, in four big/little pairs. Each pair presents a single case of their relationship and its role in self-authorship development. The cross-case comparative analysis illuminates key phases in self-authorship: external formulas, crossroads, and self-authorship. Implications from this study include the need for members to interact with diverse ideas and people to provide opportunities for development of the internal voice, and the need for the women to facilitate becoming impactful learning partners.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the last one hundred and fifty years, Greek social sororities have been a part of the higher education landscape. Currently, the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) has twenty-six member organizations representing more than four million women at 655 college and university campuses (Meet, 2016). Higher education has benefited from having these groups. Alumni from Greek social sororities and fraternities tend to donate money back to the university through scholarship funds and their chapters (Okunade, Wunnava, & Walsh, 1994). The National Panhellenic Conference reported that each year members donate more than $5 million to worthy causes and provide $2.8 million in scholarships to sorority women (Meet, 2016). Greek students are more likely to graduate on time and more likely to attend graduate school (Hu & Wolniak, 2010). Members of Greek organizations are typically more engaged in leadership activities on campus increasing student engagement (Pike & Askew, 1990). The high level of student and alumni engagement provides Greek members with access to administrators and board members on college and university campuses.

Despite these documented positive outcomes, Greek social organizations have experienced a lot of criticism from both higher education and the public at large. Various negative incidents related to student experiences in Greek life have been quickly making

media headlines, thus generating public concern on a national scale. In 2010, Victoria

T'yna-Ann Carter died in a car wreck after allegedly being hazed by Delta Sigma Theta

Sorority at Eastern Carolina University (Parks, 2016). She was tired from an evening of

activities with sorority members and fell asleep at the wheel of her car. Ravital Segal

(2012) discussed her hazing experience with Kappa Kappa Gamma at Dartmouth on The

Huffington Post. She ended up in the hospital with broken teeth, cuts, and alcohol poisoning

after being forced to drink excessive amounts of alcohol. In 2013, the fraternity Pi Kappa

Alpha at Florida International University posted "creep shots" on Facebook of naked

sorority sisters and was suspended (Robins, 2015). When some of the sorority sisters

suggested that members stop associating with fraternity members, some of the women

defended the actions of the men.

Moreover, educational research has found that Greek members consume more

alcohol than non-Greeks (Oswalt, Shutt, & Cooper, 2006; DeSimone, 2009). The peer group

culture of Greeks promotes traditional gender roles (Kalof & Cargill, 1991; Sanday, 1996).

Members learn and legitimize these behaviors. Participants in Greek organizations are

typically more conservative and reinforce attitudes and actions of male-dominant and

female-submissive relationships (Sanday, 1996). Explanations of such gender reinforcing

dynamics are inconclusive as they usually stem from comparisons of experiences and

outcomes between male and female Greek members or between Greek and independent

female students.

The purpose of Greek organizations within higher education has been widely argued

and warrants more research in order to understand the nuances of student experiences in

Greek life, specifically, sorority members and their personal experiences. It is the goal of

this paper to provide deeper insight into this world by looking at the dyadic relationships of big/little sisters within sororities.

Problem Statement

Using Clark, Guba, & Smith (1977), I present the following problem statement using a principal proposition, interacting proposition, and a speculative proposition. The social sorority is a time-honored institution of American colleges and universities. Research has shown that being a member of Greek organizations has many positive developmental outcomes. These include an increased psychological sense of community (Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996) and increased social involvement of members (Pike & Askew, 1990). Astin (1993) reported that student leadership skill formation was strongly associated with peer interactions. Students belonging to Greek organizations compared to independent students showed greater gains in personal development skills (Hayek, Carini, O'Day, & Kuh, 2002).

However, sorority members can also experience the negative side of Greek culture. A clear link exists between fraternity and sorority membership and alcohol abuse (Park, Sher, Wood, & Krull, 2009; Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 2009). Moreover, an additional link has been documented between alcohol abuse and increased sexual misconduct (Kalof., 1993; Martin, 2016; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007; Park, Sher, Wood, & Krull, 2009; Sanday, 1996). Participants in Greek organizations are more conservative and adhere to traditional gender roles (Kalof & Cargill, 1991; Sanday, 1996). Greek organizations promoted and reinforced attitudes and actions of male-dominant and female-submissive relationships (Sanday, 1996). Barber (2011) asserted that these problems are deeply rooted in organizational culture of Greek Life organizations, whereas Janis (2004) contended that

peer interactions and group influence (i.e. groupthink) are particularly strong among Greek members.

Peer relationships shape individual development along with sorority culture. While groupthink has been observed and documented as detrimental to individual development of decision-making capacity (Janis, 2004), little attention has been given to informal mentoring of the social sorority dyadic of the big/little relationship. Of particular interest is its possible impact on female identity development towards self-authorship. Baxter Magolda (2014) described self-authorship as a psychosocial developmental process of moving from authority dependence to a stable internal independent foundation of self. During this developmental process what do sorority women learn from each other about gender roles, opposite-sex relationships, and career aspirations? What impact do these dyadic big/little relationships have on the larger organizational culture? A more complete understanding of this process will have important implications in the field of student affairs by helping develop a social sorority system that empowers individual identity-development towards one's highest potential.

Purpose

This dissertation aims to gain an understanding of the role of a dyadic big/little relationship of sorority sisters in the development of self. Following a qualitative design, the primary focus of this research is to find out how the women experience and make sense of this relationship and discover what meaning it has for their development. To that end, I utilize self-authorship theoretical framework (Magolda, 2014) and interactional dynamic of a meaning-making process as a conceptual frame to guide the study. Chapters two and three will further describe the development and design of the study.

Research Questions

Three research questions guide this study to gain an understanding of the Greek sorority dyadic big/little relationship's impact on meaning-making of self among sorority members:

1.   How is the big/little relationship manifested in the culture of a sorority?

2.   What meanings do sorority women develop about the relationship between big sisters and little sisters?

3.   How do the big/little sister interactions impact their self-authorship?

Professional Significance

The primary significance of this study is to provide new information and address the current literature gap about Greek social sororities' big/little programs. Shedding more light on the big/little sister dyadic contributes to two bodies of literature. First, it aids researchers and practitioners in understanding Greek culture. Next, it provides insight into the influence of peer relationships on a path toward the development of self-authorship. Findings of this study also add to a better understanding of college student peer relationships, which are likely to help student affairs practitioners in the creation of future sorority programs.

Overview of Methodology

Following is an overview of the information in chapter three, which presents a detailed description of the methodology. This study followed the traditions of a qualitative research because its purpose was to gain an understanding of the phenomenon without interfering or changing it. A narrative case study shaped the methodological design of this study. The research took place on a single college campus and involves eight women--four

big/little pairs--from two sorority chapters. Each pair presented a single case of their relationship and its impact on self-authorship. Four pairs provided an opportunity for cross-case comparative analysis (Stake, 1994). The data pool consists of face-to-face interviews, researcher's field notes, and document analysis.

During the interviews, each of the participants discussed their experiences and interpretations of their experiences of the big/little relationship. I transcribed the interviews and reviewed them line by line, looking for significant quotes and narrative linkages. To represent the data highlights, I followed the poetic data representation technique and used direct quotes from the transcripts to create a single poem for each dyad (Riessman, 1993). I further treated these data highlights/poems as the key narrative linkages helping each pair's narrative to emerge; I additionally organized such narratives into topics. After that stage of data representation and analysis was complete, I began re-reading all four poems and narratives for the comparative analysis through the theoretical lenses, which helped me find converging themes among all four pairs. This last stage of data analysis refers to "relying on theoretical propositions" (Yin, 2003, p. 111).

Researcher Positionality

At the beginning of my doctoral coursework, I knew without a doubt that the focus of my dissertation would be on the student development experience. After graduating with a master's degree, I spent thirteen years working as a student affairs professional at a community college, a large public research institution, and a regional college. While at the regional institution, I was the director of the department that oversaw Greek social organizations. In my time advising Greek students, I spent many hours discussing recruitment, risk management, and leadership development. This experience caused me to

take a closer look at the influence of peers on student psychosocial development and to reflect on my time as a sorority member.

My journey into the world of Greek life began when I was eighteen, during the transition between high school and college. A friend of my family offered to provide me with a "pref letter" to her sorority. Although at the time I had no idea what a "pref letter" was, she told me that I should join a sorority because it is the only way to be involved as a student on a large campus. Over the summer, I went to the library to read more about Greek life. My parents were not Greek and could not help me understand this world. After calling the campus, I received a large packet of information about becoming Greek. The paperwork included a list of definitions, a schedule of events, and a pamphlet on what to wear each day during the "rush" process. I completed the forms, which asked me to include my GPA, a list of my high school activities, and two photos of myself. I was invited to attend a pre-rush party where women discussed the process and provided a fashion show of what to wear during the week.

During the first day of "rush" I found that I was completely unprepared. The first day was a blur of twelve sorority parties. The women asked me many questions about my family, my aspirations, and myself. On the second day I was released, or cut, by all of the chapters except three. I remember feeling brokenhearted and wondering what was wrong with me. As an adult, I now know that for most chapters my GPA was too low and that I was not involved in enough activities in high school. Even with these problems I completed rush, pledged, and was initiated into a chapter.

My first year as a sorority woman went by smoothly. Every Monday night I would attend formal dinner and the chapter meeting at the sorority house. I began to meet the

older members and grew very close to the members of my pledge class. I never experienced any hazing and enjoyed the leadership development provided by the members and alumni. The only bad experiences involved working or socializing with fraternities. Sororities and fraternities paired up for all the competitions during homecoming week. Before the week began, the fraternity we were paired with threw a party for us at their house. A keg sat in the middle of the living room and the red solo cups held by members contained alcohol. As a high school student, I never drank alcohol and I rarely did as an undergraduate. During these parties, I would walk around with the same drink all night. Sometimes things would get crazy with girls getting drunk, singing, and dancing, and sometimes taking their clothing off. There was an unofficial fraternity party almost every weekend during my first semester. I attended a few of these, but I eventually stopped going because I never felt comfortable or had a good time as the sober sister.

During my sophomore year, I chose to continue to live in the residence halls instead of moving into the sorority house like most of my pledge sisters. I had taken leadership positions within the halls and developed close friendships with the women I lived with. My sorority was part of my life, but not something that influenced me every day. My sorority big sister was a senior when I pledged. She was a great person and was often my connection to the chapter. After she was gone, I felt a little lost even though I added to our family tree by taking a little sister of my own. My relationship with my little was strong. We spoke to each other several times a week and we often attended Greek events together. The women in my circle of sorority friends were good students, student leaders, and not partiers. Our friendship was a deep sisterhood relationship.

By the beginning of my junior year, things began to change. I was required to move into the chapter house and leave the residence halls along with my leadership positions within them. Within a few months, several of my sorority sisters turned in their pins. Their reasoning varied from financial burdens to a lack of personal growth within the chapter. The toughest of these resignations for me was the loss of my little sister. When she left, I felt that my connection to the chapter would never be the same. By the end of the fall semester I decided to turn in my pin as well. I packed my things and moved out before the sun came up one morning. I did not want to be seen leaving the chapter house. I moved back into the residence halls and began my leadership journey, which would lead me to become president of the residence hall association.

I regret the fact that I resigned my membership. At the time, I felt like I had to decide between being a good sorority member and becoming the leader I knew I could be. If my peers had stayed in the sorority, I would have remained. Without them, it was difficult.

I was never the typical sorority girl. Many of my sisters went into traditionally female careers like teaching, accounting, and nursing. My degree was in sociology and I interned for two summers with the department of corrections. My sisters had cute clothes and wore makeup. I wore blue jeans, Dr. Martens, and no makeup. Members of my pledge class got married and had children in their early twenties. I postponed having a child until I finished my doctoral course work when I was thirty-five years old. When my husband and I married, I did not change my last name to his. I believed that society was oppressive in its gender roles and norms.

Definitions of Key Terms

This study uses several terms that are commonplace as well as terms only used within the Greek world. Below are my definitions of these terms, which will aid the reader in understanding the culture and context of this phenomenon.

Active: An initiated member of a fraternity or sorority.

Alumni: Initiated sorority or fraternity members who are no longer in college.

Bid: A formal invitation to join a fraternity or sorority.

Big Sister/ Mentor: A person who provides knowledge from their personal experience to a protégé/little sister.

Chapter: A local group affiliated with a national organization.

Formal Recruitment: A sorority membership selection period typically before fall classes begin. Formal Recruitment involves a series of parties in which women meet each other, potential new members make decisions about their desire to belong to the chapter, and the chapter makes decisions about whom they want as members.

Informal or Continuous Open Recruitment: A membership selection process conducted at various times during the year by sororities that have openings after formal recruitment. This process is less structured than formal recruitment and might involve activities such as attending a chapter dinner, an intramural event or a community service project.

Legacy: A woman who has a family member who is an active member or an alumna of a sorority. Typically, children, grandchildren, and siblings are considered legacies. However, some sororities have other legacy policies.

Little Sister/ Protégé: A person who learns from a mentor/big sister.

New Member/Pledge: A woman who has accepted an invitation to join a Greek organization and who has not been initiated into the organization.

National Panhellenic Conference (NPC): The national governing body of all the National Panhellenic Conference sororities. There are 26national organizations who follow their policies and benefit from their training and support.

Sister: A term used by initiated members of a sorority in reference to one another.

Summary

This introductory chapter provides the foundation of the study. Included is a brief overview of the background, problem statement, professional significance of the study, methodology, statement of student positionality, and key terms. The next chapter provides an in-depth review of the literature about the research subject. This information includes a historical overview of Greek sororities and current cultural trends in Greek life. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the impact of sorority life on the academic and career process. Chapter two serves to support the relevance of the study.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Social sororities are time-honored institutions of American colleges and universities. Their primary mission is to provide a support system for their members through friendship and social networking. Previous research has focused on Greek culture, which is responsible for increased incidents of hazing, alcohol abuse, sexual misconduct, and eating disorders, as well as increased retention rates and student involvement. The social sorority dyadic of the big/little relationship has received little attention. Of particular interest is the socialization process and its possible impact on female psychosocial identity development. Astin (1993) identifies peers as being the most important source of growth and development for students during their undergraduate years. A more complete understanding of a peer interactional dynamic may have important implications for the field of student affairs. First, higher education and student affairs professionals could learn more about peer relationships in a constraining cultural setting and their impact on student development. Second, such knowledge could enable these professionals to organize the development and informed support of the social sorority system.

To provide insight into the need for researching this phenomenon, the literature review focuses on key topic areas. First, considering the social sororities long history and cultural richness, I surveyed literature that describes the history of the organizations, their values, and their rituals. Two primary questions from the literature review concern the culture and its impact on members. Next, I shifted my focus from contextual/organizational to individual in order to understand the impact of Greek membership on its members as students. I particularly reviewed research studies that addressed student cognitive development, social engagement, career aspirations, and body image.

Search Process

The literature review occurred in two distinct phases. The first search process involved identifying key words to use in the internet-based search engine. The initial list of words included Greek, sorority, and big sister. I used the advanced search process to limit information to scholarly works and specific data bases such as ERIC and PsychInfo. The amount of information available was staggering, so the search was further narrowed to focus on Greek culture that included sorority recruitment, membership, relationships, values, and rituals. The articles were then skimmed to further determine their relevance.

The second search involved seeking research studies that looked at the impact of Greek membership on students. I used the same Internet search engine in the same way. However, I also looked into databases related to sociology and psychology because of their theoretical relevance to the research about student outcomes. Key words were identity, cognitive development, campus engagement, and professional aspirations. Most of the references found within educational databases tended to focus on large quantitative studies that did not seem to apply specifically to the topic of a sorority woman's

psychosocial identity development. To address the power of Greek life organizations on the psychosocial development of its members, I selected and reviewed those studies that addressed the impact of Greek membership on students. Some of the studies differentiated between the effects of Greek life on male members and on female members, while other studies compared its effects between Greek and independent students (in some cases, findings for Greek members were not further disaggregated by gender).

Impact of Culture on Sorority Members

Higher education researchers have spent substantial time gaining an understanding of culture on members. The next few pages lead the reader through the history of Greek life and sororities that continues to shape the culture today. The literature clearly identifies its impact on sorority women's body images, idea of beauty, and sex roles. This traditional culture at times clashes with modern feminine ideas as sororities change and adapt.

History of Social Sororities. The very first Greek social sorority was the Adelphean Society, which later became Alpha Delta Pi. It began at Wesleyan College in Georgia in 1851 as a society for mutual improvement (Farnham, 1994; Newer, 1999). The first group usually met on Fridays as a literary society and they fined members thirty cents if they attended without presenting an essay (Farnham, 1994). A small group of women between the ages of thirteen and eighteen founded it as a support network to help ease pains of homesickness and isolation. The women would use the ideas of the Freemasons, one of the world's largest and oldest secret societies, and Greek social fraternities as a foundation for their organization (Kimbrough, 2003). As a secret society, the women privately selected and voted upon new members of the group (Farnham, 1994). The group began to wear ribbons with their motto "We live for each other." Mary Evans, one of the charter members,

stated "the badge was an object of envy and ridicule" (Farnham, 1994). This began the tradition of sorority members wearing badges, having mottos, secret handshakes, and passwords. It created a division and hierarchy at the female college between those who could join a sorority because of their academic or family success and those who could not.

In the early years, Greek women usually lived together, shared meals, and provided academic and social support for each other. Sororities became popular with the support of parents and administrators. The chapters were a safer alternative to off-campus boarding houses. Through living together, it was easier to protect their feminine virtues or virginity from unbecoming gentlemen (Horowitz, 1988). The women were encouraged to focused on their education and not spend time with men.

As more women began to enter public universities instead of finishing schools, the focus of their post-secondary education changed. Students were learning academic subjects like Latin, grammar, and calculus (Solomon, 1986). Sororities completed their education by teaching them the social graces necessary for ladies. Most of the women who attended college prior to the 1960s came from the upper classes due to the expense of receiving an education (Nuwer, 1999). Parents and most of the female students assumed that after receiving a degree these graduates would accept their role of caring for a home and family. Sororities served a vital role in perpetuating and maintaining this traditional gender stereotype (Gorgosz, 2015; Horowitz, 1988; Solomon, 1986).

As higher education became available to the masses, the numbers of women enrolling in college increased along with the number of Greek organizations. The National Panhellenic Conference was formed by the 1920s, and currently consists of 26 national Greek sororities. Each of those eventually had individual chapters on various campuses.

The Greek system grew across America until the 1960s when the larger culture began to reject this tradition as elitist.

During the 1980's and 1990's universities began a critical examination of Greek culture. Incidents of alcohol abuse, hazing, and sexual misconduct caused several chapters to be closed and some campuses to ban Greek social sororities and fraternities (Kimbrough, 2003). Both the National Panhellenic Council and individual campuses started focusing on leadership training and policy development to limit negative behaviors. These efforts improved the life of Greek students and college administrators. It also helped combat some of the negative images portrayed by the media.

Basic Rituals of Sororities. College social fraternities and sororities are both secret societies. Sarah Baxter revealed, "sororities combine the secret fellowship of the Freemasons with the ladder-climbing advantages of the old school tie" (Features, 2004, p. 3). Greek organizations modeled themselves after the Masonic tradition. Members are recruited, pledged, and initiated into the society in both organizations. During "rush" or "recruitment," sororities look for new members. It can last a week or a semester depending on the university. Current members of the organization look for prospective members who are seen as worthy for membership (Arnold, 2004). The individual chapter of the sorority and the women involved determine what they are looking for in new members. Positive traits of future members could include attractiveness, personality, leadership skills, and academic standing (Boyd, 1999). Potential new members (PNMs) form recruitment groups. A recruitment counselor provides guidance to her PNMs. She gives up their sorority affiliation during recruitment (Boyd, 1999). The PNMs will attend "parties" each day of the

week. The recruitment counselor carries a large backpack or tote with the personal items the PNMs will need between parties.

Elizabeth Boyd (1999) provided a vivid description of one of the sorority parties in her article:

Outside the Theta house, the rushes learn the pattern of the evening. Waiting in the stifling heat, they hear war whoops and pounding coming from inside the front door. At the strike of five, the Thetas, two hundred strong, throw back the door and appear in formation, crowding the door from floor to sill with Theta faces radiating Theta love and singing a Theta song. They burst from the door, each calling a particular rushee's name: Heather! Ashley! Brooke! The Thetas are dressed in different shades of the same-scooped necked shift. (p. 56)

She described the party lasting exactly twenty minutes. Her article focused on the cultural richness of the recruitment rituals such as, in her case, five-day recruitment at Ole Miss.

Skits are used in both fraternity and sorority recruitment. Sororities try to impress and woo the PNMs into joining their chapter. On preference night, which is the last evening of formal recruitment, the Chi O's kneel in front of the PNMs and tie a ribbon on their ring finger while singing, "Tie a little ring around your finger, Chi O, Chi O, any little thing to make you linger" (Boyd, 1999, p. 66). Some chapters have members write letters, others show them an item they will receive if they pledge, and some chapters have PNMs throw something into a wishing well while having a member say they are wishing for them to join their chapter. Boyd (1999) describes it as heterosexual romance.

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Some schools in the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) conduct "No Frills" recruitment. This style of recruitment is simpler. The goal is getting to know potential new members and focusing less on sorority performance, decorations, and matching outfits ("Sorority Vocabulary", n.d.). These recruitment practices focus on inclusion rather than exclusivity. They can have a shorter recruitment schedule, and PNMs meet current members by spending time with them during more casual activities. Large southern schools have been slow to move to this style of recruitment (Boyd, 1999).

At the end of recruitment each sorority usually offers bids to the women they would like to join. When a potential new member receives a bid, she can choose to sign it and pledge the sorority or walk away. Signing formally begins her life as a new member or pledge. Chapters will usually host a bid day activity like a sleepover or picnic to help the new members get to know each other and the rest of the chapter ("Sorority Vocabulary", n.d.).

By choosing to become a new member, a woman begins her entry into a new college social setting. A formal ceremony welcomes the new pledge and she is pinned with a pledge pin (Kimbrough, 2003). The pledge learns about the history of the sorority, its symbols, and her responsibilities to the organization during this time. Current members also begin to educate and enforce the social standards of the group. New members gain a big sister who will help them through this process. New membership "seeks to acquaint and orient the prospective new member as to the rules, cultures, and beliefs of the group" (Cokley & Wright, 1995, p. 4). During this time, members might test a new member's commitment to the organization. Hazing occurs when the group pressures a new member into doing something that she does not want to do. The new membership period is a time for the

sorority to make sure the new member is someone they want as part of their group and for the new member to decide if she wants to be there. Initiation can occur when both parties accepteach other.

Most sororities have elaborate initiation ceremonies where pledges exchange their new member's pin for a full member's pin (Kimbrough, 2003). As a member, the woman has full voting rights to help make decisions within the group. The initiated member helps create the culture of the sorority through her participation and opinions in selecting new members. When a member graduates, she becomes an alumna member of the sorority and provides support to the organization through working with members still in the house and by making financial contributions. Alumnae interact formally through events hosted by the sorority and informally through networks supported by old friends. Sororities stress the importance of making a lifelong commitment to the organization.

