

ABSTRACT

JOHNSON, SHANNON LEE. *Sisters of Diversity: A Case Study on the Roles of a Multicultural Sorority.* (Under the direction of Dr. Susan J. Bracken.)

Little to no literature has been published on multicultural Greek letter organizations, yet they appear to be among the fastest growing phenomena in Greek life. Concerned about the future of human relations and desiring to explore opportunities for respectful interactions among diverse individuals, the author chose to narrow her research to the college campus environment and, more specifically, to a group of women. The purpose of the qualitative case study was to understand how members of one self-identified multicultural sorority at a Southeastern research university define and address intercultural issues on their college campus. The author selected the multicultural feminist perspective and the intercultural theory of student development as the theoretical framework. Primarily based upon interviews with 10 current and alumnae members of the sorority, the findings explore one overarching research question: what describes the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus? Three areas were explored – identity, structure, and activities – to support this overarching research question. Five key statements of findings emerged from the data. Within the thematic area of Identity, the first finding is the lack of sororal intentions by the women who joined Theta Nu Xi and the second finding is their deep feeling of acceptance. The third key finding, situated within the thematic area of Structure, is the idea that this sorority is intentionally multicultural but inherently feminist. Within the thematic area of Activities, the fourth finding describes how the purpose and activities of Theta Nu Xi differ from traditional Greek letter organizations (GLOs), and the fifth finding explores the concept of universal learning rather than unilateral learning.

Sisters of Diversity: A Case Study on the Roles of a Multicultural Sorority

by
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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

Higher Education Administration

Raleigh, North Carolina

2010

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to my partner in life, Kyle Johnson, who has stood beside me and supported me throughout this long process. This dissertation is also dedicated to my mother, Kaye Denning, who instilled in me a love for learning (and for using proper grammar and punctuation when writing).

BIOGRAPHY

Shannon Lee Johnson was born in Raleigh, North Carolina. She is the daughter of Kaye Denning and older sister of Kerry and Carly Denning. Shannon is married Kyle Johnson, and they are the proud parents of four cats.

Shannon graduated from North Carolina State University (NCSU) with a Bachelor of Social Work and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with the Criminal Justice Option. She went on to receive her Master of Social Work from UNC-Chapel Hill. Shannon's MSW field placement at the Duke University Women's Center led her into the field of higher education. After graduation Shannon worked at the Duke University Career Center for a year before returning to the Duke University Women's Center as Program Coordinator for eight years. During this time Shannon began the Ed.D. program in Higher Education Administration at NCSU and received a Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies from Duke University. Shannon accepted a position at NCSU as Director of the Women's Center, where she worked from 2005 until 2010. Most recently Shannon moved to central New York where she is looking for employment in higher education.

Her personal interests, which she looks forward to having time for once again, include knitting, reading, photography, scuba diving, and spending time with family and friends.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Kyle Johnson, my partner in life, for all of his support, patience, and understanding throughout this long process. I would also like thank Kaye Denning, my mother and lifelong advocate, for all of her encouragement and editing of earlier drafts. Thanks goes to my family – Lois, Kerry, Carly, Dan, and Beverly – for their understanding and encouragement. I could not have completed this huge endeavor without everyone’s support.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all of my committee members – past and present. Their encouragement, feedback, and suggestions helped make this document a better dissertation and make me a better researcher, writer, and practitioner. Special thanks goes to Dr. Susan Bracken, my chair, advisor, and friend, who helped me cross the finish line.

I would like to also acknowledge all of my colleagues and fellow graduate students for their understanding and encouragement. The two doctoral support groups in which I participated were integral in getting me through this process while maintaining my sanity. I won’t name names lest I forget someone, but you know who you are.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Sisters of Diversity

Together as ONE

- Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority, Inc.

Following the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and the ensuing legislation, significant changes occurred in the higher education landscape within the United States of America regarding shifts in student demographics. Institutional responses emerged in the form of support offices, curriculum changes, and increased recruitment of women and minority students and faculty. In addition to institutional responses, students sought to create their own support networks in order to succeed such as student organizations that emphasized the diversity they represented. One way increased diversity impacted colleges was through the evolution of social Greek letter organizations (GLOs) to include groups with a specific cultural or multicultural emphasis.

My interests in social justice for a more equitable society started with race and gender issues but expanded to recognize a broader definition of diversity that also includes such attributes as ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and religion. I focused my attention on these issues within higher education and realized that my interests have the possibility of coming together within the context of a multicultural sorority. Therefore, I chose to explore how one particular multicultural sorority defines and addresses intercultural issues on their college campus due to the organization's commitment in uniting students across differences both among members and in the larger campus community.

Background and Statement of the Problem

When the Civil Rights Movement reached its climax in the 1960s, the majority of colleges in the United States were either predominantly White male, predominantly White female, or all Black. A new era followed federal legislation that was implemented as a result of the Civil Rights Movement, and colleges around the country were no longer allowed to discriminate based on race, ethnicity, or gender in their admissions process. Exponential growth in the diversity of student demographics occurred over the course of the next 30 years, resulting in many changes within the campus climate and, as will be discussed later, Greek letter organizations (Kimbrough, 2002).

As the population of the United States continues to become more diverse, so do our college campuses. Based on U.S. Census Bureau population estimates for 2000 and population projections for the year 2050, the overall racial make-up of the United States is expected to be 14.7% Black (a 12.9% increase), 9.3% Asian and Pacific Islander (a 55.9% increase), and 24.3% Hispanic (a 51% increase) – almost 50% of the nation's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2001). In addition to these racial shifts already being reflected on our college campuses (Carter & Wilson, 1997; Chang & DeAngelo, 2002), other demographic differences are also notable. More than 6,400 postsecondary undergraduate institutions enrolled more than 17.5 million students during the 2003-2004 academic year. Approximately 40% of undergraduate students were raised in low-income households, defined at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (ACE, 2005). In 1989-1990 racial and ethnic minorities made up 20% of undergraduates at four-year colleges and universities (Choy, 2002), a percentage that increased to 36% by 2003-2004 (ACE, 2005). College

students in 1999-2000 were also more culturally diverse with 20% either having a foreign-born parent or being born outside the United States themselves while 11% did not speak English as the primary language at home. Women earned 57.3% of the Bachelor degrees conferred in 2007-2008 ("U.S. Department of education, national center for education statistics"). Additionally, about 75% of four-year college students work while taking classes and only 40% attend college full time directly after high school (Choy, 2002). Many colleges and universities continue to work on diversifying the student bodies, faculty, and staff to include more historically underrepresented racial groups as well as women (Astin, 1993).