Beauty and Body Image. Greek women have their own unique experience that differs from Greek men. Greek women often struggle with objectification and body image issues more than other students in co-educational settings. Researchers have studied the recruitment or rush process and found many areas of concern. Potential new members attend parties in which they meet members. Sometimes their physical beauty as well as personalities are judged. Boyd (1999) captured this phenomenon well:

> Here the rule is flawless skin; tasteful manicures; healthy glossy hair that's just been trimmed, highlighted, deep-conditioned. All vision has been corrected. All hair is at least shoulder length. The clothing is "studied casual" – shorts, sundresses, new sandals. A few false eye lashes. Full makeup, professionally done. (p. 54)

Women participating in recruitment as potential new members have social value based on beauty, family status, and manners. A Phi Mu recalled, "You kind of knew even then which sororities knew which girls. I kind of caught on that day. They don't know who the heck I am and they know that girl in my rush group" (Boyd, 1999, p. 62).

Social pressure to conform to the idea of feminine beauty aids in the development of eating disorders in women. According to Crandall (1988), the amount of binge eating and purging done by a sorority member's friends can predict the likelihood of her unhealthy eating habits. He described the process as social contagion, which means that sorority members' eating habits became more like their friends over time with exposure to each other. This helped to prove the role of social influence and modeling on eating behavior. The group will define norms for these behaviors if dieting and losing weight are important to members of the group. The group punishes or rejects members who deviate from these norms. Basow, Fornan, and Bookwala (2007) compared sorority members to non-sorority women on three subscales of the Eating Disorder Inventory, Objectified Body Consciousness Scale, and a measure of peer social pressure. The results showed that sorority members had more risk factors for the development of eating disorders compared to non-sorority women. They also discovered that women with high levels of these risk factors were more likely to be attracted to sororities. The idea of femininity held in sorority life appeals to other women seeking a similar ideal of feminine body types.

The Female Gender Role. Some historians believe that college women fall into two categories. First are the women who participate in higher education and who conform to the traditional female gender role. These women improve themselves, but adhere to the role of the republican mother. Women who chose to become republican mothers attended

college to improve themselves to raise better children to support the democratic idea (Peril, 2006). The second type of college woman denies traditional feminine standards. Horowitz (1988) describes them as "outsiders" who are ostracized from participating in campus life. Chambers Encyclopedia 1872 Edition describes these outsider women as blue stockings, "a name given to learned and literary ladies, who display their acquirements in vain and pedantic manner, to the neglect of womanly duties and virtues" (Peril, 2006, p. 3). Some suggest that these college women became the birthplace of the feminist movement (Solomon, 1986; Horowitz, 1988).

Boyd (1999) described the dichotomy of social roles which sorority women at Ole Miss are expected to play. A woman must be the southern belle who is exciting in conversation and determined to be successful while also being a *southern lady* who will be demure, chaste, and wise. Recruitment is a performance that focuses on all aspects of feminine competency. Women are assessed on beauty, academics, and leadership success. These women must have traditional feminine skills with paraprofessional skills that will make them successful employees in the future.

Gender norms are the socially constructed ideas about what it means to be feminine and masculine. Traditionally a person's sex or reproductive organs determined their gender role. Socio-biologists have studied human evolutionary history and found that from the beginning of humanity men and women have had separate spheres of influence (Kramer, 1991). Men were the hunters who left the home to find food. Women raised the children and stayed close to the home. These separate spheres of influence are traditional gender roles. A role is a "set of responsibilities, privileges, and obligations that are connected to social position or status" (Kramer, 1991, p. 73). Traditionally ones sex carries

the social requirements of their gender. Until the recent feminist movement of the 1960s, a woman was supposed to work in the home, raise a family, and not question her husband or any other males. Female personality traits included vulnerability, innocence, a nurturing spirit, and pleasant disposition. Male personality traits included intelligence, strength, and leadership. Socialization with others within a person's culture teaches gender roles. As a person interacts with others, they become aware of gender norms that are the social rules of a person's sex. "We communicate norms through the language we use, the behavior we model, and the criticism we aim at those who do not follow the appropriate norms" (Earley, 1998, p. 41).

Formal training at new member meetings where they learn about the history of the sorority, founders' names, symbols, and motto leads to transfer of knowledge about gender roles and social expectations. There is also a clear discussion about appropriate behavior. Members are often told when they wear sorority letters to behave like *ladies* and wear makeup (Berbary, 2012). Many chapters also warn members not to post pictures of underage drinking or anything sexually explicit. This is overt discipline to make sure members portray the approved gender role. Chapter standards committees and national standards committees act as a court system for sororities.

Members reprimand and punish women who commit offenses. Sometimes a standards committee will reprimand a member for being late with dues or house payments. More frequently, a standards committee will bring members in for unladylike conduct (Berbary, 2012). Members refer women who get drunk and embarrass themselves, or who have too many sexual partners, to the standards committee. Fellabaum (2011) stated that the group often punishes those who fail to behave appropriately for their sex.

Everyone desires to be recognized in a positive way and this need for recognition fuels the appropriate performance of gender roles on a daily basis.

Covert discipline occurs through "girl talk" or gossip and discussions among the women in informal settings (Barbery, 2012). This can occur through teasing, joking, and complaints. This allows the group to respond to unwritten expectations much more quickly. The group rewards those women who send the correct gender messages and heckles those who do not.

Female - Male Relationships. The Greek system also honors the traditional male and female sex roles. Women are often expected to behave as ladies, while men still maintain the machismo role. The sorority system struggles with the balance of maintaining tradition while also embracing new feminist expectations. Sororities adhere to a very traditional white, upper class view of femininity. Many southern Greeks are influenced by fundamental Christian values, in which God is said to have created men and women equal, but with specific gender roles ordained by God (Berbary, 2012). The man is the traditional head of the household while the wife submits graciously. This belief is contradictory because Women are said to be given equality while they are actually expected to be subordinate to men. The first Greek social sorority and fraternity members were from white, Protestant, upper class homes where these ideas would be espoused (Berbery, 2012).

Through informal and formal settings, sorority women have the opportunity to interact with men. Historically sorority women were encouraged to date fraternity men. These men were assumed to be of a higher social class than non-Greek men due to the fact that they could afford fraternity dues (Nuwer, 1999). Sororities and fraternities pair up for

dances, volunteer work, talent shows, and homecoming house decorations and floats. The fraternity "sweetheart" has also been a tradition from the end of WWII until today on some campuses. Fraternity members traditionally selected women who were lavaliered, pinned, or engaged to fraternity members as *sweethearts* (Gorgosz, 2015). The fraternity often crowns sweethearts at a dance and gives them flowers. They then serve as hostesses at all occasions at the fraternity throughout the year of their reign. Fraternities often use their sweethearts' beauty as a measuring tool against other fraternities' sweethearts (Gorgosz, 2015).

Feminisists criticize this practice because members often objectify, exploit, and in some cases sexually abuse women (Stombler, 1994). Researchers have accused fraternities of perpetuating the "ritual subjugation" where men enforce and maintain their dominance over women. When a woman accepts sexual objectification and cultivates the role, she is perpetuating the idea of "feminine narcissism" where the woman who is objectified "becomes a sex object for herself, taking toward her own person the attitude of a man" (Stombler, 1994, p.299). Even when a woman takes on this role, it is still male-defined sexuality, which invites domination and exploitation.

Specific sorority ceremonies celebrate members attaching themselves romantically to men. For example, Alpha Delta Pi performs a candlelight ceremony where all the members of the house sit in a circle and pass a candle while singing a song about romance. When the candle arrives in the hand of the engaged sister, she blows it out. This informs the group of her romantic status, and the entire group celebrates. Other Greek traditions focus on the importance of coupling. Formal dances place pressure on members who do not

have boyfriends to find dates. Some argue that this cultural emphasis on gender submissiveness and role conformity leads to a number of risky outcomes.

Sororities and Rape. Lottes and Kuriloff (1994) conducted quantitative research to examine how parent and peer socialization affected Greek sexual norms. Their findings showed that both fraternities and sororities provide a more sexually permissive peer group compared to independent students. "Fraternities encourage their members to value a narrow definition of masculinity that includes dominance, winning at all costs, sexual conquest and control of women, and the use of exploitative and forceful strategies with women in order to engage in sexual activities" (Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994, p. 205). Greek organizations interact with each other frequently during social and school-organized events, increasing peer socialization (Copenhaver & Grauerholz, 1991).

Fraternity and sorority members tend to have conservative attitudes toward male dominant and female submissive roles (Kalof & Cargill, 1991; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994). Fraternity members have higher rates of dating violence and sexual aggression compared to non-Greek men (Kalof & Cargill, 1991). Sorority members are at greater risk of being victims of sexual abuse and coercion than non-Greeks (Kalof, 1993). Research suggested a strong link between gender role norms and increased sexual violence (Kalof & Cargill, 1991; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994). Women who live in a sorority house are three times more likely to be victims of sexual assault than other coeds (Wuthrich, 2009). Research has shown that 75% of women and 55% of men involved in a rape situation had consumed alcohol or drugs before the incident (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). During an interview with Nuwer (2004) a male pledge dropout stated,

"Women were nothing to the brotherhood. A girlfriend, you gave respect, and if she wanted a beer you got one to be polite, but other than that, women were just a commodity. . . . Women may have thought (the brotherhood) paid special attention to one sorority or another, but they don't care. To them, they said they were nothing but whores." (p. 38)

Later in the conversation he said, "'You never offended a sorority too bad because you wanted to have sex with them. This was the whole mentality. You could have a girlfriend . . . but you never chose a girlfriend over a brother.'" Newer (2004) discusses throughout his book the sexual objectification of women and the numerous demeaning names used by fraternity members for women. These names that dehumanized women and made them objects were a clear part of fraternity culture.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Sororities. The media consistently links Greek life with alcohol. Movies like Animal House, Revenge of the Nerds, and Old School show the idealized versions of Greek house parties. In reality, alcohol consumption is much more dangerous. Students who consume alcohol are at greater risk for low grades, violence from physical altercations, and automobile injuries. In a study by Wechsler, Kuh, and Davenport (2009) the majority of Greek students engaged in drinking at some point in their college career. Fraternity and sorority house residents engaged in binge drinking more frequently than Greeks who lived outside of the formal residence. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which conducts the annual National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), has defined binge drinking as drinking five or more alcoholic drinks on the same occasion on at least one day in the past 30 days (Drinking, n.d.). Wechsler, Kuh, and Davenport (1996) indicated that more than half (57%) of fraternity

house residents and almost half (43%) of the sorority house residents were frequent binge

drinkers. This means they binged three or more times in the two weeks before taking the

survey. These results were much higher than for non-Greeks and members who lived

outside the houses.

Greek members tend to come from families with a higher socioeconomic status than

nonmembers (Sweeney, 2014). Men and women often see college as a time to have fun and

experiment with alcohol and drugs before they assume their adult roles as professionals

and the heads of households. Sweeney (2014) argued that partying reflects a gendered and

class sense of entitlement to hedonism. For Greek men the party becomes a ritual of

drinking and hooking up with women to prove their masculinity. Nuwer (2004)

interviewed a former pledge about alcohol, who stated, "It was an addiction in the sense

that I and another kid with a fake ID when we went out, we'd get like $500 worth." Cultural

norms in Greek life support alcohol use. Wechsler, Kuh, and Davenport (2009) discussed

the fact that alcohol is integral to Greek ritual and culture, so much so that the group

punishes or rewards new members for their use of alcohol.

Hazing and Sororities. Once a woman goes through recruitment and begins her life

as a new member or pledge, it opens the door to potential hazing. The definition of hazing

used by members of the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) is "any action taken or any

situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule and

risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not,

regardless of the person's willingness to participate" (Hazingprevention.org, n.d.). The NPC

supports efforts to eliminate hazing. They have adopted the Unanimous Agreement IX,

which condemns hazing and hazing-related behaviors by undergraduate and alumnae members (NPC, 2016).

Nuwer (2004) compared Greeks who haze to cults. Both use psychological and social influence to manipulate and coerce behavior of individuals. New members are highly susceptive, especially if they are new to college. Greek chapters often focus on the symbolic idea of the chapter becoming a family to the new members. Fraternities and sororities often tell members they will provide whatever they need while in college; they require secrecy, and they make it difficult to leave the organization once they are part of a group. Instead of having a religious head like a cult, the pledge master or new member educator is the person with all of the power. The pledge master or new member educator can make new members participate in hazing activities by threatening to prevent them from becoming full members.

Hazing can include scavenger hunts, paddling, branding, and all-night activities. Deborah Shaw (1992) conducted a survey of sorority advisors and discovered that 25% of the advisors believed women were required to drink alcohol and 20% stated that the chapter kept women up all night to review sorority history and knowledge. Shockingly, 5% reported that their chapter hit pledges. In 2014, Miss America Kira Kazantsev was removed from Alpha Phi sorority at Hofstra University for hazing concerns. During an interview she said that she joked in an email that "We would make the evening scary for pledges." She said, "That event never came to fruition and none of these things that I've been accused of ever happened or were ever intended to happen" (Miss America, 2016). An unnamed source stated that she called the pledges names, made fun of physical imperfections, and

made them work out to the point of exhaustion. Kira denied those charges and she was able to keep her title and crown.

Greek life is rich in tradition and rituals. The negative aspects of the culture are revealed in how sorority members view themselves as women, their increased likelihood of becoming rape victims, and increased amounts of alcohol use. Higher education administrators continue to seek to enhance the best of Greek life while mitigating the negative parts of culture. Sorority students are more involved on campus, have higher graduation rates, and tend to be more connected than non-Greek students. In the next section, the researcher explores the impact of sorority life on members' academics and careers.

Impact of Sorority on its Members as Students

Ironically, no Greek rituals exist for graduation, obtaining a job, or academic success. Yet Greek membership has been a focus of scholarship pertaining to the impact of college on student outcomes. Researchers have investigated the effects of Greek membership on various student and learning outcomes, including retention and graduation, academic achievements, identity development, leadership skills, and career aspirations. Most of the studies on educational outcomes compared Greek members (lumping together both sorority and fraternity groups) and independent students. Few studies focused specifically on sorority members, comparing them with fraternity members and independent female students.

Academic Impact. The research related to the impact of sorority membership on a student's academic success is inconclusive. The Center for the Study of the College Fraternity (1992) reported that sorority membership may be positively related to

academic achievement. Pascarella, Edison, Whitt, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini (1996) used the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency to research academic development of students at 18 institutions. The study showed that sorority women scored slightly lower than non-Greeks on an exam at the end of the first year to measure reading comprehension, mathematics, critical thinking, and composite achievement. When students completed the same test at the end of their third year there was no difference between sorority and non-sorority women in their development (Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt, 2001).

Pike and Askew (1990) looked at Greek grade point averages (GPAs) during their senior year of college. Fraternity men had significantly lower GPAs while sorority women had averages comparable to their unaffiliated peers. "Fraternities and sororities are not . . . enhancing the education of their members. This is especially disconcerting given the resources directed at these organizations" (Hevel, Martin, Weeden, & Pascarella, 2015). The literature on cognitive or educational changes in Greek members is inconclusive and limited; researchers should consider this for future study.

Moral Development. Kilgannon & Erwin (1992) conducted a longitudinal study on the moral development of Greek students. After the first year of college, there was no significant difference in the moral development of Greek students and non-Greeks. After completing two years of college sorority members had lower levels of moral reasoning than both fraternity members and non-Greeks. Greek members have self-reported higher levels of academic dishonesty (Storch & Storch, 2002). They have reported cheating on homework and exams more frequently than non-Greek students have.

Leadership. Astin (1993) found that students who placed importance on leadership development were more likely to join a Greek social organization. It is widely accepted that

Greek students are more involved and engaged on campus than unaffiliated students (Hayek, Carini, O'Day, & Kuh, 2002). Many Greek students use their affiliation to springboard themselves into leadership positions in other organizations across campus. Even though Greek students comprise a small portion of most campus populations, they tend to hold many of the leadership roles available to students. They fill student government associations, campus programming boards, and homecoming committees.

Over the last twenty years both higher education and businesses have redefined what leadership is. While traditional models focus on management skills, the current focus is on transformational leadership and social responsibility. The Social Change Model of Leadership focuses on leadership development as a process and says that everyone can make positive change at any level of leadership. This model contains seven critical values of a leader, which include consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship. Researchers created a survey called the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS) to assess these seven items. Dugan (2008) found that sorority women demonstrated significantly higher levels on all seven of the SRLS compared to fraternity men. Hevel & Bureau (2014) used the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNS) to capture student development in six key areas. Researchers gave the survey to students at the end of their freshman and senior years of college. At the end of the first year, there was a direct relationship between growth in both fraternities and sororities on the citizen subscale. Sorority members also had higher levels on the common purpose subscale. By the end of their senior year, there were no significant differences in any of the leadership subscales. The WNS found that Greek membership had little positive or negative influence on students' educational outcomes. Hevel & Bureau

(2014) speculated that seniors might have already passed on leadership responsibilities to younger members to have more time to prepare for graduation and job searching.

Interpersonal Skills. Hunt and Rentz (1994) researched interpersonal skills using a 30-item scale to assess an individual's relationship skills and their ability to respect diversity. They discovered that Greek members had positive gains in interpersonal skills. Pike (2000) also researched interpersonal skill development with first-year students living in residence halls and those living in Greek housing. He used a three-item scale that looked at an individual's ability to lead, work in groups, and get along with diverse groups of people. The Greek students had small positive gains in interpersonal development. Long (2012) used the Fraternity/Sorority Assessment developed by Educational Benchmarking Incorporated. The participants were 9,380 college students on 15 campuses. The results showed the Greek experience was "excellent" at producing gains in the sense of belonging and peer interaction category. The author hypothesized that this was due to chapters providing a small intimate community on larger campuses. He also mentioned that Greek chapters help establish close friendships, and members learn to interact and resolve conflict with each other.

Career. Greek students focus on the extrinsic value of their education. They see college as a way to have career success and increased earnings (Astin, 1993). Unaffiliated students were more concerned with learning and the intrinsic value of education. Almquist and Angrist (1971) researched role models and peer influences on career aspirations. The role models functioned as a normative group, setting values and norms for other peers. They provided praise for compliance to the norms or punishment for nonconformity. The findings discovered that sorority women were less likely to have career salience or clear

career goals. Sorority membership fostered traditional female roles within the home and not ambition to work in a career.

Summary

Greek membership is a unique experience for every individual. In general, several changes apply to all Greeks. Through participation in sorority life members actively engage in a world of rituals and symbolism that lasts throughout their lives. As American society has changed, so has the role of Greek social organizations in the lives of college students and campuses.

Other aspects of Greek membership pertain to its role in college experiences and educational outcomes. Members tend to be more engaged in campus leadership positions and research has shown that they have higher levels of interpersonal development. Researchers have also found that sorority members are morally underdeveloped as compared to their unaffiliated peers. These women also adhere to traditional gender roles, which affect career choices. A review of the literature shows no clear evidence that Greek membership affects students' cognitive development or academic success either positively or negatively. Hevel & Bureau (2014, p.33) stated,

> "There is a perception among many educators and stakeholders that fraternity/sorority membership may be one of the most time-intensive experiences on a college campus . . . these organizations seem well positioned to influence students' educational outcomes. Advocates argue that these organizations provide life-changing experiences, foster meaningful relationships, and highly engage students. Therefore, the lack of evidence that fraternal membership influences students' educational outcomes should concern educators".

The effects of Greek membership on educational outcomes are more nuanced than either

critics or supporters thought (Hevel, Martin, Weeden, & Pascarella, 2015).

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the research problem and questions that directed the study. It also provides discussions of the relevance of a qualitative research and, specifically, a narrative case study in examining the research problem of this study. Further discussions include the details of methodological considerations and choices of the study location and participants. Finally, the chapter presents a step-by-step guide to data collection and analysis along with a discussion on trustworthiness.

Purpose

This dissertation aimed to gain an understanding of the role of the dyadic big/little relationship of sorority sisters in their development of self. Following a qualitative design, the primary focus of this research was to find out how the women experience and make sense of this relationship and discover the meaning it has on their development. The researcher used self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2014) and interactional dynamic of a meaning-making process as a conceptual frame to guide the study.

Research Questions

Three overarching research questions guided the study in order to understand the impact of the Greek sorority dyadic big/little relationship on meaning-making of self among sorority members.

1.   How is the big/little relationship manifested in the culture of a sorority?

2.   What meanings do sorority women develop about the relationship between big sisters and little sisters?

3.   How do the big/little sister interactions impact members' self-authorship?

Rationale for Qualitative Study

The research problem or question directs the type of research methodology (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) used to answer the question. Creswell (2003) believed that the theoretical perspective of the researcher also influences the selection of a methodology. Crotty (1998) argued that a researcher must have four aligning elements to ensure the soundness of research. The epistemology, the philosophical study of the nature of knowledge, impacts the theoretical perspective, which directs the methodology and methods.

Patton (2002) stated that basic qualitative research is interested in a phenomenon to understand and explain. The purpose of this investigation is to gain knowledge of the environment without interfering and changing it. Students bring different perspectives, but the author hopes to focus on the common themes, which will emerge from the data.

Merriam (1998) identified five key philosophical distinctions of qualitative research that differentiate it from quantitative studies. The first is that the researcher is interested in understanding the meanings people construct. The second characteristic is that the

researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and interpretation. The next characteristic is that most qualitative research involves fieldwork. This practice began in anthropology and sociology. Investigators need to understand the natural environment of the subjects to understand all aspects of the experience. The fourth characteristic is that qualitative research is inductive. The aim of research is to build toward a theory or discover if an existing theory can explain a phenomenon. Finally, qualitative research is richly descriptive. Researchers use written text to explain meaning and understanding of the experience. Direct quotes from interviews and field notes provide a detailed picture.

Qualitative research is emergent in nature. The researcher needs to be flexible enough to adapt during the research process. It is heuristic; it requires the researcher to learn about the research process while conducting the study. It is also important to be sensitive to the participants and physical setting. A researcher should know how to gain information without being too obtrusive. When interviewing individuals, the researcher must decide when they have enough information to answer the research questions.

Epistemology

The epistemology focuses on the nature of knowledge and provides a philosophical background for what kinds of knowledge are possible (Crotty, 1998). Two primary philosophies exist in qualitative research: objectivism and constructionism. Objectivists believe that something can exist apart from human consciousness. Knowledge and values are objective; they exist in reality. By definition, constructionism suggests the belief that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge about reality. Individuals invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of the world around them (Creswell, 2003). Social constructionism argues that individuals do not live in isolation and that they learn to

make meaning through observing how others interact in the world and applying it to their own experiences. The historical and social institutions into which we are born begin to shape our meaning making at the time of birth. Without culture, the world could not function; it provides for the governing of human behavior. Geertz (1973) argued that culture is the source of human thought, not the result. Community provides institutions, laws, and beliefs to provide meaning to those in it. Social life constructs meaning, maintains meaning, and reproduces the culture. In sociocultural theory learning is a process of active construction as well as enculturation into a new environment.