In addition to diversifying students, staff, and faculty on college campuses, there are other elements – both internal and external to the institution – that contribute to improving campus climate. External elements influencing campus climate include the larger sociohistorical context such as key social movements and the government and policy context such as affirmative action. The internal institutional context includes four factors: the structural diversity of increased enrollment and hirings, the historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion, the psychological climate involving perceptions and attitudes about discrimination and prejudice, and the behavioral dimension emphasizing cross-cultural involvement and social interactions (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). Gurin (1999) states that diversity experiences at college can be facilitated on three levels for students: structurally by increased demographic representation, curricular changes in the classroom, and interactional diversity by increased contact between students from different backgrounds. “Most efforts by institutions to address diversity focus on structural and

classroom diversity...less is known, however, about the effects of student interactions with peers from diverse backgrounds beyond the classroom” (Hu & Kuh, 2003, p. 321). All of these contexts are important and should be considered when trying to improve the campus climate for diversity. The intent of this study, however, is to focus on one aspect within the behavioral/interactional dimension.

Although the student population on most college campuses is becoming more diverse, there is a tendency for less social interaction among different cultural groups (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; X. Zuñiga & Nagda, 1993). Among his findings on how students are affected by their college experiences, Astin (1993) found a divergence in affective development during the college years between White and Black students’ perceptions “that racial discrimination is no longer a problem [as well as] in their commitment to the goals of promoting racial understanding” (pp. 406-407). Even in areas outside of race, the dominant culture believes equality has been achieved. Voluntary segregation of Black students through their selection of student organizations suggests the importance of peer groups during college (Astin, 1993). Research indicates the positive effects diverse college campuses have on students both personally and educationally (ACE & AAUP, 2000; Hu & Kuh, 2003), but with shrinking comfort zones those positive effects may wane for students. As a researcher and higher education administrator, I am concerned about the implications of such self-segregation for future human relations in the United States and curious about ways to increase positive interactions with and knowledge of individuals different from one another while maintaining respect and appreciation for our multitude of differences.

Purpose of the Study

Given my concerns about the future of human relations and desire to explore opportunities for respectful interactions among diverse individuals, I am choosing to narrow my research to the college campus environment and, more specifically, to a group of women. Attending college is one of the few life choices that significantly influences an individual's future in various ways. Beyond cognitive growth, vocational training, and identity within a certain career field, personal and social development also occur during the college years. Critical thinking, networking with other students and their families, and the exploration of new concepts and values including gender role attitudes are all part of an undergraduate education (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). In addition to these broader areas of change, "it would appear that there are unmistakable and sometimes substantial freshman-to-senior shifts toward openness and a tolerance for diversity, a stronger 'other-person orientation,' and a concern for individual rights and human welfare" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 559). Based on their updated synthesis of literature on the impact of college, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found "more positive attitudes toward racial equality and tolerance among college students as well as greater awareness and understanding of other cultures...and increases in students' commitment to promoting racial understanding" (p. 576).

Among the many affective changes Astin (1993) attributes to the college experience is a substantial increased commitment to promoting racial understanding. The empirical data of a national longitudinal study clearly support the positive effects on student development of diversity activities and institutions that promote multiculturalism (Astin, 1993). Among the

long-term effects of college found by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005), the finding most relevant to this study is that the social and political values and attitudes held upon graduating from college tend to persist through the adult, post-college years. “If higher education, with its relatively protected environment and its tradition of openness to new ideas and differing points of view, proves unable to fashion workable solutions to our racial conflicts, then it is difficult to imagine how they can be resolved in the larger society” (Astin, 2003, p. xi).

In their book *Divided Sisters: Bridging the Gap Between Black Women and White Women*, Wilson and Russell (1996) incorporate the broader concept of women working together cross-culturally in order to combat various forms of oppression, leading us to a more equitable society. “Despite, or perhaps because of, women’s lesser political power, it is they, rather than men, who hold the key to improving race relations in this country....Conversely, society will transform itself only when women decide together to fight social inequality in all its various forms, whether based on race, gender, or class” (p. 3). Several studies (De Hon, 1995; Milem, 1991; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001) indicate that women are more open to diversity than men, suggesting the potential for women to play a leading role in promoting diversity and social change around multicultural issues on a college campus. The question remains as to whether this concept is feasible. How might it be accomplished and are women truly the key? Given the potential for social and personal development during college, examining a group of college women working to promote multiculturalism provides a unique context in which to explore this notion. Therefore, this study involves looking within one self-identified multicultural sorority at a Southeastern research university. The purpose of this study is to understand how members of this

particular sorority define and address intercultural issues on their college campus. The specific sorority selected for this study is Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority, Inc. (herein referred to as Theta Nu Xi), founded in 1997 by a biracial woman in search of sisterhood that crossed racial boundaries.

Why Study a Sorority?

The obvious question still exists as to why I am choosing to study a sorority rather than a more broadly defined student organization that does not have a selective membership process. Student organizations such as student government, residence hall associations, student military programs, sports, Greek letter organizations, and special interest groups generally serve as a source of extracurricular activities providing various opportunities for students to “volunteer, participate, and lead” (Dunkel & Schuh, 1998, p. 18). While special interest student organizations focusing on diversity and multiculturalism bring students together who are committed to such issues, participants tend to be both male and female. “Greek organizations offer unique opportunities for creating living-learning communities; they provide strong connections between members, plentiful opportunities for leadership and self-governance, and expectations for community service” (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998, p. 15). Astin’s (1993) national longitudinal study on the impact college has on students found that membership in a fraternity or sorority has both positive and negative influences. His study found positive effects in the development of leadership skills but also a tendency for alcohol consumption and hours of partying as well as reduced chances of altruistic behavior and social activism; of particular significance to my study, membership in these organizations also presented a negative association with discussing racial or ethnic issues.

Winston, Nettles, and Opper (1987) and Whipple (1998) cite multiple challenges facing Greek letter organizations and offer suggestions for returning these groups to their full potential and founding principles; the challenges cited include alcohol and substance abuse, lack of diversity, sponsoring racist and sexist activities, hazing, and sexual assault. They also cite the need for the development of positive learning communities involving critical thinking and having higher behavioral expectations and standards. While there is great controversy over the value of Greek letter organizations to the educational community, they do “unite students in friendship and shared purpose” (Whipple, 1998, p. 1).