Theoretical Framework

One of the primary responsibilities of higher education is to identify how students develop throughout the college experience. Perry (1970) conducted one of the first landmark studies in this field using primarily male students at a Harvard University. Over fifteen years he conducted 464 open-ended interviews with 82 male and 2 female students to develop a scheme of intellectual and ethical development. Perry discovered nine positions that students move through in their journey as they progress in college. Student can repeat each of the positions if they experience setbacks, or students can work through several positions at one time. The amount of time a student spends in any position varies according to their personal experiences. Each position helps to explain the awareness of self and the impact of the external environment.

Perry's (1970) positions build on developmental tasks that students must completeto move into new positions. Students will move from seeing knowledge as simple to complex. The nine positions are:

1.   Basic Dualism – Authority figures possess the absolute truth and the world is divided into absolutes (Right & Wrong).

2.   Multiplicity Prelegitimate – Authority figures are seeking the truth, but the world is complex and abstract.

3.   Multiplicity Legitimate but Subordinate – Authority figures can be right and wrong. Students begin to believe that the answers are undiscovered.

4.   Late Multiplicity – Students begin to fight authority or strive to please authority figures by providing them with the answers they want. Students believe there are no right answers and all opinions are equal.

5.   Relativism – Everything is relative and the student must seek what is valid.

6.   Pre Commitment – Students begin to make their own decisions.

7.   Commitment – Students make commitments

8.   Challenges to Commitment – Recognition of several interpretations of commitment

9.   Post Commitment – Individuals believe in their own values and respect other different opinions while being open to changing their opinion.

Perry's research identifyed students' perceived experiences. He wanted to understand what they make meaning of and what they accept as truth or knowledge. During his open-ended interviews, he would ask students to discuss events in their lives and have them explain how the events affected them. Through constructing their own story, they were empowered to create their own meanings. In his study, college students would move from the socialization of their families, to a reliance on external authorities, and finally into an establishment of their own authority.

Kegan (1994) wrote that the demands of contemporary society for self-authorship are well over the heads of much of the adult population. He believed that the complexity of adult life in modern America required more complex forms of education, which could help adults develop the necessary skills. As a psychologist, he was interested in the meaning people apply to their stories. He wanted to know why some people could successfully navigate challenging tasks, while others could not make meaning and process the information to grow. His model consisted of five orders of consciousness, which were phases people move through as they develop. Kegan termed the fourth order as self-authorship; he described it as "the mental making of an ideology or explicit system or belief." These beliefs emerge gradually over time.

In 1986 Marcia Baxter Magolda began a longitudinal study by interviewing 101 students at Miami University as they entered college (Baxter Magolda, 2009). She would continue to interview 35 of the students annually over the next 20 years. The purpose was to understand their epistemological development, or how they viewed knowledge, their view of self, and their view of relationships. This combines cognitive development with intrapersonal and interpersonal development to create three dimensions of a person. Baxter Magolda wanted to understand the holistic student experience through listening to how students constructed their reality. Her interviews were semi-structured and informal.

Baxter Magolda (2009) identified eight key locations in the journey of self-authorship. Three locations are phases while five are elements within each phase. The first phase is external formulas. Authority figures have socialized most students entering into college, at the traditional age of 18 years old, to accept knowledge from those authorities (Baxter Magolda, 2009). These individuals can be family members, teachers, and religious

leaders. The external voices of others prevent students from hearing their own internal voice. The student's individual identity is defined by other people and a lack of awareness of personal values and social identity. People make important decisions based on seeking the approval of those in authority.

Most college students begin their journey toward self-authorship in this phase. Nineteen institutions of higher education across the United States conducted The Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNS) (Barber, King, & Magolda, 2013). Researchers distributed a quantitative survey each year. The study selected six schools for a subset of qualitative research in which they interviewed 30 students over three years of their college experience from 2006 through 2008. In the interviews, most of the students began in the External Formulas phase. In the study one of the students, Gia, discussed her mother, "'She doesn't like me to get into other people's cars; she doesn't like me walking by myself. So when I get back home in the summer I know I'm . . .having to do things my mom's way'" (Barber, King, & Magolda, 2013, p. 885). In her junior year she stated, "'I really don't have a balance when it comes to that with my parents'" (Barber, King, & Magolda, 2013, p. 886). She did not make any changes toward self-authorship until her junior year of college.

As people begin to have new experiences, they will encounter the second phase of crossroads. At this step in the journey, individuals become torn between following the vision and expectations of others and beginning to listen to their internal voice. People begin to desire their own internal definition of self and to have authentic relationships. If a person experiences some type of pain, it often stops them along the journey and prevents them from progressing. Once they stop, they begin to realize that listening to others'

opinions and doing what they say is making them unhappy. Every person will choose to progress for a different reason.

There are two elements within crossroads, listening to the internal voice and cultivating the internal voice. In the listening phase of the journey, people begin to focus on what makes them happy, examining their beliefs, and discovering what is important to them. To be successful, some individuals journal and others find support through partnerships or friends. The person who does not address these issues gets stuck in the shadow lands.

In the WNS research Steve, a fraternity member, described learning about different religions and political conflicts, "'I'll just sit and listen to two other people debating over what they think is right . . . it's kind of cool to listen to their arguments and be like, maybe what I thought for so long isn't good'" (p. 883). Bryant (2011) conducted a case study which involved an evangelical Christian student organization, from which 14 students were interviewed in 2003 and 2005 about their experiences. Darla, a student who was in the crossroads phase, stated, "'Everyone is searching. Everyone has questions, and Christianity is about discovering those questions, getting closer to the truth even though you are never fully going to grasp it'" (Bryant, 2011, p. 22). Will, another student in the study, wondered, "'Am I a Christian because it's the way I was brought up and that's the way my parents raised me or is it really what I believe? And that's something that I'm still struggling with and trying to figure out'" (Bryant, 2011, p. 24).

Baxter Magolda (2009) believed that most participants spent their twenties in the element of cultivating the internal voice. The key questions each participant asked himself or herself were: How do I know who I am, and how do I relate to others? While developing

personal and professional relationships, people would begin to establish priorities, and define their values and beliefs. Most would establish a clear idea of who they wanted to become. They would then have a clear path to the future.

The central phase on the journey is self-authorship. This occurred when individuals began to trust their internal voice. Each person at this stage would have reevaluated his or her values and beliefs. One participant described the process as having remolded a piece of clay from one object into a new creation.

There are three elements in the journey. The first is to trust the internal voice. Individuals learn to control their reactions to issues they cannot control. Individuals learn not to let their emotions get in the way or create problems. Challenges are opportunities to grow and learn. Friends and partners can also be a big help at this stage.

Costello (2010) explored the connection between friendships and self-authorship in black college women. Out of seven participants, Jaffrey articulated trusting the internal voice the best: "'Whatever you want, you really have to fight for it here. I've realized, which is good in some ways, analyzing this over the summer. It's good because it makes sure that I don't become complacent and like accustomed to the status quo.'" She has learned to accept her college experience and can control her reactions to difficulties. Jaffrey will fight for success and graduation.

Once the individual trusts the internal voice, they will begin the next element of building an internal foundation. People will begin to use their internal voices to create a personal philosophy that will become a framework. Establishing a framework will help them rethink attitudes and behaviors. Sometimes people make difficult decisions to change careers or end relationships. Other individuals find the strength to use a hidden talent or

enter into a relationship. Some people have to go back through some processes because their new values are in conflict with a past lack of personal trust.

Roy, a college student, described making the choice to spend time with "'more educated people' instead of old friends and family" (Pizzolato, Nguyen, Johnston, & Wang, 2012, p. 672). He had to separate himself physically to also separate psychologically. He wanted to become a professional. The values and beliefs of those from his past did not support his new educational goal. He stated, "'My friend April she is a nurse manager of the hospital . . . Those are the type of people I like to be around'" (Pizzolato, Nguyen, Johnston, & Wang, 2012, p. 672).

The element in the process is securing internal commitments. This means living values and beliefs in every aspect of one's life. People describe knowing what to do in certain situations because their commitments are second nature. Individuals feel comfortable working with others and do not feel that they need to please people. These individuals are less afraid to change and are willing to continue to learn and challenge themselves. Only a few participants near the age of forty reach this final stage in the process.

Baxter Magolda (2009) believed that a person's true inner voice can only be found by discovering their epistemology or cognitive development ("How do I know?"), their interpersonal development ("How do I want to construct relationships with others?"), and their intrapersonal development ("Who am I?"). When students begin college they encounter challenges that make them ask all of these questions. The journey to master self-authorship continues through adulthood for most people.

As individuals progress through their journey, a significant factor in their success can be the relationships or partnerships they form. Baxter Magolda (2009) noted that participants often struggled to find people who would listen to their issues without trying to solve their problems for them. Other participants discussed feeling alone as they entered adult life. They desired deeper relationships with people. After discovering that study participants valued their annual open-ended discussions, Baxter Magolda developed the Learning Partnership Model (LPM) to provide a framework for family members, friends, and educational professionals to help individuals along their journey of self-authorship.

Good learning partners have three important tasks. First, they help individuals discuss their life experiences. Often the partner will ask the individual about their feelings or thoughts on a certain issue. Next, the partner will act as a collaborator to help the individual solve his or her own problems. The partner may have the individual provide multiple solutions to the same issue and weigh the consequences of each action. Finally, good partners respect the thoughts and feelings of the individual. Baxter Magolda used the reference of a partner who provides guidance from the back seat while the individual steers the bicycle on its journey.

Most individuals seek partners who will help them along their journey. It is important for the developing individual to know what they need and to recognize when people are offering the support. Each person in the relationship must be able to communicate their expectations of the other. By recognizing the skills of a good partner, the developing individual will gain the foundation of developing partnership skills.

Information about good learning partners appears throughout the research on self-authorship. Bryant (2011) highlighted Rebecca's experience with her teacher: "'I had this

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teacher, Mrs. Perkins, and I was extremely close to her. She was like my second mother in a

sense, you know. And she helped me through a lot of things. When my parents got divorced,

I would talk to her about a lot, and she totally discipled me'" (p. 25). Rebecca expressed "'I

have a problem with people not being willing to talk about what it is they believe in a way

that is productive, not in a way that's trying to convince you'" (p. 25). Steve was a student

who found his fraternity brothers to be a strong supportive force (Barber, King, & Magolda,

2013). By the time he was a junior, Steve shifted from feeling connected to the whole

organization to a small group of friends within the chapter with whom he would discuss

and debate ideas. Darcy, another student, also had close relationships with sorority sisters:

"'Having strong female relationships in my life is really, really, important to me, and my

sisters are really amazing strong women'" (Barber, King, & Magolda, 2013, p. 884).

Challenges are a part of living. They occur throughout life's journey in every setting,

including school, work, and family. Baxter Magolda (2009) identified three tasks that our

society expects individuals to deal with successfully in their lives. First, there are the

complex issues one encounters at home and at work. The next skill is working

collaboratively with others to solve mutual issues. An example of this would be asking a

colleague about a decision to find out if one's answer to the problem will work well in the

department. The final expectation is that individuals will develop their own personal

authority. This is exemplified by an employee who can make competent workplace

decisions without the direction of others.

Baxter Magolda (2001) believed the role of higher education is to create experiences

for students that help them progress through the stages of self-authorship. Kuh, Kinzie,

Schuh, Whitt, and Associates considered experiences such as service learning, study

abroad, and research impactful (2005). Learning needs to be rich and more complex to produce complex meaning-making experiences. Colleges and universities can identify the experiences of students who experience high amounts of self-authorship to help develop practices that work.

Parents in Self-Authorship. Torres and Hernandez (2007) conducted a longitudinal study of Latino students that lasted three years and included 19 women and 10 men. The students attended four institutions of higher education within the same urban community. The author wanted to understand how Latino college students' ethnic background shaped self-authorship. The researchers used semi-structured interviews at the end of each year. Torrez and Hernandez discovered that the recognition of racism is part of the developmental process. Students needed support to grow and process. One student reported that the only Latino employees she saw were service workers. This type of experience can create internal conflict and personal development. Latino students were more likely to seek support and advice from family and friends, instead of traditional authority figures in higher education.

Career Development and Self-Authorship. In 2005, Creamer and Laughlin uncovered the link between self-authorship and career decision-making. This study involved mixed methods of a survey of 467 men and women and phone interviews with 40 college women who completed the survey. The research suggested that college women often sought career advice from their parents over career advisors and faculty. The authors believed that the women in the study may have rejected the advice of authorities when it contrasted with the advice of parents because they did not have the cognitive skills to

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negotiate diverse viewpoints. The interpersonal dimension of self-authorship became the most important aspect of career decision-making.

Learning Partnerships in Self-Authorship. Collay and Cooper (2008) researched two cohorts in master's level graduate programs in two different states. Twenty-two women participated by discussing leadership and self-authorship, and by writing reflection papers about the theories throughout their program. The women of color that participated found self-authorship to be supportive of their growth. The women used each other as learning partners, and began to trust themselves and see themselves as leaders.

Researchers have also investigated self-authorship and leadership development. Cohen, Cook-Sather, Lesnick, Alter, Awkward, Decius, Hummer, Guerrier, Larson, & Mengesha (2013) looked at three leadership programs at Bryn Mawr College. Researchers held focus groups, and sent a survey to students in the groups. One of the key findings involved the leadership relationships. One student explained, "'I learned how to trust and be okay with being vulnerable'" (p. 10). Learning partnerships require honesty, which helps develop leadership skills.

Methodology

A methodology should direct how the research should proceed. It further defines the research focus and connects the philosophy to the best way to deconstruct and understand the subject matter. Narrative case study requires rich and detailed information from the subjects. This type of research involves spending numerous hours with subjects to gain their perspectives. Due to the amount of time involved in these studies, the researcher usually includes a small number of subjects.

I spent ten hours interviewing the women and twelve hours observing their environment. The case study design rendered me an opportunity to focus on each case of four dyads and their unique experiences. My interactions with the participants and my observations aimed to understand the meaning-making processes of each sorority big/little pairing through a theoretical framework of self-authorship. Engaging the participants in a narrative construction of who they were as a result of their big/little relationships was possible through a narrative case study design.

Case study research is different from other types of qualitative research because it focuses on a single unit (Merriam, 1998). Researchers have defined case study in many different ways. Stake (2011, p. 23) described it as "whatever bounded system is of interest. An institution, a programme, a responsibility, a collection, or a population." Merriam (1998, p. 27) stated, "I have concluded that the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case." The goal in a case study design is to understand the fine details of the experience and the environment that shapes the case. Researchers try to understand the complexities of the lived experience. The case study process connects to other systems, which have influence on the individuals. Yin (2003) stated that experiences were best uncovered through case studies because the method allows researchers to make complex connections, which they would understand through surveys or experiments. Thus, the phenomenon is intrinsically bounded by time, location, or experience. There should be a limited number of people, which could describe the phenomenon. If the potential number of participants is endless, the study is unbounded, and not a case study.

In this project, two individuals constituted a single case since the focus was on the dyads of little and big sorority members; therefore, each case required recruitment of one big and one little sorority member who formed that relationship. However, to understand each dyadic relationship at the various levels of education (i.e., sophomore, junior, senior, and beyond college), I incorporated four different cases into this project. Stake (1994) described such an approach as a collective case study because of the additional cases. Such an approach allowed for a cross-case analysis, yielding more depth into the data and opportunities for comparisons of the participants' meanings of their self-authorship development as they progressed in their education and spent more time in their relationships with big or little sisters. The dyads were instrumental case studies.

Stake (1994) further provided a helpful set of criteria for a case study design, which I followed in my research. First, the researcher should provide information on the uniqueness of the situation. This information can include history, culture, and organizational structure. Second, identifying an issue under the investigation is important. Third, the researcher should approach the data inductively for the themes to emerge from within, which, in turn, would help the researcher identify the uniqueness of each case. As I was seeking to understand the process of self-authorship and roles of dyads in it, I relied on each case to tell its own story.

Donmoyer (2011) identified three key advantages of conducting case study research. First, case studies provide readers and researchers accessibility to learn about unique situations and cultures. The information is not generalizable, but it gives voice to outliers whose voice would normally be lost. Seeing through the researcher's eye is the second reason. Written text provides as complete a description of the phenomenon as

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possible. The researcher should be able to transport the reader into the experience. Lastly, case study research provides decreased defensiveness about educational critiques. Individuals can usually relate to the rich personal experiences of others in case studies and learn from their experiences more easily than experiencing the critique themselves.

Research Context. The focus of this study was on eight sorority women; at the time, three pairs were undergraduates and one pair were alumni members. Considering the qualitative design of this research, this study provided a narrow snapshot of the lived experiences of a few women. The dyadic relationships between peers offered valuable information on self-authorship, and helped identify how these relationships could affect the student psychosocial development process.

I selected sorority women for two primary reasons. First, the majority of research conducted on self-authorship focused on individuals. Second, sororities have used big/little partnerships for several decades and very little research exists seeking to understand the process.

The institution selected for this study was a Division I research institution in the midwestern United States. Plains University was a publicly funded school that had an undergraduate enrollment of around 19,000 students. The campus had traditional Greek life programs in which the majority of chapters had chapter houses for members to live together. Most of the sorority chapters were nationally recognized and fell under the National Panhellenic Conference rules and expectations.

My selection of this site was based in part on accessibility and my networking connections with student affairs professionals. Knowing individuals connected to Greek life

made it easier to access participants and gain trust with the women. My background as a student affairs professional also provided me with credibility.

Research Participants. I interviewed sorority women from only two sorority chapters. This created an opportunity to gain a unique in-depth knowledge of the rituals, symbols, and organizational structure of these groups. The women were recruited through the Panhellenic council and through messages posted on the Panhellenic Facebook page. I made the case selection based on access and availability to the subjects. All participants were required to be at least eighteen years old. I only selected complete big/little pairings to provide information from both the parties about the relationship. The goal of the study was to interview individuals from four dyads for a total of eight interviews. Upon completion of the interview, each participant was given a $20 gift card or cash.

I omitted the names of the participating Greek chapters to provide anonymity. In addition to this change, the participants chose fictitious names for themselves for the study. I kept a list of real names on a computer that remained locked by password. Another list was maintained on a printed document in a safe.

I conducted the interviews in person in a meeting room within the college union to keep the conversations private. When given the option of where to conduct the interview, none of the participants made the choice to meet elsewhere. The location was centrally located on campus and in a university office focused on serving students. The room was located out of public traffic and had no windows that would allow other individuals to see within the room. The meeting space was only about 10 feet by 10 feet and contained a desk and a small round table large enough for four chairs to fit around it. The interviews took place while sitting across from each other at the table with the audio recorder in the

middle. Due to the small size of the room and its location in the building, the recordings were clear and easy to understand for transcription purposes.

After each interview, I took field notes about each of the subjects. The goal of these notes was to document the mood of the interview, what the participant looked like, and body language. I did not take notes during the interviews in order to allow the participants to feel more relaxed. The field notes included weather and current campus events to provide a context. I included this contextual information before describing each case in the data representation chapter.

Data Collection. I sought and received study approval for this study by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Plains State University. The process assessed potential physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal harm to subjects (Creswell, 2003). I utilized an informed consent document explaining the purpose and possible impacts of the study based on the template provided by the IRB. The form also explained that participation was voluntary, that subjects could withdraw at any time, and that copies of the study would be available upon request. The informed consent form required signatures from the researcher and participant. The IRB also encouraged confidentiality and the safe storage of research information to protect individuals.

I collected data through a combination of participant interviews, observations, and document analysis. The in-depth interviews averaged around one hour each and created sixty-eight pages of transcription. Interviews occurred with each participant one time throughout the research and were guided by the semi-structured interview protocol. The questions were all open-ended and sought to address the three research questions presented earlier in this paper. I utilized a digital device to record interviews, which

provided a file used for verbatim transcription. In addition to the student interviews, I

maintained an analytic field log as a record of observations of certain cultural events and

interactions.

When conducting a narrative analysis interview, it was important to get the whole

story from their perspective. I asked open-ended questions relating to the dyad to uncover

what the relationship meant to the participant. Narrative analysis is most successful with a

less structured interview instrument. Riessman (1993) suggested seven broad questions

with follow-up questions that can clarify the subject's response if needed. If researchers

"can give up control over the research process and approach interviews as conversations,

almost any questions can generate narrative" (Riessman, 1993, p. 56).

This study also utilized participant observations as another research method.

Merriam (1998) described what researchers should do to use observation as a successful

tool. It should serve a clear research purpose by providing insight into the natural

environment those others methods cannot provide. I planned observations deliberatively

and recorded each observation in a systematic manner. When observing, I kept information

in field notes. The choice on how much, and what, to record, is typically a decision made by

the researcher. I took rough notes and then typed the observations into a more formal

document. I documented the experience soon after in order to prevent loss of knowledge

through forgetfulness. Good field notes include information about the physical setting, who

the participants were, what the event or activity observed was, what the conversations

were, and how the researcher felt (Merriam, 1998).

To understand the dyadic big/little sister relationship in the context, I conducted

observations during formal sorority events. The fall semester was a very active time for

sorority members. I observed some formal sorority recruitment events, bid day, and the homecoming. I observed as a participant. Sorority members knew about the research process and were also aware that the interaction with members would be limited to what developed naturally throughout the process.

    Data Analysis. Riessman (1993) worked as a clinical social worker and noticed how her clients processed their life experiences through telling their own stories. While doing her research she began to see the need to move away from uncovering key thematic elements and toward a narrative approach identifying how the person created meaning from their stories. In that way narrative analysis could become a representation of an event and meaning.

    Following the premise of the narrative analysis and research, I understood that personal stories were unique. Each person included and omitted different information about the same events. These choices, however, equipped me as a researcher with clues about what they saw as important and why the information was necessary to include. The stories had the power to reveal different kinds of clues, such as about moral, religious, and social beliefs. Treating omission and silence was also important because those could occur when a person suffered from a traumatic event like rape, abuse, torture, and war; the stories do tend to allude to identity.

    Narrative analysis has its beginning in traditional ethnographies. Researchers utilizing ethnography consider accounts of a person's life realistic and the descriptions factual. Language is a technical tool to create meaning. Narrative analysis views language as ambiguous and socially constructed. The meanings of words are as creative and unique as

the individual speaking. The storyteller provides all of the meaning and reflective interpretation.

Riessman (1993) discussed the human representation of experience in her book. She simplified the process of meaning making by breaking it into five parts. The first component is *Attending to the Experience*, in which a person first experiences a place or event with the basic five senses. Each person notices different things in the same location and experiences the environment differently. Second, a person *Tells about the Experience*. People begin to construct meaning as they use language to describe the location. The person explaining the location or event will also begin to construct their identity through the story. In the third step researchers will *Transcribe the Experience* through audio, video, and written transcripts of the dialogue. Researchers make choices about how to transcribe, which also change the interpretation. In *Analyzing the Experience*, a metastory is created by writing, editing, and summarizing the original experience or location. The researcher alters the experience through his or her own interpretations, which are politically and morally biased. The fifth and final representation is *Reading Experience*. Critics of narrative analysis question if there can be a true representation of anything because of the multiple levels of interpretation. Consumers of this research interpret data when they read it and process it through their lens.

Narratives can take many forms. Some narratives are sequential with the event progressing as it occurred. Habitual narratives describe reoccurring issues and their outcome. Topic-centered narratives focus on one idea or topic and how it impacted the individual's life at different times. The interview guides the narrative approach.

Riessman (1993, p. 25) asks three key methodological questions about how the researcher represents a subject's experience:

1. How is talk transformed into a written text and how are narrative segments determined?

2. What aspects of the narrative constitute the basis of interpretation?

3. Who determines what the narrative means and are alternate readings possible?

One of the key research questions of this study was how sorority women made sense of their big sister/little sister relationship. By using *poetic structure* technique as described by Riessman (1993), I uncovered the meaning making of self-authorship between the dyadic pair in each case study. In the conversations with the women, I searched for key ideas in how they viewed the relationship, what emotions they experienced as a result of the pairing, and how each had changed because of the relationship. Each dyad produced different emerging stories.

I used poetic structure to narrate the emerging stories. Riessman (1993) edited all of the dialogue between the researcher and subjects, pauses, false starts, and all other features of spoken language. She suggested that all human speech has a rhythm, which can lead to poetic stanzas that can unify the narrative for the reader. The researcher focuses on the oral and not text-based language. Each stanza will contain thoughts about a specific topic that appeared through the interviews, in theatrical terms a specific scene within a larger play. The narrator can use overarching metaphors to describe each topic, moving the reader through the research and unifying each topic area. Key words and verb tenses used by the subject also shapes the stanzas. This technique provided a model for analyzing interviews, which lend themselves to the narratives.

Transcribing interviews moved the conversation into a written text, which forced me to make choices about reduction of the raw data material. Riessman (1993) suggested making a rough transcription with all the details of the conversation between the interviewer and subject. After the researcher creates the rough transcription, she then makes a re-transcription where texts that appear to take a narrative form are portioned to create boundaries and a framework for the story. The analysis begins at the point of transcription through the re-transcription and reduction process. It is important to focus on the meanings encoded in the oral presentation of the story. The final poem should favor the voice of the subject over the researcher.

Once the interviews were transcribed and key phrases highlighted, I used poetic transcription. Faulkner (2009, p. 31) described this as taking participants' exact words from the interview and then "cutting and pasting the essential elements in an effort to reveal the essence of participants' lived experience". The data was coded and sorted into themes describing different aspects of their sisterhood experience. I tried to keep several sentences of dialogue of the same theme together. Each of these chunks of dialogue was then turned into a four-line stanza or quatrain. Only one woman's voice was used for each quatrain to eliminate confusion. The women's quatrains were then merged together to create a thematic flow. Preserving their unique language allowed me to capture each individual's story.

Critics of narrative analysis argue that the methodology is a combination of social science and literary craft. Reissman (1993) suggested a four-part method to achieve trustworthiness. First, a narrative should be persuasive to the reader. This can occur when the author supports the theory with the written poem or story. Correspondence is the

second method. The researcher takes the final interpretation back to the subjects. The

participants can provide feedback, but people change and develop. These individual

changes may cause them to see their story differently. The researcher ultimately decides

what to include in the final narrative analysis. Third is a coherence criterion, which means

that the information should be thick. The theme should appear repeatedly in the narrative.

Pragmatic use is the last way the researcher achieves trustworthiness. Reismann (1993)

suggested providing information on how participants obtain knowledge. This includes

describing how the participants produced interpretations, making it visible, identifying

how successive transformations occurred, and providing primary data.

Qualitative research is emergent in nature and the researcher must be open to

finding unexpected themes. Depending on the individual, this process can last for several

months. The researcher should treat all information received through thematic sorting

with equal value. The researcher focuses on the individual subject's feelings, values, or

beliefs. The narrative is the researcher's re-representation and reconstruction of the

person's experience. Through the story of self-authorship, themes should unfold.

Narrative analysis is beneficial because it provides a memorable form of knowledge

for the reader. The story weaves together the layers of culture, values, beliefs, and

experiences. These layers help the reader understand what has happened to the subject

and the challenges they face. As the sorority women begin the process of self-authorship,

their stories unfold the complexity of their struggles and relationships. The narrative thus

highlights identity construction and reconstruction.

Credibility. When embarking on a study a good researcher knows that the learning

which takes place along the journey is just as important as the final results. This portion of

the manuscript discusses the importance of creating a good research plan to limit human error and strengthen the research process. I provide a step-by-step plan to the reader and provide support from relevant texts.

Triangulation is a commonly used and accepted method in qualitative research to increase trustworthiness and integrity. It involves the use of two additional qualitative methods to compare with the results of the primary research. Through the use of three methods, additional data is created and triangulation occurs. For this study, observations and document analysis added to the interview information. Member checking occurred at the end of the study when the participants received a copy of the paper and provided feedback about the findings. The researcher should view the subject's responses as credible and take them into consideration. Member checks can be formal and informal. The individuals were provided with detailed information and a summary of emergent themes. The document analysis entailed a review of the university Panhellenic and sorority chapter information such as recruitment guides, websites, newsletters, and training materials.

Limitations

This study was limited to one public institution in the midwestern area of the United States. The Greek life program at this institution was very strong and highly supported by the university. Each of the houses contained 60-100beds. Sorority membership was still structured around a traditional formal fall recruitment. All of the participants were part of only two chapters. This provided a limited perspective on the big/little experience. The women also volunteered to participate. Individuals who had negative big/little experience probably would not have volunteered for the project. It would also have been more helpful to interview the women in the spring semester because the freshman and sophomore

responses would have probably been richer. At the time of the interview, they had only spent a few months together as a big/little pair.

Summary

The research design is essential to helping the researcher define what knowledge is and how best to discover those truths. The goal of this study was to uncover the subject's experience of being a sorority big/little sister. For this reason, the researcher chose the qualitative methodology of narrative case study. The methods of interviewing, participant observation, and document analysis were essential in providing trustworthiness and helping to discover the participants' reality. This study aimed to share their voice in a way that was truthful, authentic, and honest.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The central focus of this dissertation was to gain an understanding of the impact of

the Greek sorority dyadic big/little relationship on a meaning-making of self-authorship

among sorority members. This chapter offers the representation of data and the results of

the research process. This study employed several research methods: observational field

notes, document analysis, and interviews. I presented the data, following one of the many

techniques of the narrative analysis. Specifically, I utilized a poetic narrative representation

to reduce the raw data into a narrative format and highlight the narrative linkages that I

observed in the story-telling of each participant. This method allowed me to treat data

inductively for the significant topics to emerge for the narrative of each case/dyad. This

methodology was selected because it permitted me to foreground the process of how

meanings were constructed. It also provided an analytical tool which allowed me to look

through the data and gain a deeper insight into sorority culture, including the values and

beliefs of women about their relationships and the Greek experience. Thus, while

observations and document analysis produced contextual data, face-to-face interviews did

shed light on individual-level meaning-making of who they were as a result of their

interaction with their big or little sister.

Contextual Findings

Documents served as a primary data source for the analysis. The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs at Plains University suggested which documents to use for the review. Student affairs staff members identified the information significant to provide insight into the culture of Greek life on campus. Some of the documents were publicly available on the university website and on campus, while two of the items used were only available to other student affairs professionals on campus.

One of the internal documents was the national survey conducted by the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA) and Educational Benchmarking, Inc. (EBI). These organizations had input into creating this assessment tool. The survey asked students about their "academic life, leadership and personal development, community service and philanthropic involvement, alcohol and other drug usage, diversity, membership education, satisfaction with the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, and anticipated alumni activity." The population included 3,600 randomly selected students who were members of Greek social fraternities and sororities. The study had a 41% return rate with 849 responses from sorority members. Individual college campuses were required to pay for the assessment measure. Due to the cost of the survey, Plains University had only participated once during the 2011 – 2012 academic year. The study designers compared these results against 50 institutions that also completed the survey during the academic year. Researchers offered a newer version of this assessment tool to institutions annually.

Another important private document was information compiled from a Greek Life

Task Force that occurred in spring 2014. The task force addressed behavioral issues within

campus fraternities. Two of the chapters had hazing infractions after attending mandatory

hazing seminars provided by the campus. The purpose of the task force included eight

separate charges. These included reviewing the structure of the Greek judicial process to

determine which student conduct violations should go directly to university administrators

instead of referral to a body of their Greek peers. The group also reviewed "A Statement of

Relationship and Expectations for Fraternities and Sororities." The university created this

document in the 1990s. This document was significant because it clarified the roles of

chapters and the university in their support of Greek life on campus. Another charge was to

create programming to encourage active bystanders to speak out if students were making

poor decisions. This document provided perspective on the unique relationship of Greek

chapters with the university. It also helped clarify what each of these groups found

important.

The Role of the Chapters from the Plains University Perspective: The Institutional Narrative

The document review led to the creation of several themes: interpersonal skills,

leadership, academic life, alcohol and drug use, and Panhellenic excellence. All together

these themes provided a big picture of Greek life at Plains University – the Greek Life as an

organization.

Interpersonal Skills. This category included a person's ability to interact with

others successfully. An individual with strong skills in this area was expected to

communicate well with others, manage conflict, and build trust. The homepage of the

fraternity and sorority affairs website stated, "Greek affiliation also allows students to

make lasting friendships with individuals with similar ideas and purposes." This sentiment

was echoed by the statement from the 2016 Panhellenic recruitment book. The welcome

letter from the recruitment chairs also stated, "We hope that throughout formal

recruitment, you will also find the chapter you feel is comfortable to you. As women we

know how much these strong ties have changed our lives." In the statement about

relationships and expectations for fraternities and sororities, the language was as follows

"participation offers developmental opportunities through supportive friendships."

When assessing the AFA/EBI survey results, I found that there were ten questions

related to student interpersonal competence. Each began the exact same way:

> To what degree has your fraternity/sorority experience enhanced your ability to:
>
> Think critically, define problems, solve problems, effectively manage conflict,
>
> motivate others, develop trust among members, listen effectively, understand
>
> others by putting yourself in their place, establish potential networking
>
> relationships, and engage faculty outside the classroom.

Plains University had a statistically higher mean compared to the mean of the 50 other

institutions. Sorority women at Plains University ranked 13th highest overall.

Leadership. For sorority women, leadership could mean involvement on campus in

student organizations as well as the development of key leadership skills. The Office of

Fraternity and Sorority Affairs had two leadership programs for members. The website

provided this narrative,

> Junior Greek Life is an organization for freshman new members in the Greek
>
> community at Oklahoma State University. The organization promotes leadership,

campus involvement, and tries to instill in its members a sense of passion for the

Greek community at OSU.

The second group was the Order of Omega. It was a national honor society for Greeks based

on the leadership involvement.

Emphasis on leadership was also evident in the Panhellenic recruitment book,

"Sororities encourage active involvement in campus organizations and foster the skills

necessary for their members to become strong leaders." The book claimed that "sorority

women and fraternity men hold more than half of the leadership positions" at Plains

University. Groups with Greek officers included student government association,

homecoming committee, and the freshman welcome camp. The campus Panhellenic

website page for parents stated,

> Because sorority chapters are self-governing bodies in which the members take on
>
> the responsibilities of running the organization, sorority life is a special living and
>
> learning environment. The hands-on experience of holding an office in the chapter
>
> helps members develop leadership, organization and communication skills.

Researchers identified leadership skills as one of the learning outcomes in the AFA/EBI

assessment. Five questions focused on practical leadership competencies. These questions

all began the same way, "To what degree has your fraternity/sorority experience enhanced

your ability to: Assume positions of responsibility, manage finances, organize events, run

meetings, and publicize events." Sorority women at Plains University ranked 25th out of 50

institutions placing them in the middle nationally.

Academic Life. It is important to sorority chapters and higher education institutions to have successful students with high retention rates. The campus Panhellenic website page for parents discussed the academic expectations in detail:

> The sorority community makes academics a top priority knowing your student is at OSU to get an education. Many chapters have an academic development program which enforces a strict academic policy that includes maintaining a respectable grade point average to participate in chapter activities. Further, each sorority has its own scholarship program that will help your student succeed academically as well as learn to effectively manage their time away from classes. Scholarship programs can include study hours, mentors, support technology and/or study files. In addition, many of the chapter houses include quiet places to study as well as resource rooms or libraries complete with computers including online connections as well as copy/fax machines.

Scholarship was also mentioned in several places in the Panhellenic recruitment book. First, "the all-sorority average GPA consistently exceeds the PU undergraduate all-women's average. The Panhellenic GPA for the fall 2015 semester was 3.349." There was also a warning for women going through a formal recruitment:

> If your high school GPA is below a 3.0 or your college GPA is below a 2.7, you may have significantly fewer opportunities than participants with higher GPAs. Potential new members who do not meet the minimum academic requirements of a specific chapter are typically released early in the recruitment process.

Plains University addressed scholastic achievement in their Statement of Relationships and Expectations for Fraternities and Sororities. The document identified the benefits to Greek

chapters. Other statements included "The right to request and receive through the office of fraternity and sorority affairs academic information essential to assessing scholastic performance of the organization, according to official procedures." Plains University endorsed Greek chapters "as long as they remain complementary to the educational purposes of the university."

The AFA/EBI survey included three questions related to a student's academic success. The first two questions were, "To what degree has your fraternity/sorority experience contributed to your: Setting academic goals and academic success". Each of these ranked PU sorority responses 17th out of 50 schools. "To what degree has your fraternity/sorority experience contributed to your: Self discipline." The PU sorority women ranked 12th highest in the same group of institutions. There were no other questions directly relating to academic success on the survey.

Alcohol and Drug Use. The Statement of Relationships and Expectations for Fraternities and Sororities at Plains University clearly discussed the expectation of the institution concerning alcohol and drugs:

> Chapters are responsible for strongly discouraging the use of illegal drugs and the
> misuse and abuse of alcohol. Furthermore, they are responsible for assuring that all
> forms of alcohol use are within the policies of the university and the laws of the city
> and state. Each chapter that provides housing is responsible for maintaining a
> substance-free environment on chapter property.

Further information about alcohol was included in the Panhellenic recruitment book: "The possession, use and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages is absolutely prohibited while on chapter premises." The information went into further detail to discuss that chapters

could not use their funds to purchase alcohol, no one was allowed to purchase bulk alcohol for the chapter or individuals, and chapters could not co-sponsor or co-finance events with alcohol. All recruitment functions were required to be dry and drinking games in any form were not permitted. The list was very detailed for the potential new members.

There were only two questions on the AFA/EBI assessment related to alcohol and drug use within sororities. They were listed under the learning outcome of healthy behaviors. "To what degree has your fraternity/sorority encouraged you to drink responsibly/abstain" and "To what degree has your fraternity/sorority encouraged you to understand the consequences of drug use and abuse." PU sororities ranked near the middle at 23rd nationally on both questions.

Panhellenic Council Excellence. Displayed prominently on the main page of the Plains University Panhellenic website was a list of awards received by the group. The same awards were listed within the Panhellenic recruitment book and printed brochures. The Association of Fraternity Leadership and Values (AFLV) sought to promote Greek growth through education, leadership, and values. Each year Greek councils, chapters, and individual members could apply for awards and other recognition. In 2016, PU Panhellenic Council won seven of eight award categories, including council management, leadership and educational development, membership recruitment, philanthropy and community service, public relations, risk reduction and management, and self-governance and judicial affairs. The group also won the Southerland Award in Division III for five out of the last seven years. This award was given to the Panhellenic council with the highest scores in the eight award categories. They were also given the Gamma Sigma Alpha GPA Award for having the highest GPA difference compared to non-Greek students in the spring 2015

semester. The difference was .4137 between the sorority women and non-Greek students. In 2015 the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) honored Plains University Panhellenic with the Achievement Award. The award was given to councils who follow the standards of excellence set for Panhellenic associations. Only 22 schools were recognized with this award during 2015.

Plains University is also the only campus to have a Greek Neighborhood Association. This group worked to create a beautiful and safe environment for members of the chapter houses. The group added over 200 additional lights around the neighborhood at a cost of $280,000. The association also added additional street signs and worked with the city to improve services within the community. Having a positive working relationship with the city, Greek students improved parking issues along the streets, and they also worked closely to have additional law enforcement for the neighborhood during major campus events like sorority bid day and homecoming.

Fundraising and Service. Throughout the year the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Affairs hosted three shows where Greek students could showcase their singing and dancing talent. Two of these shows in the spring academic semester of 2016 raised over $5,100 dollars for local charities. On the Panhellenic website page for parents it stated "In 2011, students raised nearly a quarter of a million dollars and gave over 70,000 hours of their time". Every semester the office of fraternity and sorority affairs published a digital newsletter. Each chapter received a page for chapter specific news. While reviewing the document it was clear that at least half of the chapters reported on service hours and fundraising.

The Role of Greek Traditions and Student Culture: The Observed

Qualitative research often strives to be naturalistic in its approach. My goal was to understand human behavior that was embedded in a culture of that organization. Observing two key events in the fall 2016 semester helped me to better understand the cultural context in which sorority members' meaning-making occurred. The observations took place during the Panhellenic formal recruitment event and bid day over the course of eight days.

Formal Recruitment. It was a beautiful sunny day in early August. The temperature was 101 degrees at 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon. On the road separating university property and the Greek neighborhood association, there were lines of young women in summer dresses, tennis shoes, and backpacks or totes. As they walked away from the student union closer to the Greek chapter houses, the conversations between the women began to slow and turn into silence as they approached their destinations. Upon crossing the invisible barrier of the road, a view of the neighborhood came into perspective. Eleven chapter houses stretched across six blocks. There were 29 chapter houses located within the neighborhood association. All of the buildings were at least two stories, brick, and had elaborate entrances.

A small group of women had formed outside the chapter closest to the center of campus. The house was a Tudor style, three-story brown brick building. There was a series of pitched gabled roofs highlighted by timbers and windows. The decorative stone trim was accented by a tan stucco that appeared in the upper floors, and the focal point of the beautiful building was the heavy arched wooden front door. Just outside the entrance was a small bricked-in patio with heavy iron furniture. A square tent was set up next to the

furniture with the chapter's letter across the white canvas. Underneath the tent was a black

metal storage unit with five levels of shelves. Each level contained items that a potential

new member may need during recruitment. These lifesavers were combs, hair bands, Q-

tips, Kleenex, hairspray, safety pins, and small mirrors.

As groups of the women continued to arrive, some of the ladies sat and replaced

tennis shoes with high heels. Other women checked their hair and clothing in the mirrors

available. On a table next to these supplies was a large blue cooler filled with cold water,

and a few individuals grabbed cups to take a drink. The air began to fill with the scent of

perfumes and hairspray as the women hurried to wrap up their preparations before the

party.

One of the Gamma Chi's or recruitment counselors walked through a crowd of

dresses wearing a t-shirt, shorts, and flip-flops. The green-eyed brunette wearing little

makeup announced, "Girls start getting in line. You all look so pretty!" Thirty-four young

ladies all began to form a line in alphabetical order. Every one of them had hair at least as

long as their shoulders, wore no glasses, and all wore some type of dress. The ladies were

beautiful in bright colors, with shining jewelry, and full makeup. They rejected the

traditional southern look of linen and pearls, but instead wore modern clean dresses with

statement jewelry that became the focal point of the outfit.

The solid wood door opened to the chapter house and a thin woman with blond hair

emerged. She was holding a clipboard with a hot pink tulle bow that perfectly matched the

tulle bow in her hair. Her outfit was a white blazer and skirt. Both were perfect and crisp,

without wrinkles. She worked her way down the line of potential new members and

checked each name off her list on the clipboard. The recruitment counselors followed her,

fanning each girl with a with a homemade paper fan. When the task was complete she

retreated back through the wood door into the house. As soon as the door closed behind

her, loud pounding noises could be heard from the chapter. The pounding sped up to a

crescendo and the women inside all shouted the chapter name. The door burst open and

the potential new members walked into the house to music:

"We're the girls who are fancy-free, we're the ones who can't be beat

Got everything you desire, gonna set your world on fire

We are ___ We are ____"

As the potential new members finished streaming into the chapter, the entry was

revealed. Sorority women covered the three-story staircase that looked down on a single

entry point. All of the members were dressed in matching shirts, with each of the sisters

looking her best and wearing a large smile as she sang. As the potential new members

stepped inside they were each greeted and escorted deeper into the house by a member.

The pairs walked off deep in conversation. Each was quickly trying to learn as much as

possible about the other.

Outside the chapter the recruitment counselors checked their phones to document

what time the party began to ensure that the potential new members (PNMs) would leave

the chapter within the designated time. The recruitment counselors wrote information

down about the party, checked the water to make sure it was still full, and picked up some

of the items left by the PNMs. Once the basic tasks were completed they sat and talked

while waiting for the end of the party.

At the end of the party, the PNMs changed their shoes to something more

comfortable, grabbed their backpacks, and began to walk down Greek row to the next

party. After they passed four fraternity houses with perfectly green and manicured lawns, a tan sorority house appeared. The first view showed four white columns flanked on each side with large concrete lions. On the roof appeared the chapter letters in gold. The door was wood with glass in the center and iron to protect and decorate it further. On the side was a scanner for the women to enter with easy access and increase security. To the sides of the door were intricate, stained glass pieces with the sorority symbol and motto.

A tent was set up on the driveway to the right of the columns. The potential new members gathered around a fan that was blowing cool air. Some of them started to check their hair and fix makeup while they had time, and all of them were sweating in the intense summer heat. The women again started swapping comfortable shoes for heels stored in bags and backpacks. The recruitment counselors at this chapter began to walk and talk with the informal groups of women. Each of them was wearing matching t-shirts and Converse low-top sneakers. This pair of recruitment counselors seemed to like each other and liked making the potential new members s feel good. The blond woman said "Don't worry; everyone is hot. You look awesome!" Then the brunette recruitment counselor said "Only a few days until bid day, and then you can put this behind you!" The PNMs who were busy applying lipstick and brushing out their hair looked up from their tasks and smiled back at the women. I could see some of the PNMs begin to relax their shoulders and talk to the other girls. The mood became much lighter.

The recruitment counselors were quieter for about a minute when one shouted, "Hey girls it's almost time." Upon those words each of the PNMs began to form a line in perfect alphabetical order down the walkway in front of the door. The women became somber and quiet. A woman in a white dress exited the chapter with a clipboard in hand. As

she walked past the line of women, checking their nametags, you could see that she had just brushed her long dark hair that hit just above her waist. Not a strand seemed to be out of place. Her fingernails matched her toes and her necklace complemented the shade with sparkling pink stones. When finished she turned without a smile and went in the house. A thumping sound began and the door flung open to a song: "Like it, love it,/Listen and I'll tell you why,/I'm the member of the best sorority/It may be on earth but it's heaven to me."