As we begin the 21st century, diversity within Greek letter organizations takes multiple forms and presents a variety of issues on college campuses. Historically White fraternities and sororities were joined in the early 20th century by Jewish fraternal organizations throughout most New England colleges by the mid-1800s (Rudolph, 1990). Existing on segregated campuses since the early 1900s, historically Black Greek letter organizations began exploding onto predominantly White college campuses in the 1970s (Kimbrough, 2002). The Civil Rights Movement resulted in increased diversity among college student bodies, leading to the latest trend of developing cultural, special interest, and multicultural sororities and fraternities. Informal estimates indicate that there are around 30 Asian, between 50 and 70 Latina/o, and more than 40 multicultural Greek letter organizations in existence today.

Sororities are not often the subjects of feminist research, but there is support for a feminist approach to this study. Social, political, and educational benefits of women’s friendships and women’s organizations are documented in writings in recent decades, so the

examination of a sorority is not an illogical connection. In her study of sororities as a gender strategy, Handler (1995) states that “sororities structure and formalize bonds among women, institutionalizing women’s friendships and legitimizing close and caring relationships between women” (p. 238). She goes on to say that sororal sisterhood is different from a feminist concept of sisterhood because the women are not articulating a shared oppression around gender. Through past conversations with several student members of Theta Nu Xi, these women admitted that they did not stereotype themselves as the “sorority type” and probably would not have joined a sorority at all before learning about Theta Nu Xi (personal communication as part of EAC785 class, October 12, 2001; October 14, 2001; October 24, 2001). Acknowledging the difficulty of women working together cross-culturally in a predominantly segregated society, hooks (2000a) provides support for such a study as this one: “Individual white women and women of color who have worked through difficulties to make the space where bonds of love and political solidarity can emerge need to share the methods and strategies that we have successfully employed” (p. 59).

Theta Nu Xi addresses the question of why they established themselves as a sorority rather than a student organization given their interest in multicultural education. The first reason given is a desire for the sisterly relationship with very diverse women that is developed through the selective membership process of Greek organizations. They want “to show others that the ideal of sisterhood is truly ideal in this sense – that it can transcend the barriers which have historically kept women (and men) apart” (“Theta Nu Xi homepage”). Their second reason is more pragmatic. Because they recognize the tendency for social segregation on college campuses, they are trying to use the most effective means to

encourage cross-cultural interaction. In hopes of having the greatest impact of social change, the founders of Theta Nu Xi acknowledged the central role Greek letter organizations play in social life on college campuses and decided to use that source of power in promoting voluntary social and educational interactions across cultures ("Theta Nu Xi homepage").

Theoretical Framework

My interest is in examining the potential for overall social equality, and my desire is to examine that potential within the context of a college sorority. Therefore, I selected the multicultural feminist perspective and the intercultural theory of student development as my theoretical framework for this study.

Multicultural Feminist Perspective

Feminist theorists developed multiple perspectives to end sexism. Feminist thought takes many forms and includes working to provide equal opportunity within the existing patriarchal system to demolishing the status quo and building a new system. Certain feminist perspectives approach gender inequality with a particular emphasis such as the role of class and capitalism, psychoanalysis, or ecology. This case study, however, focuses on the multicultural feminist perspective (Tong, 1998).

According to a multicultural feminist perspective, gender is not viewed as a common oppression because there are multiple aspects to each woman's individual identity. Women actually have multiple identities throughout their lifetime, many of which come with their own forms of oppression or inferiority (Lorde, 1984). Within the multicultural feminist perspective, different aspects of identity often leave women feeling like their self is fragmented because women do not fit just one definition or identity. "All women are not

created or constructed equal...[and each] will experience her oppression as an American woman differently” (Tong, 1998, p. 212). According to hooks (2000b), a feminist theory that takes into account the interconnectedness of gender with race and class is necessary for a mass-based movement to end sexism and other forms of oppression. Feminist theory must go beyond the historical perspective of privileged White women to “include knowledge and awareness of the lives of women and men who live on the margin” (hooks, 2000b, p. xvii).

Lerner (1997) looks at differences among women from an historical perspective and acknowledges that women “differ by class, race, ethnic and regional affiliation, religion, and any number of other categories” (p. 132). One popular conceptual framework views American society as a “melting pot,” encouraging assimilation to a dominant – male, White, upper-class, heterosexual, Christian – culture and set of values. Another popular framework for viewing differences in American society is the “salad bowl” concept, which allows for the sharing and acknowledgement of difference. However, this concept is insufficient because it implies issues of race and gender can be added to the current curriculum or activities such as Black History Month or Women’s History Month. The patriarchal system is still in place, maintaining power and authority over everyday life. Lerner (1997) outlines a new conceptual framework that puts “differences” at the center of discussion and curriculum content, encouraging us to question the importance of one set of information over another.

Feminism as a mass movement, however, is discussed as three distinct waves – first-, second-, and third-wave feminism. What is now considered first-wave feminism began in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 with the first women’s rights convention discussing the role of women in society. Running into the 1920s, this suffrage movement focused on the

success of “key legal, educational, and economic issues [that] could not be gained without greater political leverage, and thus the vote emerged as a unifying objective for feminists” (McPherson, 2000, pp. 208-209). Second-wave feminism gained momentum during the 1960s, often called the women’s liberation movement, and focused on raising awareness about the social and cultural influences that subordinated women and demanding greater sexual freedom, control of their own bodies, economic equality, and redefining domestic responsibilities. Women’s Studies as academic scholarship also emerged during this wave. “By the 1980s organisations [sic] of non-western, visible minority, immigrant, refugee and aboriginal women complicated and diversified feminist notions of a female condition” (McPherson, 2000, p. 209), and the third wave of feminism gathered momentum and shifted direction of the feminist movement once again. Involvement by more young women in the third-wave feminist work and creation of knowledge characterized this movement along with more inclusive practices with regard to race, class, gender, and sexuality. Third-wave feminism is “concerned with personal aims and with wide social and cultural change accomplished in part by becoming cultural producers” (Starr, 2000, p. 474). According to Baumgardner and Richards (2000), there are three elements to feminism:

It is a *movement*, meaning a group working to accomplish specific goals. Those goals are *social* and *political change* – implying that one must be engaged with the government and laws, as well as with social practices and beliefs. And implicit in these goals is *access* to sufficient information to enable women to make responsible choices. (p. 56)

Patricia Hill Collins published her seminal work called *Black Feminist Thought* during this time (Collins, 1991). Focusing on the empowerment of Black women rather than women working together across differences, her work is not used in defining multicultural feminism.

According to hooks (2000b), earlier visions of sisterhood were based on collaboration derived through common oppression. True sisterhood, however, is formed when women bond together “on the basis of shared strengths and resources” (hooks, 2000b, p. 46).

Women must work together in solidarity, overcoming the barriers that divide them, in order to overcome various forms of oppression imposed on them as a larger subculture. Wilson and Russell (1996) suggest that colleges and universities can play a bigger role in facilitating intercultural dialogue because college is often the first time women from different cultural backgrounds come together in the close quarters of a residence hall. These new interactions provide ample discussion topics that could be facilitated during orientation or as on-going sessions in order to increase awareness about realities and myths surrounding their cultural differences and encourage deeper intercultural friendships. Theta Nu Xi is bringing women together in a sisterhood not bound by their oppression as women but rather to fight multiple forms of oppression.

Intercultural Theory of Student Development

Great strides have been made in the United States in recent decades to extend beyond the dominant White male perspective to include multiple voices in research and literature. According to Tanaka (2003), however, current multicultural approaches to diversity are going to the opposite extreme of alienating White members of the community by eliminating their voices altogether. Building on the positive work of multiculturalism and the strengths

of social and student development theories, Tanaka (2002, 2003) proposes the intercultural theory of student development which “moves beyond the addition of new voices to... ‘a process of learning and sharing across difference where no one culture dominates’” (p. 282).

This intercultural framework promotes an intersubjective society. Each person, or subject, is able to tell her or his story positively while taking into account one’s own history without objectifying others in a negative light. In examining the complexity of college campuses, Tanaka (2002) combines this individual interpretation of intersubjectivity with one that emphasizes “evaluating the meanings attached to abstract social identifiers like gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation – one’s ‘subjectivities’” (p. 283). By accentuating both the personal and social intersubjectivities, assimilation of one culture into another is not assumed, interactional power issues are more visible, and emphasis is placed on personal and social identities rather than essentialized categories such as gender and race. Both the intercultural theory and multicultural feminist perspective promote appreciation and respect for the multifaceted identities and experiences each individual brings to a conversation, classroom, or community.

Significance of the Study

The direction being taken by social Greek letter organizations in response to increased diversity among college student populations differs tremendously from currently available published literature on fraternity and sorority life. Several articles (Boschini & Thompson, 1998; Chang, 1996; McKee, 1987; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998) discuss diversification of Greek letter organizations as the need for historically White organizations to recruit and accept members from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. While this is

true, these authors do not address the development of cultural and multicultural Greek letter organizations, groups that are primarily discussed in informally published material. Several studies also have indicated that sorority or fraternity involvement has a negative impact on students' openness to diversity and commitment to promoting racial understanding (Milem, 1991; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996). Little to no literature has been published on multicultural Greek letter organizations, yet they appear to be among the fastest growing phenomena in Greek life. There is a strong need for additional research and publications on the emergence of such organizations, the roles they play on college campuses, the challenges they present both to the administration and for the organization, and potential solutions to the challenges. Such research could provide guidance to campus administrators in order for these new organizations to have positive experiences and for Greek life as a whole to succeed.

Significant numbers of Greek letter organizations focusing on cultural groups such as Latino/a, Asian American, and gay/lesbian students have formed in the past couple of decades. Even more relevant to the focus of this study is the emergence of Greek letter organizations, specifically sororities, with a multicultural focus. These sororities often include the word "multicultural" in their organizational name and emphasize multiculturalism in their mission statements. On a Frequently Asked Questions page of their web site, Theta Nu Xi explains why they call themselves multicultural:

While other Greek organizations are and continue to grow more diverse, our organization explicitly seeks members with multicultural ideals and interests ... We call ourselves multicultural because the one belief we share is that there is inherent

value in discovering, understanding, and appreciating all the ways in which people are different from each other. It is for this reason that we differentiate ourselves, in name and in purpose, from other greek [*sic*] organizations with the word “Multicultural.” (“Theta Nu Xi homepage”)

Such an organization provides a unique setting within which to examine cross-racial and intercultural exchanges among women and potentially offers an alternative setting for social change. Little to no research has been done on the effect such sororities have on students individually or more broadly by improving diversity initiatives and climate on college campuses where chapters have formed.

Guiding Research Question

The research design is a qualitative case study. In qualitative research meaning is derived from the perceptions of individuals being studied and the proposition that their realities are socially constructed. Within qualitative research, case study is considered one of the common types of inquiry, particularly within education (Merriam, 1998). This particular case study is intrinsic (Stake, 1994) and descriptive (Yin, 2003). One chapter of Theta Nu Xi was selected for this research given the use of “multicultural” in the organization’s name and the emphasis in the organization’s mission statement to promote multiculturalism and be living examples of a diverse sisterhood. Given that the stated purpose of this study is to understand how members of this particular sorority define and address intercultural issues on their college campus, participants included chapter alumnae and current members who had participated in the organization at least one year so that they had sufficient time to experience various aspects of membership. From the internal perspective of the multicultural sorority

chapter members, this study explored how they work toward achieving their mission. Specifically, one overarching question guided this research: what describes the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus?

To support this overarching research question, three areas were explored: identity, structure, and activities. The identity and core mission of the sorority as an organization were investigated. Through examination of its purpose via written and personal interpretations of the mission statement by its members, I hoped to discover the level of significance it plays in the individual members' lives as well as how it guides the sorority's activities on campus. Surveying the structure of the organization provided a systematic perspective of how the sorority functions organizationally and how this may influence the nature of the roles played by Theta Nu Xi. Delving into the activities of the sorority presents supporting evidence of how the sorority goes about promoting multiculturalism. The types of activities conducted, with whom they collaborate, and how they interact with other members of the campus community play an important role in the sorority attaining its mission and contribute to its external effectiveness. Looking at how members identify with the sorority's mission along with how the organization is structured and the activities conducted as a group offers a descriptive picture of the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus. Briefly outlined here, these three topics are discussed in greater detail within the methodology chapter.

Subjectivity Statement

I am a woman – a White, heterosexual, non-religious, feminist woman interested in multicultural issues who never joined a sorority. My many identities along with my

childhood and life experiences brought me to where I am now and will continue to guide me in the future. Race and gender are central to my overall identity and interests, and they ignite the passion that drives me. This is my personal history that influences both my academic and professional choices.