Rows of women proceeded down the second floor to the first on the entry staircase. Each of the potential new members was greeted by a sorority member who provided a handshake while saying "Hi, welcome back." The process was like a complicated dance. Each PNM entered on the ground floor. All of the women lined up on the stairs would take a step down after each PNM was paired. After all 29 PNMs were inside, the sorority members remaining closed the front door quietly. The recruitment counselors again checked their cell phones to time the party. Both of the women found shade under the porch and chatted quietly through the party.

On the next day, preference round began. The potential new members began to stream out of the residence halls looking tired and not speaking with each other much. The women were wearing their best dresses due to the importance of the occasion. Some of them were in nice black cocktail-style dresses, while others were wearing brighter dresses with lace or fancy trim. Some of the PNMs had no backpacks or bags because they may have only been attending one chapter before a break. Along Greek row some of the grass was wet from the overnight watering of the sprinkler systems. The women seemed to be aware of the issue and stayed on the sidewalks. Those without backpacks carried their nice heels while wearing flatter shoes. Several from the day before were returning to the same

chapter house with the lions in the front. The recruitment counselors greeted them with "Good morning." One of them walked over to hug a girl in a blue dress and they spoke for a while.

After five minutes most of the potential new members all showed up. The recruitment counselor stated "Good morning, it's the last day; you're almost there!" The potential new members smiled and began to line up in alphabetical order. One recruitment counselor walked through the PNMs while checking a list. She looked up at her partner with a look of dread. "We have one missing." In a louder tone she shouted "Is Alison _____ here? If you are here please get in line!" Underneath a far tree a woman in a pink dress stood up and wiped her eyes. She was not smiling and had red blotches on her face and under her eyes. She stiffly walked into place in line where the other PNMs seemed to comfort her. One recruitment counselor quietly stated "not happy with her pref." The other counselor replied, "I'll talk to her later." The same attractive thin woman from the day before walked out of the chapter house with the clipboard in her hands. She again checked the line and proceeded back to the house. As the doors opened the women were all dressed in black with pearl jewelry. They were singing quietly, "White shining stars, upon my diamond pin/ Symbols of the friendship that is held within./Loyal and true, I pledge my love to you/_____ _____ forever, wearing White and Blue."

On the next morning a crowd of people gathered in the center of campus between the student union and library. A small stage had been set up with black speakers flanking the sides. Music flooded the space playing DJ Kahaled's "All I do is win win win no matter what." When the lyrics said "Everybody's hands go up and they stay there," the crowd in unison threw their hands up and started bouncing to the beat. Directly opposite of the

stage was another platform which contained a man wearing PU communications gear with filming equipment. A separate group of employees from the communications department were operating a drone with a camera underneath its torso. The crowd watched the object circle overhead, and as it got close to groups of people they waved and pointed at it.

It became apparent that there were two separate groups of people attending the official Panhellenic formal recruitment bid day celebration. The first group was the sorority women. The women were all grouped together by chapter. The separate groups were easy to recognize because they were carrying large chapter letters and homemade signs, and they were all dressed alike. Due to the heat most of the women selected tank tops. The shirts were turquoise, white, and green. One of the group's shirts said "Thought _____ Thought Right." Another shirt showed a baseball diamond and said "Welcome home to _____ -_____ -_____." The women were all wearing the appropriate colors and symbols of their chapter. Some groups made their outfits fun by adding tulle tutu skirts, or headbands with antennae that bounced as they walked. One group had each of their members in face paint and glitter. It was an atmosphere of excitement and anticipation.

On the edges of the lawn stood a separate group of people. This group was the parents and families of the potential new members. As the music switched to the Spice Girls singing "I'll tell you what I want, what I really really want," the parents watched the sorority women dance to the music. One of the ladies stood with her husband and son. She clutched a Louis Vuitton bag and had large diamond rings on her fingers. Another woman on the edge of the lawn was wearing skinny jeans and a Ralph Lauren polo black v-neck t-shirt. She was wearing pearls with her casual clothing. Throughout the audience were beautiful handbags from Coach, Michael Kors, and Kate Spade.

"Please be appropriate; this is going to be live-streamed" announced the brunette woman who had advised and guided the students and was now standing beside the stage. From the right-hand side, lines of women came running up to the stage. The potential new members were smiling and holding invitation cards to their new chapters. As the women found their way to their new chapters, they were welcomed with hugs and cheers. Some of the PNMs hopped up and down as they grew closer to the sea of people. A student moved up to the podium and said, "Welcome everyone." She paused to make sure she had their attention. "Roll call; let's call out the names one at a time." In alphabetical order each of the chapters did a chant. The women waved and screamed at the cameras.

Once the roll call was completed the announcer said, "Now we are going to let you know your recruitment counselors' affiliation and hometown." One by one each of the recruitment counselors announced their name, hometown, and chapter. When finished each ran into the screaming mass of sorority sisters waiting for them. The drone circled overhead. After all of the women were gone the woman at the podium exclaimed, "Enjoy your bid day! You are all now dismissed; enjoy your bid day!" The song "Let's Get It Started" by the Black Eyed Peas began to play as the swarm of women ran towards Greek row.

The parents who were quietly waiting on the edges of the event were then connected with their daughters. Some of them carried flowers and gift baskets as congratulations gifts. The morning sun began to turn hot and several people started sweating walking through campus. At the Greek chapter houses, a mix of different music could be heard. The street between campus and the Greek neighborhood association was blocked by local law enforcement to prevent car traffic, and was littered with glitter and confetti from the celebration. In front of the large sorority houses bleachers were set up for

group photos. Different banners hung off the sides of the houses indicating the theme of the bid day party for each chapter. One banner said "Bringing home the gold since 18 ___ ." The Olympic rings appeared on the banner, t-shirts, and balloons. Large chapter letters painted red, white, and blue sat next to the entrance. Women posed in groups next to the wood signs, each holding up one, two, or three fingers to indicate their big/little sister family order. Other groups of sorority women used their hands to form diamonds to represent their chapter's symbol. A few houses down the banner showed a gold flame and read "Go for the Gold." The wood chapter letters were painted in shiny gold. Some of the other chapter banners read "Aloha" and "Loyalty Forever." Chapters without large dinning areas had separate tents set up with tables and chairs. The catering varied from barbeque to hamburgers and hot dogs. The sororities continued the festivities into the afternoon with alumni and parents. After dark the potential new members and current members spent time getting to know each other through more relaxing activities like watching movies.

Individual Level Findings: The Narrated Sorority Member Voice

From August 2016 through January 2017 I interviewed six undergraduate women about their experience of being part of a sorority big/little sister dyad. To recruit the participants one of the advisors of the Plains University Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs sent an email to the Panhellenic executive officers. Two of the women were interested in participating in the process. After interviewing each of the women and their big/little sisters, the women were able to refer another pair of participants. The alumni pair were recruited by e-mailing a list of chapter advisors.

All of the participants responded by e-mail or text. Once initial contact was made, I continued our communication about time and location with the students through text

messaging. I sent a text to remind the student about the meeting a day before each interview. The first time that I saw the students was at the interview meeting.

The following four poems are comprised of the words of the big and little sisters to narrate their meaning-making of the role of their big/little relationship in their lives. Each poem represents a narrative of a single case: one big/little pair. Each of the four-line stanzas of the poem focuses on a single topic. The information following each poem provides more insights into the key topics that appear in the narratives.

Table 1.

Participants	Role	Year	Poem Title	Topics
Trisha	Big Sister	Sophomore	"Role Model"	Stereotypes and Stigma of Sorority Life; Buddies; Time; Twins; Involvement; Career Questions; Role Model
Liz	Little Sister	Freshman		
Chelsea	Big Sister	Senior	"Always be There"	Mutual Selection; Personal Improvement; Buddies; Big/Little Reveal; Loss of Family; Twin; Learning from Each Other
Sara	Little Sister	Junior		
Brooke	Big Sister	Senior	"Better Person Because of Her"	Buddies; "Big" as a Role Model; Big/Little Connection; Mom; Contract; Alike; Initiation; Boyfriend; Family Name; Involvement; Time Together; Career
Jessica	Little Sister	Senior		
Helen	Big Sister	Alumni	"Friends for Life"	Parents Pat of Greek Life; Sisters Attending Weddings and Funerals; Time Together; Learning about Being a Big Sister; Always There; Bad Littles; Bad Influence; Boyfriend; Busy with Life; Lasting Friendship
Louise	Little Sister	Alumni		

Pair One Trisha/Big and Liz/Little

Trish contacted me by email because she was interested in participating in the research. One of her sisters had informed her that I was still looking for participants. I was impressed by how professional and well-formed her email was. I requested her phone number and we decided on a time over text messaging. She asked if I could interview her and her little at the same time. I had to tell her no, but she arranged for her little to arrive after our interview.

Trisha was a sophomore from a small town with a graduating class of around one hundred people. When I first met her she greeted me with a smile. She knew my co-worker and they exchanged small talk about a previous event on campus while she waited for me to pull together my papers. She arrived earlier than scheduled. Trish carried a Kate Spade water bottle with her initial on the front, and it was filled with what looked like water. Her glasses were the same color and were also Kate Spade. The Fitbit on her arm matched the other two items and several other accessories. Her outfit was well curated. She had make - up on and her hair was fixed.

She was relaxed as we briefly talked about when her little would arrive. When discussing Liz she smiled. She talked about how they were trying to plan lunch together after the interview. Trish explained that they ate together at least once a week on campus. She was texting her as we began the interview process.

Liz appeared outside of the office to meet Trish after her interview. Liz appeared nervous and relieved to see her big. She was carrying her backpack and looked like she was returning from class. Her brown hair was pulled back and she wore little if any makeup. Her outfit was less accessorized than her big.

When Trish left us Liz appeared stiff as she sat across from me. She made less eye contact than several of the other women I interviewed. Most of her initial answers were short and her voice monotone as she answered. She appeared to be glad when we finished, so that she could meet her big.

Freshman and *Sophomore* Poem**: Role Model.** To highlight the interaction between the two, I formatted Trish's words in italics and Liz's words in regular font in the poem.

Older sister

Blood sister

Senior in the house

I'm not going to the same house as her

That's where I am supposed to be

If I hadn't fit the criteria the girls that I talked to wouldn't have rated me highly

Recruitment standards

Academic achievement, leadership, character, financial responsibility, and personal development

I just really clicked with the girls

I had a lot in common with them

Felt like home

My pledge class we're like family

I go home people say "How's buying your friends"

I'm buying a place to live

I'm buying food

I'm buying connections . . . opportunity

Something that I encounter a lot

Stereotypes

Random people

Sororities and fraternities like the death of America

There's a stigma

Get a person to look past that

There is not a stereotypical sorority girl

All of us are pretty different

Buddies

Responsible for getting them everywhere

Take them on little dates, sonic or ice cream

Get to know them, they get to know us

I was recruited by her big and Her G

I was like super-excited to finally meet her

Heard so much about her

We talked about her

Sitting in the car

I said "I love you"

She goes "I love you too"

That was the moment we both knew

We're going to pref each other

That's pref math

The moment that I knew

I wanted her as my big

Buddies

Sophomores

Drive us to and from chapter

Opportunity to get to know them

Before big little reveal

Top three

We preffed who we wanted

A member is in charge of pairing

My big was my second buddy

We just really clicked

I knew there was no one else that I wanted

My big

Senior/freshman coke date

Look under your chairs

Envelopes

A note

Ran upstairs

Found my crafts and things

Another card

Get dressed and come downstairs

Our fam outfits

I ran downstairs and saw all of my family standing there

I ran screaming to her

Me and my big

We are always there for each other

Not like attached at the hip

I love that about her

It just felt like we're old friends

They pranked us

Our names in a bucket

Draw you out and see who you get

Psych

Card under the chair

Change into matching outfits

Big boxes hiding with our names on them

We run over – Our shirts this year it said "ohana" (Family)

Every little get's a wood sign that's a LIL

Big personalizes them for you

My big cannot craft

It's still in my room I love it

My other little

Is terrible at crafting

Made me a Christmas present

It's not the best . . . that's not what it's all about

I made my littles some paddles

Decorative ones

I want them to do that for their littles

I will probably end up doing it

Some of them are very close with their bigs

Some of them just don't talk to them

Some people got exactly who they wanted

Others didn't

We have a family group text

My G, her two littles, all of their littles

My littles

My cousins littles, it's like a bunch of people

Whine fam

Like whine or wine

We're all really easy criers

All of our older girls like they love wine

Family Christmas

We did our own thing and hung out before

You take pictures

Cookies and punch

I could just tell from their relationship

It was pretty similar to how ours is

We were going to be twins

Told myself not to be so petty

My relationship with my littles is kind of weird

One is like my big and one is like my G

They're so opposite from each other

It's so weird to see myself play out in both of them

We're really different

She's pretty quiet and a lot more reserved

I'm loud and out there

We are good paired, we balance each other out

Only sophomores can take a freshman little

We took 70 from recruitment

Only 40 of us

Willing to have twins

Person in charge of big little

Called a mystagogue

Look at if you're financially able to do twins

Points that we accrue...your character as a person

Big little

Rules

You are not supposed to talk about who you love

It's all supposed to be really neutral and it never really is

Officially from headquarters

The definition of the big little relationship is supposed to be like a guide for college

It started as like an academic mentorship

There's not really any written definition

During initiation week

Facilitate their initiation process

I week guides

If they have any questions . . . ask us about it

I just don't think either of them see each other

I think next year whenever they are both living in the house

They will get to know each other

It's because the whole PC just lives spread out

Having a twin sometimes is hard

Equal time with both of us

It's a balancing act

Kind of difficult

One is so low maintenance

She . . . just shows up

The other ones like calling me

Texting me

I see one of them almost daily

My other one I see less often

Probably once a week maybe even once every other week

It's just all she needs, and that's what I'm here for

We get food

We study

She's one of my best friends

We just hang out

Homecoming

Chapter

Formal dinner

We will sit together

It's kind of understood from talking to your big or friends

You select what kind of big do you want to be

Do you want to be the mom

Want to be the older sister friend

Low maintenance one

I'm definitely like a mom

My other one

We're like obsessed with each other

Whatever the little needed

Whatever you need

Dynamic

It can change from day to day

She's been a great influence and role model

I want to be that for someone else

She's very good at taking care of people

I hope I can come off that caring and warm

One of them had an issue

Academic dishonesty

Didn't know who else to talk to

She of course came to me

She just needed to talk about it

Talk it out with herself

What should I do

This is what you are going to do

Always a challenge trying to find time

Time to sit down and talk

You have to work hard

To still have time

She has helped me acclimate to college

Helps me become a better person

Inspired me to get involved

I expected to be very close with my big, I'm very glad that I am

She just got a position in the house

Two lower division positions

One under me, one under the housing person

She's finding her place

The lower maintenance one

Scholarships that require a lot of study hours

She didn't have a lot of time to get involved

Hopefully next year

We'll do better next semester

Slower paced semester

Liz . . . starting to put in that effort

My other little just doesn't really

I thought that we would be pretty much best friends

There's this pair

Inseparable...definition of best friends

You want that

It's different

You can't have that instantly

It's been sixteen weeks

I defiantly thought there would be more quicker

It's made me grow up

Helped me decide on what I think about things

Helping me set up my views of the world

Help me decide what kind of person I hope to be

I really value our relationship

She's such a good person

She's such a good role model

Very thankful for her

This is my family

This is where I belong

I have someone in my corner

Support

We always know we have someone there

Have people we can call across campus

Once we graduate we have people we can call across the world

Relationship we can always count on no matter what

I'm really indecisive about what I want to do with my life

We'll sit down and talk about it

You need to do something that's going to make you happy

We talk about that a lot

Made me realize you really can do whatever

You have the powers to do it

You have to believe in yourself

As a woman I have discovered the side of me that is more confident

Parents are both teachers

Following the footsteps

Something I've always really loved

My dad is upset

My dad said you should do something else

It placed that seed in my head

Having these people to mentor and teach

Solidified . . . yes this is what I am supposed to be doing

Freshman and Sophomore Key Topics.

Each of the topics included below were discussed by both members of the dyadic pair. I will go into detail about the topics presented in this individual case.

Stereotypes and stigma of sorority life. Both of the women addressed the issue of negative stereotypes. Trish stated, "I go home people say "'How's buying your friends?'" Her response to them was that she was paying for housing, food, and ultimately connections. She discussed the issue for a while, stating that she encounters a lot of negative reactions about being a sorority woman. She was visibly upset when answering this question. Liz agreed "There's a stigma." She said that she tries to get people to look past her sorority membership. Her argument was that there are no stereotypical sorority women. Each of them has different values, passions, and goals.

The next topic is the buddies. Both women discussed the process of receiving buddies before becoming a big/little pair. The buddies are responsible for picking the

women up for sorority functions like formal dinners, chapter, and new member meetings. Trish stated they were "responsible for getting them everywhere." Liz mirrored this, that they "drive us to and from chapter." The goal was for each of the women to spend time together to get to know each other. Trish said "Get to know them. They get to know us." Liz said it was an "opportunity to get to know them." There was intense emotion in the words used by both women. Trish said "I love you" to her big in the car and "That was the moment we both knew." In the interview Liz did not mention love but stated, "We just clicked; I knew there was no one else I wanted."

Big/little reveal. This event is one of the key rituals that the women discussed. For each of them the day of big/little reveal was a surprise. Trish was attending a senior/freshman Coke date and Trish was at a new member meeting. Both discussed changing into matching sorority family clothing. Trish instructed "Get dressed and come downstairs . . . Our fam outfits" while Liz said "Our shirts this year said 'Ohana.'" She later explained it was because ohana means family and it is from the Disney movie *Lilo and Stitch.* Both discuss running to their families and bigs due to the excitement of seeing each other.

Twins. Trish discussed the need for several members of the sophomore class to take two littles or twins. Both also discussed how different each of the freshman women were from each other. Trish said "One is like my big and one is like my G . . . they're so opposite from each other." Liz stated "We're really different . . . she's quiet and a lot more reserved . . . I'm loud and out there." Both discussed the differences in a positive light. Liz told herself "Not to be so petty" about being a twin.

Time. Trisha was concerned about the amount of time all of them were spending together. Liz she described as seeing "almost daily" while her other little she saw "once a week maybe even once every other week." Liz said Trish tried to have "equal time with both of us." She was concerned about Trish's busy schedule and how difficult it was to find the time. Trish was very concerned about creating a close relationship with both and for each of the twins to become closer friends.

Involvement. It was clear throughout our interview that Trisha was highly involved in sorority life. She discussed directing some of the chapter's shows. Late in the discussion Liz said Trish "inspired me to get involved." In December, Liz got two positions in the chapter. Trish explained the positions as "one under me, one under the housing person." She also said "She's finding her place." Trish seemed to be connecting her to leadership positions.

Role Model. Liz said Trish was "such a good role model" and "She's been a great influence and role model; I want to be that for someone else." Trish discussed selecting what kind of big you want to be. She mentioned "Mom" and "Older sister friend." Both of these represented role models and mentors in life.

Career Questions. Trish and Liz also discussed struggles over deciding a career path. Trish wanted to be a teacher but struggled with her father's disapproval. She said "My dad said you should do something else . . . it placed that seed in my head." Trish ultimately said "Having these people to mentor and teach . . . solidified . . . yes this is what I am supposed to be doing." Liz said "I'm really indecisive about what I want to do with my life." She said Trish and she "talk about it a lot."

Pair Two: Chelsea/Big and Sara/Little

The first to agree to participate was Chelsea. She responded to the email sent to the Plains University Panhellenic council executive officers within a few hours after it was sent out. We connected through one initial email and several text messages to pick a time and location of the interview. We initially planned to meet in the morning on a Thursday, but I was ten minutes late to the interview. When I arrived Chelsea was reviewing flash cards and had binders and books out like she was studying. After apologizing, she suggested that we move the interview to the next week. After flipping through a paper calendar filled with dates and highlighted information, we agreed on Friday when her schedule was less full. Chelsea was very serious and business-like through the interaction. She was casually dressed, wearing a t-shirt and jeggings. She had straight dark hair pulled into a sloppy bun in the back of her head. After our conversation she quickly returned to studying in the silence of the college union study area.

A week later, as we discussed, we met for the interview. Chelsea arrived wearing an outfit very similar to the one she was wearing before. She appeared to have no makeup, which allowed her clear complexion to show. Her straight brown hair was pulled back again, but it appeared to hit just at the shoulder. There was no noticeable jewelry, except for some simple earing studs. During this interaction her shoulders were more relaxed. Her language was still professional and courteous, and she used the term "ma'am" and said "thank you."

Chelsea was a senior psychology major at Plains University. She discussed applying for graduate school to work on a master's degree in psychology. She shared that ultimately, she would like to be a therapist specializing in play therapy for young children. In her

chapter she was the vice president of philanthropy and during the current year she was serving on the Panhellenic Council Executive Team as the Vice President of Programming. The leadership position required her to plan a hazing seminar, risk management training, and other educational sessions for the campus Greek community. She also worked with all of the Panhellenic chapters on philanthropy and community service events.

Chelsea provided me with Sara's contact information at the time of our interview. Sara did not respond to my email, but responded to my text messaging. We agreed to meet in the same central location in the college union building. Our interview occurred about two weeks after Chelsea's, her big sister.

When I met Sara for the interview, I was surprised. Sara has a Hispanic surname, but she does not visually identify as Hispanic. Her hair looked as if it had been lightened, her natural color appeared to be a light brown, she had blue/gray eyes, and light skin. She was dressed casually and her hair ended just below her shoulders. When we identified each other she greeted me with a happy booming "hello" and bright smile. She was very friendly as we walked toward the office in which the interview was to take place. Her personality did not change while we were together; she continued to be open and full of joy. Sara was a junior double majoring in marketing and management with a minor in human resources. She hoped to work at Children's Hospital. Her mother worked at that hospital and she had spent a lot of time there volunteering. In her chapter she was the vice president of philanthropy, a job filled by her big Chelsea before her. This position required her to plan and execute philanthropy and fundraising events.

Junior and S**enior** Poem**: Always Be There.** To highlight the interaction between the two, I formatted Chelsea's words in italics and Sara's words in regular font in the poem.