The first significant event in my life revolves around race. I was born and raised in the South, and when I was in third grade, my mother married a Black man. This was in the mid-1970s in North Carolina, where public schools had been desegregated for barely a decade. The initial reactions by both Black and White people to their dating and marriage were extreme on both ends of a continuum and were my first exposures to discrimination and racial oppression. I was 12 and 15 years old respectively when my sisters were born, and the next layer of oppression came in their early childhood. The question of whether or not they were adopted, even as their mother or I stood there with them and their father, became the despised indication of ignorance for me. As my sisters grew older, I witnessed their emotional reactions to being teased by classmates for their biracial identity or being forced to choose one race over the other on the requisite school forms. Having been born and raised in the South where Black/White relations tended to stay in the forefront of the headlines and day-to-day issues along with my personal experiences growing up with a Black step-father places the Black/White dichotomy at the top of my mental list when I think about race and diversity. I am aware of my propensity to think first about Black/White racial relations, and I consciously work to acknowledge and recognize other racial and cultural groups when considering diversity.

I stumbled into women's issues and empowerment in an attempt to deal with the second significant event in my life. As a teenager I experienced gendered violence and sought assistance from the local rape crisis and domestic violence agency. This experience opened my eyes to various forms of violence against women, its damage, and the causal factors. Gendered violence was another form of oppression with which I had been living during my childhood. In moving on with my life, I wanted to give back to the agency that so graciously helped me. I became a domestic violence crisis counselor and eventually received my bachelor's degrees in social work and sociology. Shifting my focus to community organizing around equity issues, I interned at a campus-based women's center for my master's degree in social work. This is where I first identified myself as, and accepted the label of, feminist. As a Student Affairs administrator, I discovered my desire to work with traditional-aged college students. Higher education also provided a unique environment in which to combine my interests in gender, race, and other forms of oppression as well as potentially inspire future leaders of our society to become committed to social justice issues. I had the privilege of serving as the administrative advisor for the chapter of Theta Nu Xi studied in this research for their first two years on campus, gaining insight of and respect for the organization. I see in this sorority a model of an intercultural community that has the potential to influence social change for the members and those around them. This research is important to me because it positively intertwines my multiple identities through a feminist lens that gives me hope for our future.

Summary

While the population in the United States and on college campuses continues to grow more diverse, I am concerned about the self-segregation of students in response to their campus climates. As a result of this concern, I want to understand better how human relations can be improved. Acknowledging the history and changes within Greek letter organizations and the propensity for women to be more open to diversity, this case study examines one multicultural sorority at a Southeastern research university. This study involves looking within one self-identified multicultural sorority at a Southeastern research university. The purpose of this study is to understand how members of this particular sorority define and address intercultural issues on their college campus. The next chapter defines terms used and explores literature relevant to this study from broader diversity awareness to more specifically within the context of a sorority.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

In the spring of 1996, Founding Monarch Melissa Jo Murchison-Blake was in search of sisterhood. She wanted to be part of a family that openly embraced all women and crossed cultural boundaries. As a bi-racial woman, she did not want to choose between historically Caucasian or African-American sororities. Founding Monarch Murchison-Blake felt that if she did choose one, she would be denying half of her heritage.

- History of Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority, Inc.

In looking at the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus, several assumptions are made. Before even getting to these assumptions, however, the societal context within which these campuses exist must be recognized. Due to the historical foundation of the United States of America, privilege is centered around White, rich, heterosexual males. Although there are still instances of overt discrimination and violence targeting people without one or more of these social identifiers, this dominant culture of privilege infiltrates most institutions and organizations in American society at a subconscious, institutionalized level. Focusing on the concept of diversity and multiculturalism, this literature review includes writings from different fields in order to better understand how members of one self-identified multicultural sorority define and address intercultural issues on their college campus. The fields include higher education, student services, Greek life, education, and business and management.

To consider the possibility of social equality, therefore, awareness of diversity and systems of privilege must occur. As discussed earlier, college campuses provide a significant

environment in which such awareness can be obtained, potentially leading to increased sensitivity and commitment to promoting overall social equality. A closer examination will be made regarding diversity approaches in higher education and student affairs, reviewing several key models and theories relevant to this study. Peer groups on college campuses provide opportunities for like-minded students to get to know one another on a personal level and grow during a developmentally significant time in their lives. Specifically, this self-identified multicultural sorority provides a unique environment to explore how its members define and address intercultural issues on their college campus, coming together around their commitment to promote multiculturalism within their organization and in the larger campus community. Before moving forward I will define several words in order for the reader to better understand how certain terms differ and are used within this study.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are being used for the purpose of this study:

Race. Constructed in a sociopolitical context, race is used to broadly categorize the human species based on similar physical, hereditary characteristics (Hoopes & Pusch, 1979; Talbot, 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). In this study I use the term Hispanic and Latina/o interchangeably and the term White to refer to anyone in the United States who is of European descent. I use the term Black to refer to anyone in the United States who is of recent or distant African descent; I choose to use this term rather than African-American in order to be more inclusive of individuals with strong Caribbean or African identity.

Ethnicity. Ethnicity refers to a racial sub-group sharing distinctive cultural traits (Hoopes & Pusch, 1979).

Gender. While the term “sex” is biologically determined, the term “gender” is socially constructed. The female gender is devalued socially within most cultures around the world, generally viewed as lower in status and having less power (Burn, 2005).

Culture. Samovar, Porter, and Stefani (1998) define culture as “the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, actions, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and artifacts acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving” (p. 36). Pedersen (1994) advocates for the use of a broader definition of culture “to include demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, place of residence), status variables (e.g., social, educational, economic), and affiliations (formal and informal), as well as ethnographic variables” (p. 16) as a way to acknowledge the complexity of culture and the many cultural identities and roles individuals assume throughout their lives. According to Pedersen (1994), cultural patterns guide and influence our daily interactions, providing a normative perspective until we begin to learn that other cultures exist.

Diversity. According to Talbot (2003), “diversity and multiculturalism are considered related, but not completely interchangeable. Diversity is a structure that includes the tangible presence of individuals representing a variety of different attributes and characteristics, including culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other physical social variables” (p. 426).

Multiculturalism. According to Hoopes (1979), multiculturalism “is that state in which one has mastered the knowledge and developed the skills necessary to feel comfortable and communicate effectively with people of any culture encountered and in any situation involving a group of people of diverse cultural backgrounds” (p. 21). Reflecting the

complexity of a broad definition of diversity and acknowledging that we each have multiple identities that shape our lives, multiculturalism involves quick and effective cross-cultural learning. “It assumes that the journey toward multiculturalism is an ongoing, developmental process that can be learned. This process involves self-awareness, knowledge, and the development of skills. Multiculturalism is not an inherent characteristic of any individual” (Talbot, 2003, p. 426).

Intercultural/Cross-cultural. “Both ‘intercultural’ and ‘cross-cultural’ refer to interaction, communication and other processes (conceptual analysis, education, the implementation of public policy, etc.) that involve people or entities from two or more different cultures...[and] are used more or less synonymously” (Hoopes & Pusch, 1979, p. 6). According to Tanaka (2003) current multicultural approaches to diversity are alienating White members of the community by eliminating their voices altogether. Building on the positive work of multiculturalism, Tanaka proposes an intercultural framework that “feature[s] learning and sharing across difference *in which no culture dominates*” (p. 125).

Feminism. At its very core, feminism is a social movement working for gender equality through social and political change. Women having access to or generating sufficient information in order to make knowledgeable decisions about their lives is a third component to this definition. “Because women is an all-encompassing term that includes middle-class white women, rich black lesbians, and working-class straight Asian women, an organic intertwining with movements for racial and economic equality, as well as gay rights, is inherent in the feminist mandate” (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 56).

Greek Letter Organization. Usually a single gender group with selective membership focused around social, service, and academic commitments. The most visible recruitment and activities occur on a college campus among undergraduate students, and the organizational names are usually comprised of two or three letters from the Greek alphabet (Anson & Marchesani, 1991). While some women's Greek letter organizations (GLOs) call themselves fraternities, for the purpose of this study the term sorority refers to a women's Greek letter organization and fraternity refers to a men's Greek letter organization. Greek life refers to the social aspect of colleges and universities surrounding Greek letter organizations.

Black Greek Letter Organization. Intercollegiate fraternal organizations specifically serving the needs of and supporting Black college students will be referred to as Black Greek letter organizations, abbreviated as BGLOs by some authors (see Brown, Parks, & Phillips, 2005; see Harris & Mitchell, 2008). The nine member organizations of the National Pan-Hellenic Council, also known as NPHC, dominate the national Black Greek life scene. It is important to note, however, that those nine groups are not and have not been the only Black GLOs in existence, as is described later in this chapter. Therefore, I am choosing to use the phrase Black Greek letter organizations or Black GLOs unless referencing the roles of the national umbrella organization and/or campus governing council or specific member organizations within those councils. This word choice emphasizes a distinction between predominantly White and historically Black GLOs and allows recognition of past and present Black GLOs never belonging to NPHC.

Identity. In the context of this study, identity refers to how members individually and collectively identify with the mission of their sorority, particularly around the definition of multiculturalism. Although racial and cultural group identities impact interpersonal relations between others, this study is not concerned with introspective stage models of identity development theories (Cox, 1994).

Organizational Structure. Structure of an organization refers to the cultural differences of members, structural integration with regard to heterogeneous membership and leadership, and organizational characteristics such as size.

Activities. Activities consist of both formal and informal events planned by the sorority for non-members or for themselves as well as individual behaviors. This term reflects not only the type of activity conducted but also how it is conducted, specifically in ways that develop and work toward achieving the organization's mission.

The Need for Diversity Awareness

While it is important to acknowledge that the impact of social equality does not stop at our borders because the skills and ability to respect those different from ourselves can and must be applied within an international environment (Hoopes & Pusch, 1979), this research focuses within the United States. In order to move down a path toward social equality, greater awareness of our differences and similarities must occur on an individual and societal level. American society benefits from greater diversity, making life richer through exposure to multiple cultures (El-Khawas, 2003). In transitioning from a monocultural to a multicultural society, “a critical mass of understanding and awareness precludes participants from settling for anything less than fully inclusive practices [where] social justice and

egalitarianism are institutionalized and systemic” (Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991, p. 371). Indicators that a multicultural environment has been achieved according to Manning and Coleman-Boatwright’s (1991) Cultural Environment Transitions Model include power and authority being shared; art, architecture, and symbols representing many cultures; changes in language as to no longer reflect a dominant culture; and organizational structures being more flexible and reflective of multiple management styles.

A variety of approaches can be taken to help develop diversity awareness as we strive for social equality. With the commitment of people in power and the allocation of resources specifically for working towards social equality, trainings can be implemented for employees, courses can be modified or created for students, and recruitment for diverse applicants in our schools and businesses will assist in this transition. According to Hoopes and Pusch (1979), multicultural education enhances awareness of our own culture and heritage, fosters an understanding that different cultures provide a source of learning and respect, and provides “skills in analysis and communication that help one function effectively in multicultural environments” (p. 4). By recognizing differences between cultures, “multiculturalism presents us with a paradox because it requires us to look at how we are the same and how we are different at the same time” (Pedersen, 1994, p. 3). While there are many locations where multicultural education can and should occur, college campuses provide a significant environment in which such awareness can be obtained. “Our students, as leaders of the future, need to learn how to accept diversity, negotiate conflicts, and form coalitions with individuals and groups if they are to become prepared to be leaders in an increasingly heterogeneous and complex society” (Gurin, 1999, ¶ 25).

The College Campus Environment

Colleges and universities play an important role in educating and socializing students for better integration into diverse work and living communities. Preparing students for participation in a democratic society is a goal of most higher education institutions. “At no time in our society has the need been greater for connecting the work of the academy to the social and environmental challenges beyond the campus” (Boyer, 1990, p. xii). Students go through a critical developmental stage during college, and campuses provide an insulated environment open to learning and exploring new ideas as well as a location where our future leaders are honing their knowledge, skills, and beliefs. Increased diversity experiences during college carry over to post-college years with graduates more likely to live racially and ethnically integrated lives, helping to break the cycle of climbing segregation in our society (Gurin, 1999). “Our nation’s campuses have become a highly visible stage on which the most fundamental questions about difference, equality, and community are being enacted...[and] the academy brings indispensable resources...to the increase of insight and understanding” (AAC&U, 1995, p. xvi).

In her expert report on the need for diversity in higher education, Patricia Gurin (1999) analyzed three studies on how college students are affected by their diversity experiences. She found positive relationships with regard to both learning and democracy outcomes. Learning outcomes refer to “mode of thought” benefits such as active, engaged, critical thinking about complex issues from multiple perspectives. This kind of thinking is fostered in an environment that is unfamiliar and different from a student’s pre-college experiences and provides a variety of perspectives as well as contradictions. Democracy

outcomes refer to preparing students for active involvement in the pluralistic democracy that is American society. Skills needed to participate in a pluralistic democracy include recognition of multiple perspectives, acceptance of difference while looking for commonalities, acknowledgement and management of conflict, and an interest in the larger world. Higher education can offer the conditions for these skills to be developed by having a diverse and respectful campus promoting equality among peers.