Sorority recruitment is mutual selection

They saw something in me

I saw myself fitting

*I feel in lov*e

I met the five criteria

Financial responsibility, personal development, leadership, academics, character

Loved all the people

They all loved me back

I have to go to this chapter

I could see you being the VP of philanthropy

They saw so much in me

Run on bid day

You need to do this

You shouldn't do that

They tell me

Without their push and guidance I don't think I'd be where I am

Big little is mutual selection

Meet older members

Bid day buddy

We just connected, she became my big

Buddies

Sophomore helps freshman

Find classes, take them to chapter

Anything they need

I found my big

We bonded over a song

It was fate

How the cards Were dealt

Never rushed my little

Met randomly

We were the exact same person

I think I want her

Big/little reveal before initiation

Bigs hid in boxes

Big and little wearing the same shirt

Thank God I got her

Big/little reveal

Line up outside

Coke date with seniors

Run upstairs

Names on balloons

Pop

BAMF fam

Put on your family's clothing and run downstairs

Reveal's like Christmas

Shirts and trinkets

A lot of crafting

They pin you with their pin

Tradition

Matching t-shirts

Crafting wood signs that say LIL

Paddles at initiation

It's supposed to be a surprise

We already talked about it

If I don't get you I'm going to be so mad

I just really wanted her

New member to sister

Show them why you love ritual

Why you love the sisterhood

Why they went through it

I act the way I saw my big

Big sister giving me advice

Someone I could just complain to

The same way

It's like you feel united

She's like the big sister I never had

She graduated a year early

Family, drifting off, getting really small

Time goes on

They drop

They leave

Just me and my little

My little transferred

My big is the only one here

Whenever she leaves I will be alone

Just me

Second little

Unsure throughout

It was hard

Crazy

Out of the blue

I didn't know she was wanting a twin

Am I not good enough

It turned out to be good

Original one

Like a jealous kid

"I'm the only child"

Upset

It didn't cause a problem

She says sorry

I'm sorry

I shouldn't be upset

New little breaks social media rules

Don't post that

You can't say that

It's gonna come back and bite you in the butt

Out in a bar

She's 19

You can't be doing that

Why? Because it's illegal!

My twin was crazy

She went home

Just wanted to be with her family

I was sad

She's emotionally attached

Boyfriend

Packed up her stuff and just left

Very dramatic

Before it was just me

In my family for maybe a year

She jokes I've always liked you more

Original little

She's like a mentor to me

Supporting

Being able to ask her any questions

She's been through the ringer

I want to be there

Always listen

Anything

I just always wanted to be that person

I'm watching and learning

I'm doing what she does

I don't realize it

Taking care of people

No training

Unwritten rule

You should always be there for your little

Be that person in case they have no one

I haven't really been open to anyone before my big

Love your self

You are worth more than you think

It's definitely boosted my confidence

Always be there

Loyalty

Non-judgmental honesty

Family

It's been more than I thought

If I ever need anything

I call her

It's been more than I expected

I love my little

She's great

We get along

Still for each other

Support

That's a key role

Foundation should be the relationship

Constant love

Value the relationship

Commitment to each other

Mom

Protector

It's fantasy

Big and little best friends

Do everything together

Unrealistic

Junior and Senior Pair Key Topics.

Each of the topics included below were discussed by both members of the dyadic

pair. I will go into detail about the topics presented in this individual case.

Mutual Selection. Both women mentioned the role of mutual selection through their

sorority experience. Chelsea mentioned, "Sorority recruitment is mutual selection." This

process allows both parties the opportunity to have a say in the decision. During sorority

formal recruitment the women have a chance to select the chapters they are interested in

joining. The chapters also have the opportunity to select the women they are interested in

joining. Sara said she "loved all the people . . . They loved me back." Chelsea mentioned the

five criteria her chapter uses to decide if a potential new member would be a good fit.

These criteria include financial responsibility, personal development, leadership,

academics, and character. Mutual selection was also mentioned by both women as the same

process used to create big and little pairs. In both processes each of the women mentioned

the "love" they had for the chapter and each other.

Personal Improvement. During the interviews both of the women discussed the

chapter's/sorority sisters' role in encouraging self-improvement. Sara said they "saw so

much in me" and one of them said "I could see you being the VP of Philanthropy." This

interaction occurred during formal recruitment before she was a pledge at the chapter.

Chelsea discussed the push to be more. She stated, "Without their push and guidance I don't

think I'd be where I am today." Her sisters encouraged her to take on leadership roles

leading her into an executive position in Panhellenic.

Buddies. Both of the women mentioned becoming "buddies" as part of the big/little

process. Chelsea described the oppoturnity to "meet older members" while Sarah was more

specific, saying "Sophomore helps freshman." The relationship was important. Chelsea said

"we just connected" about her big sister. Sarah said that with Chelsea "We bonded over a

song." It was interesting that Chelsea said "we were the exact same person" about Sara.

Big/Little Reveal. The women both shared their experience of big/little reveal. The

tradition of making it special was a well-planned event. Chelsea said her big "hid in boxes"

while Sara described "names on balloons . . . pop." Each of them shared the experience of

finding a t-shirt and running to their sorority family where everyone was wearing the same

shirt. Chelsea described the scene as "big and little wearing the same shirt." Sara said "Put

on your family's clothing and run downstairs." Gifts are purchased for the little. Chelsea discussed "crafting wood signs that say "LIL" . . . paddles at initiation" She also mentioned that "Reveal's like Christmas . . . shirts and trinkets." This celebration occurs a few weeks before initiation and includes everyone in the chapter. Alumni are also invited back for the occasion.

Loss of Family. Both of the women discussed the loss of sorority family members. The most dramatic story was about Sara's twin who left at night. Sara said about her twin "She went home . . . just wanted to be with her family . . . I was sad." The losses also included Chelsea's big who graduated a year early and Sara's little who transferred. Sara said 'My little transferred . . . My big is the only one here . . . Whenever she leaves I will be alone." Each woman was sad to be in a family of only two people.

Twin. When Chelsea decided to take a second little, called a twin, it caused problems in her relationship with Sara. In the interview Sara said "I didn't know she was wanting a twin . . . am I not good enough?" Both discussed the strain it caused. Chelsea was more affected due to the fact that the new little did not follow chapter rules about alcohol and social media. She said the "new little breaks social media rules" and "out in a bar . . . she's 19." After the new little left the relationship appeared to recover, but Sara seemed to continue to have concerns. She said "She jokes I've always liked you more."

Learning from Each Other. It was clear that each of the women learned how to be a big sister from watching their bigs interact with them. Sara said "I'm watching and learning . . . I'm doing what she does." In the interview Chelsea said "I act the way I saw my big . . . big sister giving advice." Chelsea mentioned that there was no training for the role. Both

discussed the job of a big sister as "always being there." This is where the poem's name originated.

Pair Three Brooke/Big and Jessica/Little.

Brooke and Jessica were a unique pair in this study. Brooke was the first one to initially contact me in August. I had requested information about the study be sent through Panhellenic to the chapter members. Two senior members on Panhellenic showed interest immediately. Due to the quick response their advisor did not send the message out to all of the Greek women at Plains University. She instead provided me with contact information for the interested women. When I emailed Brooke she responded with several follow-up questions about the research. One of her concerns was the fact that her little was technically a senior in credit hours even though she should be a junior. I did not believe that it would impact the interview and asked her to let me know about available times. Her schedule was pretty full and it took two weeks before we found a time that worked. Brooke was casually dressed. She wore a baseball hat, but her long blond hair tumbled out. She wore little makeup and was very attractive without it. She easily made eye contact and walked with confidence. When discussing the informed consent form for the project, I had to explain very little. She spoke about participating in several research projects through her degree. Her questions and responses were intelligently put together. She was more reserved in her answers than her little concerning tradition and ritual. Brooke provided me with Jessica's phone number at the interview and informed me that she would be expecting an email or call.

I met Jessica about a week later. She also quickly responded to my email and then text messaging. The first thing that I noticed about her appearance was how similar she

looked to her big, Brooke. She also had beautiful blond hair and a beautiful complexion uncovered by makeup. When she spoke she was very friendly and warm. During the first part of our interview she asked me about my methodology. She was concerned that sorority women who did not have good relationships would not volunteer for an interview. Jessica was pretty soft-spoken and at times cried while describing how she felt about her relationship with Brooke. Her responses were genuine and it was clear how emotional she was about the relationship.

Senior and Senior Poem: Better Person Because of Her. To highlight the interaction between the two, I formatted Brooke's words in italics and Jessica's words in regular font in the poem.

Girls I talked to during recruitment

I related to them really well

They made me feel very comfortable

Home away from home

People in the chapter really saw me fitting in

My leadership abilities

Could make a difference

My values lined up with their values

I found a girl

She was one of the main reasons why I went [chapter name]

Now that we know each other

We're two totally different people

I kept telling myself I would be okay if I went another chapter

I think I would have been a little upset

It worked out

I'm very happy to be there

Buddies

Sophomore and freshman

They will pick you up and take you places like if you have chapter

Go get ice cream

Buddy

Pick you up for events that you need to be at

Take you to get ice cream

Answer any questions that you have about sorority life or school

Three names

People we want to get to know better

We did that for like four or five weeks

Mutual selection pairing process

Bible study

Where I met my big

We spent time studying, getting coffee

Time outside sorority functions

A pair based on how you act

Who you are

As the process goes on

You're making connections

The girl I feel in love with when I feel in love with the sorority

Is a little bit more wild than I am

We were picking

Do I go with what I know is right or do I go with the person I am closer to in the moment

I prayed about it

I talked to my mom a little bit about it

Go with your heart

She's a better person

I chose to be Brooke's little

We are a lot alike

We can do this

We literally can conquer life exactly the same way

I wouldn't change a single thing

I couldn't open up to Brooke any faster

Don't trust

We are both like that

Trying to reach out to the younger members

Trying to find someone I meshed with well

Freshman picked us as sophomores and then we picked them

There's a head person who matches everyone up

Someone suggested that I meet her

They thought our personalities really meshed

I was really kind of stressed out about it

Who am I gonna find

My friends

I think you guys would be really good big little pair

It worked out

Mutual

Pref sheet

Top three choices

We have someone that does that

I don't really know how it works

Initiation week

Big will pin you

Turning shifting point

More sentimental

Initiation

They get pined with our pin

Different ceremonies the big is required to be at to support the little

Stand behind them

Reveal

Her name on a piece of paper inside a balloon

My name on the outside of the balloon

Pop

We change outfits

We all get to run downstairs and meet them

Connection

Big little

Blankets and they have our crest on it, the day we were initiated, and our name

Paddles

Big little

Forever, have our names on it engraved

Every year it's a different gift

The year I went through it was a towel wrap

Your big purchases that for you

We made it special

Gold fam

My big wanted it we all had gold jewelry

We all had hearts of gold

It didn't stick

Gold fam

I don't know why

We always use gold tulle in our hair on big little night

Other people don't really know we call ourselves that

Date party together

Formal together

Walk arounds together

Football frenzy together

We have class together

We go to football games together

We go to movies

We go to dinner

We go to each other's house

We do homework a lot

Study a lot

Hang out

My big always picked me up for chapter

So we would sit by each other

Attend philanthropy events at the same time

Met each other for lunch at the house a lot

Sit by each other in chapter

Eat dinner together

Philanthropy

We do those together

We go to philanthropy events together

We have gone to date parties together

We go to chapter and dinner together usually we sit by each other

We were together at football frenzy and walked around with her at homecoming

They expect bigs to be more mature

Be that example and be rule followers

What it means to be a member of our chapter

If older members are not attending events then the younger members aren't going to attend

She is always there for me constantly

Role model

She makes me a better person

I wanted to be a better person for my little

I think the purpose of big little is mentorship

My big did really well

We all have our flaws

I think I tried to do that for my little

Looking for someone I wanted to be my little

I could see us, in me and her

We're very encouraging and very religious people

I could see us carrying this on through her

My little get a little

It's getting passed on

I was very blessed with a good family

She was very special to me and so is my little

Big got kicked out

Alcohol related incidents and stuff like that

It does affect young women

If your sophomore big is doing all of this it almost makes it look okay

That little gets a little and she doesn't really know how to be a big

If your mom is not a very good mom

It's harder for you to be a good mom

You haven't had that experience or don't really know what a good mom is

Brooke was very good mom

I'm always there, you can always talk to me

I don't think other people were like that

Jealous of people who have good relationships

I was a big sister almost like a mom

Protective of my little

Want the best . . . her to succeed . . . her to be treated the right way

Like a mom wants for her child

Those influences come from my own

Biological family

From my big too she was always really supportive of me in everything I did

That carried over into my relationship with my little

I think their big influenced them almost too much and in a negative way

They don't really know how to bounce back and be a better one

I've also seen where they do bounce back and they're really good bigs

Change the family completely

Document

five criteria, its character, financial responsibility, academics, personal development

If you don't uphold that you do not receive one

No training, who you are as a person feeds down to the next people

Sign a contract

Standards of what being a big means

Mentorship guiding the younger member through the initiation process

Through her time in my sorority

You are the example

You're the mentor

We hold you to a higher standard

We didn't spend time . . . ten minutes talking about it

Initially I was wanting to spend a lot of time with her

That was a challenge

Having that time to get to know each other

A bit of a challenge in our relationship

I Had an ex-boyfriend that did not go well

She was there for me when a lot of people weren't

I can never thank her enough for being there

I truly needed her more than anything

Our very first semester as a big/little pair we weren't super close

She had a boyfriend

Almost a year later they broke up

That was a really significant event

That was a turning point of where went from just big little

More of a deep relationship

Transformed it to outside of the sorority

I don't know if there's been a single day this whole semester that we haven't at least seen

each other once

It brought us closer

I was able to be there for her

It connected us more on an emotional level

Big personal event

She thought about me even when we weren't together

Text me and say I am praying for you

Goodie basket with a really sweet card with like a Bible verse

I knew she cared even if she wasn't constantly asking me if I was okay

We have a pretty good relationship

We haven't gone through a lot of challenges together

Initially I think I didn't handle the boyfriend thing very well

After a while I gave up trying to spend time with her

After they broke up

It wasn't me being so selfish

Approach it from a better standpoint of she's hurting

I was there for her in the right ways at that point

Stereotype

We're wild

TV, social media

I definitely don't feel like we at Plains State typically fit the mold of the stereotype

Stereotype associated with being in a sorority

Media, movies, negative headlines

Just about the social aspect

"We paid for our friends"

Girls like that in every chapter

Also the other half of the house that are not like that

Everyone is very active as a whole

Opens up a lot of opportunities

You can instantly relate to other people that are Greek-affiliated

Something in common

I've never gone into a single class where there hasn't been another Greek woman

Connection

You meet like a whole lot of people

It gives you the confidence that you can do it

Stepping out of my comfort zone

I feel as if I could run for positions and do things I didn't think I could

Everyone is supporting you

Hey you can do that

They see strengths in you that you don't see in yourself

Push you to be better people

She is super-involved

She serves on our standards board

She wants the best for our sorority

Rule follower

She is on Panhellenic Exec

I was a Gamma Chi

We did that together

Disaffiliated together was really cool

Big little

Like a title

I did not expect us to be that close

I didn't expect to go to the extreme of we spend our whole lives together

I have a really good relationship with my big

From the beginning I was a little bit disappointed with my relationship with my little

We weren't spending as much time together

We weren't on the deeper level as soon

I think I had maybe unrealistic expectations for my little

I tried to compare it

As the years have gone on

I am probably as close with my little as I am with my big

She has encouraged me

Be a strong woman

Live that out and stand up for myself

Be disciplined in everything I do . . . compassionate and competent as well

She obviously makes me a better person

She is one of my best friends

Things we view as a whole are different

Love each other no matter what

Communicating well

Sitting down and having those conversations in person

Face-to-face interaction

Helps build relationships

Be less judgmental

Follow my heart

It doesn't matter what people think about me

Taught me how to be a better person

More confident because of my relationship with my big and little

They're really supportive

Encouraging

I Feel more confident knowing I have their support

Patience

Compassion

Intentional

I'm taking that away from this relationship and that's with any relationship

I can count on her in any situation of life

Any season

Any stage

Anything

Be there for them

Spend time with them

Encourage them

Be available for questions or direction

In the sorority

Here on campus

In life

Actively involved in your little's life

We do have the same major

We are together a lot

Our classes

Able to be there for each other in the hard times and then in the triumphs as well

Being in the same classes

More time together

I think that was really good for our relationship

At least seeing each other in class we had that time

Applying for grad school together

Not applying to the same places

I'm helping her through school applications and she's helping me

Every single day we get closer

She is more career-driven

I am too

I am going to enjoy my career for five to ten years before I am going to have kids

As a woman you don't need a husband, you don't need a kid right off

Our major is really hard sometimes

This is something you have always wanted to do

You're good at it

She kind of affirms those goals

It started off with proximity in class

On the weekends we go where you don't have to think about class anymore

Having class together

Helped build our relationship

Brooke and Jessica: Key Topics.

Each of the topics included below were discussed by both members of the dyadic pair. I will go into detail about the topics presented in this individual case.

Buddies. During the interview they both mentioned buddies being part of the big/little pairing process. To help the freshmen and sophomores get to know each other they spend time together as "buddies". Brooke said they "pick you up for events that you need to be at." Jessica's answer mirrored her big's with "They will pick you up and take you places, like if you have chapter." Both mentioned getting food. Brooke said they "take you to get ice cream" and Jessica said they "go get ice cream." Jessica went into more detail about the process, discussing how they select "three names of people we want to get to know better." The buddy process takes place before mutual selection occurs and the sisters are paired as big/little.

Big/Little Connections. Brooke discussed her concern over finding the right person to be her little when she said "I was really kind of stressed out about it . . . Who am I gonna find?" Her goal was to "find someone I meshed with well." Jessica described the difficulty of deciding between "the girl I feel in love with when I feel in love with the sorority" and a paring based on "who you are." The girl she fell in love with was "wild" compared to her. She wondered "Do I go with what I know is right or do I go with the person I am closer to in

the moment?" After talking to "Mom" and having "prayed about it" she decided to "follow her heart." Jessica was concerned about "making connections." Brooke described it as "someone I mesh with well."

Alike. Several people suggested that Brooke and Jessica meet each other because "You guys would be a really good big/little pair." Brooke said "Someone suggested that I meet her . . . they thought our personalities really meshed." Jessica stated it as "We are a lot alike" and "We literally can conquer life exactly the same way." Another unique component to their relationship was the fact that they shared the same major.

Initiation. Both mentioned that during initiation the little gets pinned with the sorority pin that belongs to their big. They will use that pin until they order theirs after the initiation ceremony. Brooke said "They get pinned with our pin" and Jessica said "Big will pin you." Brooke further elaborated by discussing the fact that the big stands behind the little at different ceremonies to support them.

Family Name. Each of the women discussed their sorority family name "Gold Fam." The fam is a slang term for family. Both talked about wearing gold. Brooke said "We all had gold jewelry" and Jessica said "We always use gold tulle in our hair on big/little night." Brooke said the name came from the fact that "We all had hearts of gold." Her little said "I don't know why." Brooke did not feel like the name stuck, while Jessica did not seem concerned.

Time Together. Both women mentioned attending sorority functions together. Brooke said she would "pick me up for chapter so we would sit by each other" and Jessica said they would "sit by each other in chapter." They both also shared that they attended philanthropy events together, date parties, and homecoming events. They spent time

outside of sorority life in class together and studying. They both also discussed applying to graduate school.

Big is a Role Model. Brooke and Jessica each used their big as a role model for being a big sister. Brooke said 'I think the purpose of big/little is mentorship . . . My big did really well . . . we all have our flaws . . . I think I tried to do that for my little." She further said "Those influences come from my own biological family . . . from my big too." Jessica considered Brooke to be a "role model." She also stated "I wanted to be a better person for my little." Jessica discussed the negative influence when she said "I think their big influenced them almost too much in a negative way . . . They don't really know how to bounce back and be a better one." She also said "Who you are as a person feeds down to the next people." Her goal with her little was evident in her hopeful statement "I could see us carrying this on." She wanted her family to continue to be "encouraging" and "religious."

Mom. The ladies both used the term "mom." Brooke said "I was a big sister almost like a mom" and that she "Want[s] the best. . . . [wants] her to succeed . . . [wants] her to be treated the right way . . . like a mom wants for her child." Jessica said "Brooke was a very good mom." When discussing the negative influence of big sisters, Jessica related it to a real family by saying "If your mom is not a very good mom . . . It's harder for you to be a good mom." She believed it does "affect young women."

Contract. To receive a little sister the sophomore women are required to sign a contract. Brooke described it as "standards of what being a big means." Jessica said it was "Five criteria. It's character, financial responsibility, academics, personal development." Brooke said they spent "ten minutes talking about it" and Jessica said there was "No training." Both referred back to being a mentor to the little.

Boyfriend. When I asked about challenges they both mentioned the same one which was Jessica's former boyfriend. Brooke wanted to spend more time with Jessica but was unable to because of the romantic relationship. When they broke up Jessica said "I truly needed her more than anything." Brooke said "I was able to be there for her." Jessica described it as a "turning point" and Brooke called it a "really significant event." Both talked about how the relationship changed. Brooke said "It connected us more on an emotional level" and Jessica said it was a "deep relationship." Brooke reflected on how she changed, saying "It wasn't me being so selfish . . . [I needed to] approach it from a better standpoint of she's hurting."

Involvement. Each of the women was very involved in their chapter and in Panhellenic. Brooke said Jessica "serves on our standards board." This is where sorority members are sent when they violate chapter rules of any kind for a just of their peers to judge them and provide them with educational guidance. Women who are late on their financial obligations, who do not attend events, and who violate social standards like drinking and social media are sent to the board. Jessica was also a Panhellenic recruitment counselor. Brooke was the Panhellenic executive who managed sorority recruitment activities.

Career. Both Brooke and Jessica were applying to graduate school. They frequently talked about studying and their course work. Jessica said "I'm helping her through school applications and she's helping me." Brooke said "Our major is really hard sometimes . . . she kind of affirms those goals." Both believed that being in class together also helped build their relationship.

Pair Four Helen/Big and Louise/Little.

The Director of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs sent several emails to Greek alumni members throughout the year. At the beginning of January the email included information about my dissertation project and a request for participants. I was contacted by several women. Louise was the first to email me with her phone number. We had an initial conversation and due to weather concerns we agreed to contact each other a week later to schedule the interview. When I called her the second time she quickly agreed to a date and time for the interview. During our conversation she told me several times about how excited she was to talk about sorority life. I met Louise at her office where she managed accounting and payments. She was very casually dressed, wearing jeans and little, if any, makeup. She checked in with her employees and we had the interview in the office conference room. She was happy to see me and was very relaxed during the interview. One of the first things we discussed was when she pledged in 1974 and that she completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1978. We laughed about several of her stories and related well with each other. Louise was very open about her experiences and life. She was happy to participate and asked to see the final paper. As I was preparing to leave we discussed her continued involvement with her chapter. When she was an undergraduate, the alumni would not approve of her holding an office in the sorority. However, when she graduated she became the president of the alumni association and served for about 15 years until her son was born. She said she currently supported the chapter in small ways by viewing the skit during recruitment week, helping with snacks, and attending other functions. Louise had been busy caregiving for her aging parents.

At the end of my interview with Louise, I was provided with her big sister Helen's cell phone number. I called a few days later and left a message, and she quickly returned my call. Helen lived several hours away in a rural part of the state, so we agreed to conduct the interview over the phone. I thought Louise had spoken with her about participating in the project, but I learned that she had not. Helen said that they usually spoke every other week and that they just had not called each other since my interview with Louise the week before. The interview was relaxed, but brief. It was difficult to engage with her over the phone compared to a face-to-face interview.