More specifically, internal elements to the institution contribute to improving the campus climate for diversity. The internal institutional context includes four factors: the structural diversity of increased enrollment and hirings, the historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion, the psychological climate involving perceptions and attitudes about discrimination and prejudice, and the behavioral dimension emphasizing cross-cultural involvement and social interactions (S. Hurtado et al., 1999). Gurin (1999) states that diversity experiences at college can be facilitated on three levels for students: structurally by increased demographic representation, curricular changes in the classroom, and interactional diversity by increased contact between students from different backgrounds. “Most efforts by institutions to address diversity focus on structural and classroom diversity...less is known, however, about the effects of student interactions with peers from diverse backgrounds beyond the classroom” (Hu & Kuh, 2003, p. 321).

Diversity on our campuses provides multiple opportunities for students to learn about people different from themselves and be better prepared to live and work in a society that is becoming increasingly more diverse. College often provides the first opportunities for many students to interact with someone different from themselves (Gurin, 1999). At the same time

Harper and Patton (2007) acknowledge that some students may graduate from college without realizing that events such as racially offensive theme parties, affirmative action bake sales, and “Catch an Immigrant Day” are racist and, even worse, may never be challenged to question or critically examine that possibility. Astin (1993) found an overwhelmingly positive relationship between student development and an institution’s emphasis on diversity and student participation in diversity activities. Hu and Kuh (2003) studied the effects of interactional diversity experiences using questionnaire responses from over 53,000 undergraduate students at 124 U.S. colleges, and the results indicated desirable outcomes across the board. Regardless of students’ race or institutional type, substantial positive effects were found on all seven dependent variables: sum of gain, general education, personal development, science and technology, vocational preparation, intellectual development, and diversity competence; “Interactional diversity experiences had the largest effects on diversity competence” (p. 327). Expectations must be set by the institutions, and opportunities must be created for students to interact across identity differences.

Diversity Approaches in Higher Education and Student Affairs

Higher education and student affairs often attempt to tackle diversity issues. The college campus environment reflects the campus climate as well as the organizational culture. Campus climate involves attitudes and perceptions, making it discernible from organizational culture, which is guided by systemic values and practices (S. Hurtado et al., 1999). Examining diversity approaches in higher education and student affairs within the context of how a multicultural sorority might contribute to that effort will include reviewing internal elements that contribute to campus climate, organizational culture in the context of

multicultural organizational development, a model of invitational theory, and understanding privilege and becoming social justice allies.

Internal Elements Contributing to Campus Climate

There are elements internal to higher education institutions that contribute to improving campus climate. “In higher education research, the campus climate has been defined as the current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members” (S. Hurtado et al., 1999, ¶ 2). According to Hurtado et al. (1999), the internal institutional context includes four factors: the structural diversity of increased enrollment and hirings, the historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion, the psychological climate involving perceptions and attitudes about discrimination and prejudice, and the behavioral dimension emphasizing cross-cultural involvement and social interactions. Gurin (1999) states that diversity experiences at college can be facilitated on three levels for students: structurally by increased demographic representation, curricular changes in the classroom, and interactional diversity by increased contact between students from different backgrounds. By combining these internal elements, several of which naturally overlap, a review of the literature presents an overview of diversity approaches within higher education and student affairs.

The first of five combined internal elements is demographic representation. Demographic representation includes Hurtado et al.’s (1999) structural diversity factor of increased enrollment and hirings and Gurin’s (1999) increase of demographic representation. Recruiting diverse students, staff, and faculty certainly enhances the opportunity for diverse interactions but does not guarantee it. Nationally 36% of undergraduate students are people of color (ACE, 2005). Journals are published that specifically address recruitment and

retention of college students. The *Journal of College Admissions*, published by the National Association of College Admission Counseling, however, has not included an article in 20 or more years that deals with diversity or minority students based on a search by various keywords in the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) database. The *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice*, on the other hand, has multiple articles published within the last three years at the most when searching by the same keywords. Recent articles focusing on demographic representation include a positive impact of diversity among an institution's executive leadership on minority student retention (Fincher, Katsinas, & Bush, 2009-2010); increasing diverse demographic representation of students, staff, and faculty through international exchange programs (Ault & Martell, 2007); and the positive relationship between being exposed to diverse people and ideas in college and becoming involved in diversity-related activities later in college (Milem, Umbach, & Liang, 2004). Articles examining challenges to diversifying demographic representation discuss cultural biases in the search and hiring processes of staff and faculty (Kayes, 2006), a program designed to help counter the isolation and lack of connection often felt by faculty of color (Osajima, 2009), and a review of research that discounts any educational benefits from increased diverse demographic representation on college campuses (Nieli, 2008).

The second combined internal element consists of Hurtado et al.'s (1999) historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion. Maher and Tetreault (2009) present several stages of development an institution can move through that demonstrate its historical shift to an inclusive campus environment. The first phase is determined by when an institution began admitting students from diverse social groups and recruiting diverse faculty. Then came the

development of academic programs focusing on topics such as African American studies and women's studies and eventually incorporating these scholarly perspectives into other disciplines. Allies become apparent across the institution. As policies are restructured to accommodate diverse students and faculty and diversity becomes a reflection of excellence rather than in opposition to it, a transformation occurs. The next stage toward inclusion involves "uncover[ing] and elaborat[ing] on ongoing operations of privilege – that is, the unquestioned, below-the-surface identification of excellence with whiteness, maleness, heterosexuality, and social class advantage" (Maher & Tetreault, 2009, ¶ 13). Halualani, Haiker, and Lancaster (2010) describe the importance of and a process by which to map an institution's diversity efforts, and Kezar (2008) examines how college presidents navigate the politics of implementing new diversity initiatives.

The third of five combined internal elements that contribute to improving campus climate is Hurtado et al.'s (1999) psychological climate involving perceptions and attitudes about discrimination and prejudice. Multiple institutions are conducting periodic assessments of campus climates to provide the administration insight and help them implement changes. Broader studies focusing on campus climate issues include surveying students on 10 campuses regarding the different perceptions between students of color and White students about the levels of racism and acceptance (Rankin & Reason, 2005), how students conceptualize diversity on their campuses and evaluate the options and limitations of interacting across differences (Haines, 2007), and how campus racial climate influences retention and satisfaction among 37,582 faculty across the country (Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009). Additional studies focused on the psychological climate of students

examined a reduced sense of belonging by students of color (D. R. Johnson et al., 2007); high achieving Black students feeling they were still judged on prevailing stereotypes (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007); gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer (GLBTQ) students making college choices based on campus climate (Burlison, 2010); and the perception by female Muslim students who veil of a campus religious climate that is generally welcoming yet mildly marginalizing (Seggie & Sanford, 2010).