Poem Four Alumni Pair: Friends for Life. To highlight the interaction between the two, I formatted Helen's words in italics and Louise's words in regular font in the poem.

I was outgoing

I was involved

I was a jock

I was a double legacy

Always around Greek life growing up

My parents were both Greek

Always felt comfortable in the (chapter) house

I knew it was home it was where I wanted to be

My mother was very prominent

In another sorority on campus

They all thought that I was going to go there

I cut her house

I just clicked with a lot of them

I didn't know anybody in the house

I had a lot of friends in the other house

I was glad I didn't

I had some friends in the house

Big sis

Going through rush she and I became extremely close

I knew I would be happy living with and sisters with

Friendships

Who I am

I was outgoing

I had grades

Within two months in a sorority

I don't know what it is

Maybe because you are with them a lot

It's just something that clicks

We did more

Back in the 70's as groups

Coke night

Be over there to study

Getting to know your pledge sisters

Becoming so close to them

Studying for a test

Listening to them

You're just not the same

It's a growing experience

You know immediately

These women are going to be in your life forever

One of my pledge sisters and I hated each other

Room change

They picked my name and they picked her name

Silence

Started moving our stuff in

We talked more and we'd attempt to eat dinner together

We might as well make the best of it

Within a month we were best friends

That's the way I take a friendship

I take commitment too

They have been, if I call them today

They were at my dad's funeral

We see each other quite often

Maintained a very close friendship

Knowing somebody is there always got your back

You always have somebody to talk to

40 some years ago

Group of women

Traveling, having kids

Classmates

I don't think you realize it till later

I think you felt it within a couple of months

I don't think I was searching for anything

Those women are there for you forever

Four different people

I had her as one of mine

She seemed cool well let's give it a shot

We became pretty close

I bonded with my big

She was a year older than me

I don't know how we got together

You just had to meet people

Going to the bar called the fox

I got drunk for the first time

Somebody found out

I didn't do anything stupid

I did get called into standards

She did

She's a bad influence on you

Went to the advisor's house

This is a lady I knew

She says well I think this is what we'll do

We just won't let her be your big

Then I quit

You don't understand

She didn't make me do this

I could drink at 18

It wasn't like I was rip-snotting-embarrassing-my-sisters drunk

The goody ones

That didn't think the pill should exist

Or pot

Or drinking

I didn't quit because they let her be my big

Just hit it off

I got along with my big

If you don't like what I did kick me out

Played a big trick on her

Ball of string and you go all around the house

In and out of bushes and around doors and cars

Track down who you were paired up with

I told her earlier in the day

They were not going to let me be her big sis

I would be a bad influence on her

She was upset . . . she finally found me

I go up and visit her

Football games

I see her there

Sorority sisters that try to get together

I don't go on trips because financially I can't do it

Once a year this particular group of women

Go to Vegas, or go visit friends, or go to the lake house

I have just been really busy with my parents

Three or four or five times a year

Sometimes more sometimes less

She's had a rough past couple of years

With her parents and her daddy passed away

This year we'll see her more

Reunion

Five or six

Weekend reunion and laugh

She came down for my dad's funeral

We don't see each other a lot

Email, talk

Kids, weddings

I had 13 sorority sisters

At our wedding

When my parents died

I don't know how many showed up

What my big did for me

Parties together

Study together

She encouraged me

I took a little

It was not a good relationship

She was dating a gentleman

Spent A lot of time with this person

She left school

She took a lot of fines

She wouldn't show up for things

She wanted to be with him

This isn't the way

I don't even know where she's at

Very selfish

Self-possessed

My big sis

Got really close to her during rush

Both knew immediately that she wanted to be my big sis

Instant best friends and sisters

She taught me a lot about the world

About the house

What was expected

How you did things

To this day she and I are really close

If I make a friend you're my friend for life

Being in a sorority

I learned that

My big made me a study board

I don't know what happened to it

I think it's around somewhere

The gifts were some of the stuff that was expensive

Initiation

Special with Louise

We were so close

I feel like I taught her a lot

Big

Probably gave you what you could, couldn't do

I don't remember reading anything

A long time ago

Like my big sis

Had taught me

Life in general

Life in the house

Mentor

Someone that I could go to

If I had a question

I could go to Helen and talk about anything

They wanted us

Be a big sis that was responsible

Not lead them down the wrong path

Be the best person you could be

She was going to call a spade a spade

Call it like it was

Louise you need to quit doing that

Louise you can't do that

I did my work

I went to school

I enjoyed it

I thought college was an extension of high school

I didn't get fined

I knew my role to play and I wanted to play

Be in that part

Never thought that I would be a sorority girl

I think my role is to do

What I got slapped in the face for trying to do

I know my big set a good example

I saw the big little stuff that happened

Sometimes she partied too much

Sometimes I partied too much

Always a good student and made her grades

She was always responsible

I just felt secure that I wasn't going to be left out in the cold

When I get called to standards

Right there for me

I know what I did wrong

It was always better than what I always expected

I did have a little sis

After Louise

She did not fit into the house

Constant effort to get her to make her grades

Quit partying too much

I had everything from the best

Bad experience with the other one

I got a boyfriend

I spent a lot of time with him

She didn't give up on him

I wasn't the best

Her and her big did everything together

They didn't have boyfriends

I see other relationships with bigs that were a lot more closer than ours

It didn't change the long-term effect of our friendship

Louise didn't go with us very much

Ski trips . . . Padre . . . go out to eat

She had a boyfriend

She was with him most of the time

Going out drinking

Going to a ballgame

Powder puff football

Activities from the house

Going to their parents' house

Going to the lake

I didn't do that kind of stuff

I was working I think she wanted more

Challenges

I think she wanted more

Time constraints

It was my choice; she accepted it

It was probably brought up

I don't remember discussing it

It will always still be brought up

You were with so and so

It was my choice how much to put into it

She wanted to put more effort into it and wanted to have more maybe

I didn't have any expectations other than this was your big

That's who you go to

Your pictures taken together

All the stuff together

I think it meet everything that I expected

She was there for me like my regular sister

Friendship and sisterhood

Being responsible as a big sis

What was expected what was not expected

How to make it a better place and how to make yourself a better person

Now at 60

Knowing true friendship

It sucks you in

I'm older it's just that different kind of love

It's a good feeling to know after this many years

You could call them

They'd be there

It's just deepened a friendship

Friendship

Always being there

She knows I'll always be there for her

There's no question about it

If you could talk about what friendship is it endures

You have ups and you have downs

Common bond that brought us together to be the best we could be

Support each other good and bad

Friendship

Most important

Knowing that you have somebody for life

Friends for life

I wished they all lived here

Cherish every minute when I get to see them

This is what true friendship is

It lasts it endures

I had seen my parents go through it

I knew that it was possible

It was pretty much what I wanted

I think I am probably one of the few that really got that out of it

Helen and Louise Key Topics.

Each of the topics included below were discussed by both members of the dyadic

pair. I will go into detail about the topics presented in this individual case.

Parents Part of Greek Life. At several times within the conversation both Helen and Louise mentioned their parents' connection with Greek Life. Louise was a "double legacy" for her mother's chapter, which she did not join. She shared that her mother was always active in advising-type positions with her chapter because they lived in the same town as the college. Helen discussed the experience in more depth, saying she was "always around Greek life growing up . . . My Parents were both Greek." At the end of the interview when commenting about her big/little relationship she said, "I had seen my parents go through it . . . I knew it was possible . . . It was pretty much what I wanted." Both were familiar with the recruitment process and member expectations.

Time Together. Each of the women discussed the amount of time they spent with their sisters and how close relationships developed. Louise said, "Within Two Months in a Sorority . . . I don't know what it is . . . maybe because you are with them a lot . . . it's just something that clicks." She also said, "We did more . . . back in the 70s as groups." Helen explained that her experience included "getting to know your pledge sisters . . . becoming so close to them . . . studying for a test . . . [and] listening to them." Her descriptions were about sharing everyday college life experiences together.

Always There. Many times during the interviews, the women shared their belief that these friendships are expected to last throughout life. At the beginning of the interview Helen said that she valued "knowing somebody is there, always got your back . . . You always have somebody to talk to." Again in the last few minutes of the conversation Helen emphasized that the important thing was "always being there . . . She knows I'll always be there for her . . . There's no question about it." Louise said "These women are there for you forever" and "You could call them . . . They'd be there."

Bad Influence. One of the most important challenges that their relationship faced happened before they were formally paired as big/little. The women were at a bar and Louise got drunk with Helen. Both of the women were sent to standards and told that they should not be paired. Louise stated "I did get called into standards . . . [and] she did . . . [and they told me] 'She's a bad influence on you.'" After threatening to quit, she was able to get Helen as a big sister. Helen said her job as a big sister was to "Not lead them down the wrong path." Louise stated that Helen told her "Louise you need to quit doing that . . . Louise you can't do that."

Busy with Life. A common part of the women's experience was the loss of parents. Louise lost her father and Helen lost both of her parents. They talked about the struggle to make time for sorority activities and sisters. Louise said "I have just been really busy with my parents." Helen said "This year we'll see her more." Each also commented on the time spent with their children, as parents themselves.

Sisters Attend Weddings and Funerals. Louise said that several sisters were "at my dad's funeral." In the interview Helen said "I had 13 sorority sisters . . . At our wedding . . . [and] when my parents died . . . I don't know how many showed up." Both women talked about how comforting it was to know the other sorority sisters cared about them and showed up to provide their support.

Learning about Being a Big Sister. Helen talked about her big sister: "She taught me a lot about the world . . . about the house . . . what was expected . . . [and] how you did things." When asked about what influenced her as a big sister, she said "My big sister . . . had taught me . . . life in general . . . [and] life in the house." She said "They wanted us . . . [to] be a big

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sis that was responsible." Louise stated "I think my role is to do . . . what I got slapped in the face for trying to do."

Bad Littles. Each of the women struggled with a bad little sister. Helen discussed taking a twin: "I did have a little sis . . . after Louise . . . [but] she didn't fit into the house." She then described a "constant effort to get her to make her grades . . . [and] quit partying too much." Her little Louise also struggled with a little sister: "I took a little . . . [but] it was not a good relationship." The little was involved in a romantic relationship and "She took a lot of fines . . . [and] she wouldn't show up for things." She later described her as "very selfish."

Boyfriend. One of the main challenges to Helen and Louise's relationship was Louise's boyfriend. Helen said "Louise didn't go with us very much" and "She had a boyfriend . . . She was with him most of the time." Louise explained "I got a boyfriend . . . I spent a lot of time with him." She also said "I see other relationships with bigs that were a lot more close than ours . . . It didn't change the long-term effect on our relationship." Louise knew "I think she wanted more."

Lasting Friendship. This idea is repeated many times through-out the interview. Helen said it as "Friends for life." Louise said "True friendship" . . . "It lasts; it endures." Both women referred back to a life-long bond and commitment to each other.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapter presented each case through the poetic narrative analysis. One unique poem was created for each big/little dyadic pair. The voices of the women were intermingled to provide insight into their relationship and meaning-making embedded in the culture of sorority life. The focus of this chapter was to present the results of the cross-case analysis of all four cases/pairs through the connection of the theory of self-authorship with the meaning-making of the women on the big/little sister experience. Thus, I organized this chapter to present the cross-case thematic findings and to draw implications and recommendations for practice and future research, and to conclude with a researcher's reflection.

Cross-Case Themes

I organized the cross-case findings into the three themes that reflected key phases of self-authorship: external formulas, crossroads, and self-authorship.

External Formulas. During this phase of development individuals trust authorities. The voices of parents, faculty members, and peers help them decide what to believe and how to find success in life. Their desire to gain the approval of others causes them to ignore their internal voice. They often accept others' arguments without logical questioning.

Students follow external formulas for acquiring knowledge, developing identity, and interacting with others (Magolda & King, 2007). This reliance on the external voice complicates decision-making about career and behavioral choices. Authorities often have different viewpoints, leaving the person confused about what the right choice is.

Magolda, King, Taylor, and Wakefield (2012) conducted interviews with 228 students at six campuses participating in the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education. In the first year of college 86% of participants relied on external authorities to define their beliefs, identity, and relationships. None showed any evidence of internal meaning-making. At the beginning of their second year 57% followed external authorities. The remaining students began to use their internal voices along with predominantly external views.

Similarly to the findings in the Wabash National Study, in this study the external formulas played a major role during the sorority members' first few years of college. All of the women who were interviewed went through recruitment during the first semester. Significant events such as pledging, big/little reveal, and initiation occurred in the same academic year. New members were required to attend formal dinner, chapter meetings, new member education sessions, pledge class meetings, study hall hours, as well as to participate in homecoming preparations and philanthropy events. Joining Greek life was one of their most significant time commitments (Hevel & Bureau, 2014). The freshman was expected to adjust to college and chapter life. Older sorority members became the external voice about sorority membership and often personal life.

Greek members tend to be a more homogenous group than non-Greek students (Walker, Martin, & Hussey, 2015). They often share similar ethic, religious, and

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socioeconomic backgrounds. Cultural beliefs about gender roles also help to bind the group together (Kalof & Cargill, 1991). Many of the women interviewed stated that they selected their big or little sister because of similarities in personality. Jessica said "We are a lot alike . . . [and we] can conquer life exactly the same way." The pair shared the same academic major, religious faith, and a similar physical appearance. Observations during formal recruitment reinforced the academic research. Most of the potential new members wore dresses, applied feminine make-up, and had long hair. When entering the chapter houses their manners were similar: happy and refined. These students needed the capacity to identify their own values and identity to learn how to effectively work with different types of people and ideas. One must begin to listen to their internal voice to appreciate differences.

Big as Authority. Once women complete sorority recruitment, they begin the search for a big sister. In the first few weeks a new member has several "buddies" who serve as a guide into sorority life. The new member and sophomore buddy spend time together at sorority functions and outside of the chapter. This allows each of the women to decide if they would like to be paired together permanently. The role of the sophomore sorority member is to be a guide or mentor. For several of the women this relationship became the most significant relationship through their college experience. This finding mirrors the literature. Long (2012) found that Greek members experienced a higher sense of belonging and peer interaction. This intense socialization process can impact freshman new members in many ways.

Trisha, the sophomore, had a little sister charged with academic dishonesty during her first semester at college. Trish's answer was "This is what you are going to do." The

freshman's big sister solved her problem, and she listened to Trish's external voice instead of her own internal voice. Baxter Magolda (2009) believed this type of life challenge should help an individual learn to use their internal voice. However, when an authority figure solves the problem, development is delayed.

During the interviews Trisha, Chelsea, Brooke, and Jessica all expressed their role as a big sister as "Mom." They strongly felt that their job as a big sister was to be available to support their little sister. In self-authorship, good learning partners offer both challenge and support. None of the women discussed challenging their little sisters to help them grow. Biological parents often serve as the protectors of their children. Baxter Magolda (2009) believed that parents find it difficult to be learning partners with their children because they want to fix their problems instead of watching them struggle and possibly fail. By identifying as a "Mom," the big sisters act as authority figures who protect the younger sisters. This can prevent growth and self-authorship in little sisters. However, such an enhanced sense of responsibility for another member may contribute to the growth and development of self-authorship in the individuals who play the role of big sister.

The peer group culture in Greek life promotes traditional gender roles (Kalof & Cargill, 1991; Sanday, 1996). Female sorority members are expected to portray the traditional gender role of being relationship-focused and nurturing. As a big sister, playing the role of "Mom" also fits into these ideas. During recruitment women dress the part by wearing dresses, make-up, and perfect hair. Ladies are polite and smile as they enter and leave chapters after each recruitment party. Once they become new members, the women are expected to behave like ladies and not violate chapter standards by posting

embarrassing photos on social media or getting drunk too often. These cultural traditions become the platform for individuals to internalize the externally prescribed roles.

Over the course of the interviews many of the women used emotional language that is often reserved for family members. All of the women interviewed said they "loved" their big/little sister. Jessica described "the girl I feel in love with." Trish shared similar language, saying "I said I love you . . . She goes 'I love you too.'" The use of this language reinforces the family roles played by the women and the female stereotype. Boyd (1999) observed through formal recruitment women pursuing other women as members in the same way that dating occurs. Recruitment and big/little pairing are both a mutual selection process. This can lead to what Boyd (1999) described as heterosexual romance where women practice a form of courtship.

Big as Chapter Standards Bearer. Through external meaning-making, individuals will seek outside structures and rules to work through life challenges. Three of the women discussed problems with little sisters relating to alcohol and partying. Greek students are more likely to abuse alcohol (Park, Sher, Wood, & Krull, 2009; Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 1996), even though Greek national organizations and chapters have clear rules against underage and excessive drinking. At Plains University all new members are required to learn alcohol and hazing policies. Several of the women explained that their role as a big sister included enforcing these rules. Chelsea discussed her second little's breaking of social media rules and underage drinking in bars. She told her "You can't be doing that . . . Why? Because it's illegal." Chelsea acted more as an external authority figure and not a learning partner. Her little was sent to standards committee for punishment.

One of the most prominent events in Helen and Louise's relationship was the repercussion from going to a bar and getting drunk. After being called into standards committee, the alumni member said "She's a bad influence on you" about her big sister Helen. The chapter expected Helen to enforce the rules as a big sister. Throughout the rest of their college relationship Helen tried to prevent Louise from partying too much, although she implied that she was never very concerned because Louise made good grades.

Academic success was also encouraged through the documents used within the paper. The website stated, "The sorority community makes academics a top priority." The Panhellenic recruitment book also mentioned that the all-sorority grade point average was higher than the PU undergraduate all-women's average. The EBI survey showed PU women feeling confidant about setting academic goals and academic success. These three items provided an example of sorority culture at PU stressing academic success. The focus is results-oriented. Almquist and Angrist (1971) discovered that Greek students were more concerned about career success in college versus unaffiliated students who were more interested in the intrinsic values of education.

Learning to Be a Big Sister. None of the participants described any type of training for their role as a big sister. Some of the women reported signing a document that obligated them to uphold the standards of the chapter. These included maintaining their academic and financial obligations to the sorority. When asked how they learned to be a big sister, their answers were consistent with each other. Chelsea reported "I act the way I saw my big [act] . . . [as a] big sister giving advice." The external voice was strong and when Sara got her own little she told me "I'm watching and learning . . . I'm doing what she does . . . I don't realize it". Each of the women continued to play the same role as big sisters maintaining the

sorority family culture. Jessica tried to maintain the religious nature of her sorority family and discussed looking for a little sister who would be interested in carrying on that aspect of her family.

Helen and Louise, the alumni members, both talked about how they learned to be a big sister. Helen said "Like my big sis . . . had taught me" she tried to share information about "Life in general . . . [and] life in the house." Her little Louise also looked to Helen to understand her role as a big sister. Both had gone through sorority recruitment over forty years before and it seemed that very little had changed. Sorority culture is very powerful.

Big sisters are responsible for passing on parts of the culture through ritual. It is expected that the women educate and guide the new members through pledging and the initiation ceremonies of the chapter. Many gifts are given by the big sister as symbols of the relationship. Each little sister receives a family T-shirt, a wood "LIL" sign, and crafts on big/little reveal day. At initiation the little sister is given a paddle with their name engraved on it and other gifts picked by the sorority family. Several of the women commented on the expense associated with these activities, but they never questioned changing anything about these expectations. Janis (2004) examined peer interactions and group influence among Greek members. Peer relationships shaped individual development. Sorority culture was extremely powerful and could become detrimental; however, the members rarely questioned the negative aspects of Greek membership.

Big Sister Influence on Leadership Development. Leadership involvement was important to sorority women at Plains University. All of the current members that were interviewed held positions in the chapter or in other organizations. The documents provided by the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs also stressed Greek leadership

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development and involvement. Leadership is an important part of the Greek culture. Chelsea remembered her discussions with sisters about finding a leadership role and other members would say "You need to do this . . . You shouldn't do that." Her little sister Sara shared the same type of experience. During formal recruitment one of the members divulged "I could see you being VP of Philanthropy." She became the VP of Philanthropy a few years later, a position held by her big sister Chelsea the year before. Both women listened to each other and other chapter members when deciding to become student leaders. Leadership positions can provide the members opportunities to develop interpersonal skills through working with other students. The peers within the culture became an external voice pointing out behavior that was encouraged. Greek students are more involved and engaged on campus than unaffiliated students (Hayek, Carini, O'Day, & Kuh, 2002).

Documents from PU also discussed leadership development. The Panhellenic recruitment book encouraged women to get involved in campus organizations and develop leadership skills. It claimed that Greeks at PU hold more than half of campus leadership positions. There are several Greek-only organizations that promote leadership and provide training for members. The sorority environment at PU encourages and supports development in this area. Leadership is a clear part of the culture.

Crossroads. Baxter Magolda's (2009) research has followed her participants through their adult lives from 18 through their 40s. In their twenties as the group started pursing careers, entering marriages, and having children, most of the adults entered the crossroads as a location to self-authorship. While in the crossroads people struggle with listening to the external voices of family, peers, and society, while also listening to their

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own internal voice that provides a set of values and philosophy of life. Trisha the sophomore and Sara the junior appeared as examples of individuals in the crossroads of self-authorship. Trisha was struggling with her career decisions. She was torn between listening to her father and her own internal voice. Sara struggled with her interpersonal relationship with her big sister after she became a twin. She was jealous and then regretted it and apologized.

It is one of the most important jobs of higher education to provide a diversity of thought and experiences. Magolda, King, Taylor, & Wakefield (2012) believed these challenges can come through academic life and peer relationships. Students who enter college dependent on external voices begin questioning those when provided multiple perspectives. This creates the beginning of the discovery of the internal voice. Students are forced to make decisions and begin to weigh the external voices against their own internal voice.

Career. Trish, part of the freshman/sophomore pair, spent a great deal of time in her interview reflecting on her career choice which was a crossroads moment. Her father was upset when she decided to become an education major: "My dad said 'you should do something else' . . . It placed that seed in my head." Trish's involvement in sorority song and dance shows helped her develop parts of herself that she valued. It helped her cultivate her internal voice. "Having these people to mentor and teach . . . solidified . . . [the idea that] yes, this is what I am supposed to be doing." Trisha began to listen to her internal voice and question the external voices of others. The challenge helped her to enter into the journey of self-discovery. Trisha viewed being in college as a path to a career rather than a journey of

personal growth. This supports the earlier findings of Astin (1993) that Greek members were more likely to connect college to career success than non-Greeks.

Interpersonal Skills. Chelsea and Sara also had problems within their relationship when Chelsea decided to take a second little the semester after Sara was initiated into the chapter. Sara was candid as she revealed that she had wondered "Am I not good enough?" Chelsea saw her like a "jealous kid . . . upset." Sara had not known that Chelsea wanted another little sister and was surprised when she found out a few weeks before the spring initiation. They talked about it and Sara said "She says 'sorry' . . . I'm sorry . . . I shouldn't be upset." Sara was at a crossroads because she was beginning to listen to her internal voice. After the event she realized that she could not control getting a twin, but she could control her reaction. Baxter Magolda (2009) discussed through beginning to trust the internal voice people learn to control their reactions to situations they encounter in life. Individuals learn to work within their circumstances and not focus energy on trying to change experiences.

Self-Authorship. Brooke and Jessica both had strong connections with their internal voices. As seniors they had experienced more challenges in their meaning- making along the journey to self-authorship. The alumni pair of Helen and Louise also showed signs of self-authorship. Both pairings were older, providing them more life challenges and experiences.

Baxter Magolda (2009) described developmental holding environments as confirmation, contradiction, and continuity. In confirmation the environment provides support for the person's current meaning-making and keeps that person as he/she is. An example would be a freshman sorority woman experiencing gender socialization.

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Contradiction challenges the person's current meaning-making and encourages them to leave the group once they have outgrown it. Continuity means that a person can continue to stay a part of the group as they grow from their previous self that listened to external voices into their new self that listens to the internal voice. Because sorority membership spans a lifetime, it is possible for chapters to have continuity as members develop. With undergraduate members, chapters can be confirmation by sharing external ideas or contradiction to those who question the external voice of chapter culture.

Learning Partner. Jessica said that her relationship with Brooke had helped her "follow her heart . . . [and realize that] it doesn't matter what people think about me." Brooke said Jessica had made her "be a strong woman . . . [and] live that out and stand up for myself." The key to their relationship according to Brooke was "communicating well . . . sitting down and having those conversations in person . . . face-to-face." After Jessica broke up with her boyfriend her big sister Brooke helped her to take the pain and reflect on the experience to help her identify her internal voice. Brooke was a good learning partner, and they both have continued to use each other to reflect on the complex problems in life.

Commitment. One of the most consistent experiences between all of the participants was having the support and friendship of their sister for life. When explaining what this support is like Trish said as a big sister it is "whatever the little needed . . . whatever you need . . . [it's] dynamic." As an alumni member in her 60s Louise declared "You know immediately . . . these women are going to be in your life forever." Helen, her big sister, mirrored her response with "We see each other quite often . . . [and] maintain a very close friendship . . . Knowing somebody is there [who has] got your back . . . You always

have somebody to talk to." Louise claimed "This is what true friendship is . . . It lasts; it endures."

Participation in Greek organizations produces an increased sense of community (Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996). This feeling of connection to their chapter and college continues after graduation. Greek alumni tend to continue their association and support of the Greek chapter. The members typically have higher levels of student and alumni engagement, helping to increase the feelings of connection with their alma mater. Research has shown that Greek alumni often donate money back to campus and chapters (Okunade, Wunnava, & Walsh, 1994).

Implications for Practice

It is important for student affairs professionals to recognize the strength of the big/little sister relationship and identify how to use this phenomenon to increase self-authorship. In the next few pages I will provide possible options based on research.

Increase Diversity. Barber and King (2014) focused on discovering experiences that promote self-authorship. They used the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNS) and a series of interviews to identify developmentally effective experiences (DEE). The authors tried to identify tasks that enable growth, although the tasks vary in context and nature of the experience. They identified two challenges that promote self-authorship. The first was exposure to new ideas, situations, or people from diverse backgrounds including those with different religious or political beliefs. The developmental effect occurred when a student considered a different idea about god or a political platform. The students then experienced the demand of how to interact with a friend with different beliefs. The second type of challenge was experiencing discomfort that

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leads to action. Students experienced uncomfortable feelings when confronted with difficult decisions. An example would be deciding between two social groups.

Within this study the culture of the sorority was incredibly strong. The women formally and informally learned the expectations of membership, how to be a big sister, and the importance of leadership positions. Through the first year of membership the women spent lots of time with sorority sisters and their external voices. Greeks have tended to be more homogenous than other groups (Walker, Martin, & Hussey, 2015), but couldbecome more diverse through the intentional recruitment of diverse types of students and exposing members to diverse ideas and cultures.

Over the course of the interviews, it was clear that the women used a set of five criteria for new member selection: academic achievement, leadership positions, financial responsibility, character, and personal development. Women at Plain University were encouraged to have a 3.0 high school grade point average (GPA) before going through formal recruitment. This GPA and leadership position requirements automatically limited the type of student who could apply. Participants were also limited by their ability to pay for sorority membership, which could cost from $1,647 to $4,363 for the first year of fees and initiation cost. Another limiting factor was a young woman's character. Any transgressions or questionable behavior that could be found on social media or through gossip could hurt a woman's chance of becoming a new member. The pool of students who had a good GPA and were student leaders limited the number of potential new members. On top of all of these criteria Greek life had a reputation which made some students uninterested in becoming a part of the Greek experience.

To provide challenge and further self-authorship, sorority chapters need to increase the diversity of members. Diversity can include differences in faith, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and political beliefs. Chapters could offer scholarships to encourage participation by women who cannot afford to participate without the financial support. Another way to increase chapter diversity would be to change the recruitment standards related to grades and leadership positions. Many women who are introverts may not have been as involved in high school. They can still be valuable members of the chapter through providing a different perspective. Sororities could also make exceptions for the GPA requirement. One possibility would be to require applicants with lower GPAs to write essays that describe how they would be an asset to the chapter.

If sororities are unable or unwilling to change recruitment standards, it would be beneficial to provide opportunities for the women to interact with diverse people and groups. Students could be required to participate in volunteer opportunities with groups who are culturally or socioeconomically different from them. Plains University is in a rural location and most of the students come from similar backgrounds. Requiring members to participate in a volunteer service activity in an urban location with individuals who are ethnically different would be an example of one way to help sorority women develop self-authorship.

Attending lectures or debates containing ideas that are new and possibly controversial could also lead students to challenge and expand their belief systems. Formal lectures, discussion groups, or debates could all be promoted throughout the year to address timely topics. Participation in debate and/or discussion would allow students to share multiple perspectives. Students would begin to be aware of the many voices around

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them and become more open-minded about different perspectives. This would also help students to stay informed about the world around them.

Learning Partner Training. One of the questions that I asked every participant in the semi-structured interview was "Did you receive training on how to be a big sister?" All of the undergraduate women were from the same chapter and shared the same type of answer. Trish the sophomore shared "There's not really any written definition" about what a big sister is or does. She believed it's supposed to be like a mentorship. Sara the junior little sister to Chelsea disclosed "no training . . . unwritten rule . . . You should always be there for your little." Brooke mentioned a "contract" while her little Jessica called it a "document" that had to be signed by the member before they could receive a little sister. Both said that members had to uphold chapter standards. Jessica mentioned some of these as academics, character, and financial responsibility. She also informed me that there was no training. Most of the learning that occurred was informal through the culture of the chapter.

Training would be a big benefit for the sorority sisters and aid in the development of the women. The sorority big/little sister relationship already creates a commitment to each other that should span their lives. The women desire to be there for each other, but do not always support each other in a way that is beneficial. Universities and the National Panhellenic Conference should support creating some training that focuses on Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship and specifically learning partnerships. The company that we keep can help us progress from authority-dependence to self-authorship. The women need to understand the skills of good learning partners that would help their sisters through the developmental process.

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Baxter Magolda (2009) figuratively described this relationship as the individual being in the passenger seat while their learning partner provides guidance from the backseat. Learning partners provide challenge and support similar to Nevitt Sanford's (1962) theory. Baxter Magolda believes that challenge occurs through the individual's contact with other people in their life circumstances. The situations occur throughout one's life. Some of the poems narrate the challenges, such as loss of a boyfriend, violations of the sorority standards, and the women's relationships with each other. The learning partner needs to provide the individual with the support that they need during challenging times. It is important for the person facing the challenge to decide for themselves how to react to problems and why those reactions are supported by their internal voice.

Sometimes the role of the learning partner is to provide the challenge to force people to understand the complexity of the problem in their lives and to see the many options available and match the one closest to their internal voice. As partners we collaboratively learn and grow together. Each person will learn from another by talking and providing the right questions for each to identify their own internal voice and correct answers.

Six Components of Learning Partnerships:

Supporting Actions:

- Respecting their thoughts and feelings, affirming the value of their voices
- Helping them view their experiences as opportunities for learning and growth
- Collaborating with them to analyze their own problems, engaging in mutual learning with them

Challenging Actions:

- Drawing participants' attention to the complexity of their life decisions, and discouraging simple solutions

- Encouraging participants' attention to develop their personal authority by listening to their own voices in determining how to live their lives

- Encouraging participants to share authority and expertise, and work interdependently with others to solve mutual problems

Through the creation of a training program, big sisters could learn to be supportive of their little sisters without solving their problems for them and becoming an external voice. The women could be taught to use open-ended questions to help their little sisters work through challenges and pain. The big sisters could learn to be supportive without preventing their little sisters' growth.

Additional skills would also be important to teach the big sisters or the dyad together. Communication and conflict resolution methods would be helpful as they interact with each other and the other women in the chapter. Individual leadership development to identify personal strengths and values would also help the women along the journey of discovering their internal voice. Programs like StrengthsFinder that identify a person's top five strengths and help the group understand how to work with other people with different strengths could strengthen the chapter. Creating a personal mission and values statement would help the women begin to establish their internal voice and provide an internal foundation to make decisions.

Creating a Framework to Foster Sorority Self-Authorship. Taylor & Haynes (2008) wrote about the development of a framework for student development at Miami University's Honors and Scholars Program. Their goal was to create a holistic development

process with five clearly identified components. There are three tiers of development along the journey to self-authorship. Baxter Magolda's theory was used to create student traits, developmental goals, student learning outcomes, faculty/staff expectations, and learning experiences. The components build upon each other as students move up the tiers. The developmental challenges also increase with each level. In the learning experiences column, there is a focus on co-curricular activities that introduce students to diverse ideas and people. All of the experiences are aimed at moving students through the developmental goals.

The table below was built using Taylor and Haynes' (2008) framework and modifying it to fit sorority culture. The primary focus is on student learning outcomes and learning experiences. During each of the first three years of the college the sorority women would be exposed to learning experiences that should move them through the stages of self-authorship. The framework ends after the junior year. The last year of college is often filled with internships, capstone projects, and graduate school applications or career searches. The experiences of volunteer service and political or social seminars are aimed at helping students identify different perspectives and process their personal beliefs. By having the women do volunteer work in communities different from their own it will help introduce them to new ideas and cultures.

The purpose of several of the learning experiences is for the women to spend time learning about themselves. The StrengthsFinder assessment uncovers an individuals personal strengths and how to best develop those talents. Writing a personal mission and values statement also provides a reflection tool. Both experience teach how individuals are unique and help students develop an appreciation for differences.

Table 2.

Framework for Self-Authorship		
Freshman Year	Student Learning Outcomes	Learning Experiences
	Explore questions about society and the	Complete a StrengthsFinder assessment and attend a workshop
	Think critically by identifying multiple perspectives on an issue	Participate in two leadership workshops focused on Diversity and The Social Change Model
	Identifying one's strengths and areas for improvement	Complete 24 hours of volunteer service with their pledge class serving a group that is different culturally or socioeconomically (Example: Urban City
	Interacting with people to engage with new ideas and cultures	Attend a fall or spring seminar on a relevant political or social issue and engage in small group discussion about
Sophomore	Student Learning Outcomes	Learning Experiences
	Begin choosing personal beliefs and values among multiple perspectives	Complete Learning Partnership Training before becoming a big sister
	Assess and refine one's personal and educational goals	Participate in a leadership workshop focused on writing a personal mission and values statement
	Operate effectively within a diverse team to solve a problem, address an issue, or answer a	Attend a fall or spring seminar on a relevant political or social issue and engage in small group discussion about the topic
	Identify the six components of a learning partnership	Complete 24 hours of volunteer service with their pledge class serving a group that is different culturally or socioeconomically (Example: Urban City or Native American Tribe)
Junior Year	Student Learning Outcomes	Learning Experiences
	Consistently base decisions upon the internal voice or personal	Research and plan freshman and sophomore volunteer service experience. Create a tool for reflection
	Recognize and respect the multifaceted identity of others	Work with pledge class to design a leadership training for the chapter based off the Social Change Model
	Support and sustain an inclusive community	Attend a fall and spring seminar on a relevant political or social issue and engage in small group discussion about
	Articulate the importance of volunteer service and the social change model	

Researcher's Reflection

Throughout my professional career, I have worked with Greek students in the field of student affairs. I have spent hours with sorority women during recruitment week watching skits and songs at parties, holding their hands on international badge day, and teaching seminars. The amount of time student affairs professionals and alumni members invest in this group of students can only be compared with other campus groups like student government or programming boards. The findings of this study reaffirmed why Greek life is an important part of the American higher education system. The same findings challenged my perception of the developmental growth that occurs through the big/little sister relationship.

After conducting the literature review, I expected to find a strong and unique culture within the sorority system. I assumed the women would to be close and share some of the same ideas about sorority life and sisterhood. It was surprising to me that many of the same cultural beliefs were prevalent in the undergraduate and alumni students. The best example of this is their explanations of how they learned to be big sisters. Another example would be the universal assumption that they will always be there to support each other. I expected to hear the women discuss their dedication to each other, but the connection was incredibly strong. This will help provide the support aspect of self-authorship.

The women were high-achieving both academically and through their co-curricular activities. The older women were all on track to graduate in four years or earlier. They voiced their love of the university and chapter. The alumni members were still involved with the sorority and attended university events together. These are all functions that

support the university mission, and are good reasons to invest the time into the Greek experience.

When reviewing the interviews and applying the theoretical framework of self-authorship, it became apparent that the culture limited individual growth. The uniform beliefs within the culture prevented the sorority women from interacting with diverse ideas and people. Without any challenges, it is difficult to transition from the external to internal voice. The women also relied on each other to make decisions and solve problems. This behavior was not empowering and slowed development.

I was concerned that I would encounter barriers relating to gaining access to the population. The opposite was true. My personal relationships and experience with the Greek advisors provided me with almost unlimited information. The women I interviewed also trusted me because of this connection. The most difficult part of the process was scheduling the interviews. Email messages were not effective, but text messages worked. I had more participants volunteer to participate than I needed. I have kept the list for future research projects.

Recommendations for Future Research

Over the last several years the body of research about self-authorship has increased dramatically. However, more research is needed to understand how the theory works within unique or special populations. Researchers also need to understand how specific learning experiences like volunteer service and diversity training affect student self-authorship. Student-to-student learning partnerships could also be investigated to determine approach and effectiveness. Additional information on how to best create personal reflection to further self-authorship would also be useful.

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This study could follow Magolda's original study by conducting yearly interviews throughout the subjects' lifespan. By following the participants further, a clearer understanding of the role of sorority culture could be realized. It would also be interesting to compare the progression of Magolda's original subjects' progress to that of sorority women. Additional questions about Greek life and the university could also uncover feelings during their transition process.

Professional Significance of Study

Academic research into the culture of Greek social sororities and fraternities is essential to student affairs and higher education. This study helped to shed light on the relationship of big/little sisters. The women were enforcing high academic and social standards, which support the mission of the university. PU Greek students had higher retention and graduation rates than unaffiliated students. The importance of participation in leadership activities also appeared through interviews and documents. Leadership opportunities support interpersonal development in students as well as increase their engagement as alumni. It is important that student affairs practitioners understand the strengths of these organizations. The big/little sister relationship is embedded in Greek culture. The women play a significant role in each other's lives through socializing them into the Greek community, teaching about being a big sister, and providing emotional support after the death of loved ones. This system already exists and can be improved to further strengthen the goals of the university. The institutional mission is already supported and can be strengthened to capitalize on the current foundation.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the Greek sorority big/little sister relationship on meaning-making of self among sorority members. Self-authorship was used as the theoretical framework to understand the development process of members. A total of eight women were interviewed which became four individual cases. Cross-case thematic findings emerged through three themes that reflected key phases of self-authorship: external formulas, crossroads, and self-authorship. Implications for practice include training on how to become learning partners using Magolda's (2009) research. Other recommendations include increasing contact with diverse ideas and cultures.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Document

Project Title: Big/Little Relationships and Self Authorship in Sorority Women

Investigators:

        Kathleen Kennedy
        Doctoral Student in Higher Education Administration
        Dr. Zarrina Azizova
        Dissertation Advisor

Purpose:

To examine how members of a sorority big/little sister dyad view their relationship. This research will be used for a dissertation.

Procedures:

Each subject will be interviewed one time during the fall 2016 semester. All interviews will be audio recorded. Subjects will also be asked to provide two photos of themselves and their bigs/littles and to discuss the photo. Observations may also be made at homecoming events, big/little reveal, and Dad's Day. The participant can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Risks of Participation:

        There is no foreseen risk to participating in this study which isgreater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits:

If you are interested a copy of the research will be provided when the study is finished.

Confidentiality:

•   Your name will be changed
•   The data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home
•   The dissertation advisor and committee will have access to the data
•   The data will be kept until May 2019
•   The data will be reported in a written paper

The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and well-being of people who participate in research.

If you disclose that you have been a victim of sexual assault, harassment, violence, or stalking, I will need to make a report to the Title IX Officer (405-744-9153) and the OSU Police (405-744-6523). OSU has a designated sexual assault advocate for helping victims through the decision- making process and to help refer them to services (405-880-0766). The interview will then not be used in the research study.

If the issue of hazing, violence, or underage drinking is disclosed, I will contact the Student Conduct Office (405-744-5470) and the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs (405-744-5490) if the issue involves other Greek students. The interview will then not be used in the research study.

Compensation:
A $20.00 gift card will be provided to the participant after the interview.
Contacts:
You may contact any of the researchers at the following address and phone numbers should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the study.
Kathleen Kennedy 918-803-6498
Dr. Zarrina Azizova
312 Willard Hall
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078
405-744-8064
If you have questions about the research and your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Participant Rights:
I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty.

Consent Documentation:
I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:

I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

Signatures:
I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions: Big Sister Protocol

1. Please start by telling me a little bit about yourself.
2. Why do you believe that you were selected to be a member of this chapter?
3. Tell me about your experience being a sorority woman.
4. Explain how you became a little sister?
    a. Describe how you were paired?
    b. Tell me how rituals were involved?
    c. Do you spend time with your big sister outside of sorority functions?
    d. Do you attend sorority functions with your big sister?
    e. How would you describe yourself as a big sister? What or who influenced you?
    f. Can you explain sorority families? Do you have names and/or symbols attached them?
5. Explain how you became a big sister?
    a. How were you paired?
    b. Explain if rituals were involved?
    c. Do you spend time with your little sister outside of sorority functions?
    d. Do you attend sorority functions with your little sister?
    e. Did you receive training on being a sorority sister?
    f. What expectations does your chapter place on sorority big sisters?
    g. What do you see the role of a sorority big sister as?
6. What events have been significant during your time as a big sister?
    a. Why were they significant?
    b. How did you handle these significant situations?
7. What challenges, conflicts, or pressures did you face in your big sister relationship?
    a. How did you handle these situations?
    b. What support systems, if any, did you use to work through these situations?
    c. How did these challenges affect your big/little relationship?
    d. Now that you have had more time to think about the situation, would you have made the same decision?
8. How has your big/little relationship experience matched or differed from your expectations?
9. How has your big/little experience affected your view of yourself?
10. What are the key things that you take away from the big/little relationship?
11. What do you value the most about being part of a big/little sister relationship?
12. Describe how your big/little sister supports the sorority.
13. Has your little made you think differently about your role as a woman?
14. Has your little made you feel differently about your career decisions or aspirations?
15. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your big/little relationship that we have not spoken about already?
16. Please share two photos of you and your little sister. Tell me about the photos, where they were taken, and what is important to you about them?

APPENDIX C

Semi-Structured Interview Questions: Little Sister Protocol

1. Please start by telling me a little bit about yourself.
2. Why do you believe that you were selected to be a member of this chapter?
3. Tell me about your experience being a sorority woman.
4. Explain how you became a little sister?
    a. How were you paired?
    b. Discuss how rituals were involved?
    c. Do you spend time with your big sister outside of sorority functions?
    d. Do you attend sorority functions with your big sister?
    e. Have you learned about being a big sister from your big?
    f. Tell me about your sorority family? Do you have a name and/or symbols attached to it?
5. What events have been significant during your time as a little sister?
    a. Why were they significant?
    b. How did you handle these significant situations?
7. What challenges, conflicts, or pressures did you face in your little sister relationship?
    a. How did you handle these situations?
    b. What support systems, if any, did you use to work through these situations?
    c. How did these challenges affect your big/little relationship?
    d. Now that you have had more time to think about the situation, would you have made the same decision?
8. How has your big/little relationship experience matched or differed from your expectations?
9. How has your big/little experience affected your view of yourself?
10. What are the key things that you take away from the big/little relationship?
11. What do you value the most about being part of a big/little sister relationship?
12. Describe how your big sister supports the sorority.
13. Has your big sister made you think differently about your role as a woman?
14. Has your big sister made you feel differently about your career decisions or aspirations?
15. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your big/little relationship that we have not spoken about already?
16. Please share two photos of you and your big sister. Tell me about the photos, where they were taken, and what is important to you about them?

APPENDIX D

Letter to Hand out at Panhellenic & Sorority Meetings:

Dear Sorority Members,

My name is Kathleen Kennedy, and I am preparing to conduct research for my doctoral degree from Oklahoma State University. The goal of my research is to gain an understanding of the dyadic big/little sister relationship and discover if these interactions impact self-authorship. This study will provide insight into the world of social sororities and student development.

This is a multiple case study and I am looking for:

Two – Freshman/Sophomore Pairings (New Member/Member)

Two – Junior/Senior Pairings (Member/Member)

Both big/little sisters must agree to participate!

A compensation of a $20.00 gift card will be provided after the completion of each interview.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate you will be asked to participate in an interview at the time and place of your choosing. We will discuss the topic of big/little sister relationships in more detail. You will also be asked to provide the researcher with two photos of you and your big/little and to observe your interaction within sorority events (Homecoming, Big/Little Reveal, and Dad's Day) in the Fall 2016 semester. The researcher will only observe one event with the permission of the subject and the Greek Chapter House. The researcher is only trying to better understand the relationship and rituals surrounding Greek life.

If you are interested in participating please email or call me.

Thanks you for your time, respectfully,

Kathleen Kennedy

Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Kathleen.kennedy@okstate.edu

Office: 405-744-8045

Cell: 918-803-6498

VITA

Kathleen M. Kennedy

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: SISTERHOOD RELATIONSHIPS AND SELF-AUTHORSHIP

Major Field: Education

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2017.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Natural and Applied Science at Oklahoma State University, in May, 2000.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Sociology at Oklahoma State University, in May, 1998.

Experience:

Muskogee Nonprofit Resource Center
  Community Organizer, 11/2012 – July 2016

Northeastern State University
  Director of Campus Involvement, 08/ 2009 – 08/2012

Oklahoma State University
  Coordinator – Student Union Programs   05/2004 – 08/ 2009

Richland College of the Dallas County Community College District
  Coordinator – Student Programs and Resources   2003 – 2004

  Program Development Specialist – Student Programs and Resources   2000 – 2003