The fourth combined internal element is Gurin's (1999) curricular changes in the classroom. Curricular changes could include offering or requiring specific diversity courses as well as incorporating multicultural concepts into courses across various disciplines and topics. There are articles and books that provide strategies and guidance for teaching diversity courses (see Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Marbley, Burley, Bonner, & Ross, 2010) and that help faculty incorporate diversity into their coursework to promote a more inclusive classroom in various disciplines (see Branche, Mullennix, & Cohn, 2007; Gurung & Prieto, 2009; see Lea & Sims, 2008; Moore et al., 2010). Studies are also available that assess the effectiveness or lack thereof for students who take specific diversity courses (Bowman, 2010; Case & Stewart, 2010). One article focused on curricular changes implemented at an institutional level by establishing diversity learning goals assessed through a portfolio containing interdisciplinary coursework (Bowers, 2009). According to Humphreys (Fall 2000) and based on a survey conducted by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), "Sixty-three percent of colleges and universities report that they either have in place a diversity requirement or they are in the process of developing one" (¶ 1).

The final of five combined internal elements that contribute to improving campus climate is behavioral/interactional, which consists of Hurtado et al.'s (1999) behavioral dimension emphasizing cross-cultural involvement and social interactions and Gurin's (1999) interactional diversity by increased contact between students from different backgrounds. Several studies focus on the educational benefits of diverse interactions among students. Looking at classroom and co-curricular interactions, Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) found a positive relationship between diverse interactions among students and their learning outcomes. Denson and Chang (2009) also found a positive correlation between diverse campuses and cross-racial interactions on students' educational outcomes as did Luo and Jamieson-Drake's (2009) retrospective study of alumni and Hu and Kuh's (2003) study evaluating survey responses from 53,756 undergraduate students from 124 institutions. Zuñiga, Williams, and Berger's (2005) study suggests that diversity-related student experiences positively impact future commitment to social justice. All of the studies just mentioned use quantitative methodology in assessing the behavioral/interactional dimension, leaving a void of qualitative research examining the dynamics of such intercultural interactions. A shift is emerging towards more qualitative research, particularly regarding diversity and multiculturalism, where value is being placed on the researcher as a subjective learner rather than an expert (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009). All of these contexts are important and should be considered when trying to improve the campus climate for diversity.

Multicultural Organization Models

Theta Nu Xi identifies itself as a multicultural organization, and this study attempts to describe the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus.

Organizational development (OD) is a broad field within business and industry that focuses on long-term planned change on a systemic level within an organization (Chesler, 1994; Grieger, 1996; Pope, 1993). Past literature called for the use of OD within student affairs as a model for integrating student development theories and practices into the profession (Pope, 1993). Limitations of OD, however, result from the model being “based on a perspective in which organizational values, goals, norms, and practices are centered in only one culture, the dominant culture, which in the United States and on predominantly White college campuses is White, male, heterosexual, Christian, and able-bodied” (Pope, 1993, p. 202). This monocultural focus fails to recognize social diversity and does not include a social justice approach to organizational change. Multicultural organization development (MCO), on the other hand, recognizes the dynamics of power and privilege imbedded in a monocultural norms and challenges dominance and oppression in an attempt to alter power structures and establish a multiculturally-sensitive environment (Chesler, 1994; Pope, 1993). The key component relative to this study is the multicultural aspect of the sorority as an organization, therefore, the focus is being narrowed to literature regarding multicultural organization models.

Manning and Coleman-Boatwright (1991) present the Cultural Environment Transitions Model as a process in which organizations can transition from being monocultural to multicultural. The model is a tool that provides examples of initiatives and indicators as an organization moves along the five-point continuum, which is divided into two major steps. Moving from a monocultural environment, the first major step involves awareness with inability to change and height of the conflict. The second major step entails

institutional rebirth that reflects multicultural goals and the ultimate goal of a multicultural environment. Although presented sequentially, movement along the continuum may not be contiguous. Movement may skip through stages or regress to a previous stage due to changes in institutional commitment and leadership. “This process is fraught with false starts, pitfalls, and blind alleys...[and the model] depicts this dynamic process, which requires constant educational processes and vigilance to reward nondominant cultural styles, structure, and behaviors” (Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991, p. 371). Conflict is also inevitable in this process, which is viewed positively as a means of producing growth and necessary to achieve a multicultural environment. “The expression of diverse opinions, varieties of learning styles, and multiple perspectives provide more opportunities for misunderstandings, communication errors, and style clashes” (Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991, p. 372). Rather than avoid or diffuse conflict, it must be managed through confrontation that presents diverse perspectives and shared power through engaged dialogue. This model helps provide understanding of how an organization can progress toward a multicultural environment, however, Pope (1993) believes it fails to incorporate planned change efforts or “diagnostic and intervention typologies and models” (p. 204), which MCOOD offers.

The MCOOD model incorporates social justice and social diversity into long-term planned change on a systemic level within an organization (Chesler, 1994; Grieger, 1996; Pope, 1993). In a 1981 unpublished manuscript, Jackson and Hardiman (as cited in Pope, 1993) put forward their vision of a multicultural organization:

A multicultural organization reflects the contribution and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, and product or service delivery; acts on a

commitment to eradicate social oppression in all forms within the organization; includes the members of diverse cultural and social groups as full participants, especially in decisions that shape the organization; and follows through on broader external social responsibilities, including support of efforts to eliminate all forms of social oppression and to educate others in multicultural perspectives. (p. 203)

Jackson and Holvino (1988) present four themes that describe the goals in MCOOD: diversity of stakeholders, eliminating racism and sexism, valuing and capitalizing on differences, and social and cultural representation. Their model describes six stages across three levels in the process of developing a multicultural organization. Although sequential some stages may not present themselves. The first two stages are found in level one and entail the exclusionary organization and the club, where movement shifts subtly from maintaining dominance of one group to maintaining privilege by one group over racial minorities and women. The next two stages are found in level two. The compliance organization eliminates some discrimination and has token nondominant leadership who likely will not challenge the status quo. The affirmative action organization more openly commits to the elimination of discrimination, encourages members to treat others equitably, and includes a broader representation of nondominant membership such as the disabled and elderly. Institutions of higher education are often good examples of organizations at the affirmative action stage (Clark, 2003). Level three contains the last two stages. Through examination of systemic components such as its mission, policies, and practices and their impact on members, the redefining organization is in true transition. The final stage, the multicultural organization, incorporates the full implementation of socially diverse and socially just practices.

“Multicultural Organization Development is the process of assisting an organization in moving from its present level and stage of development to become a fully multicultural organization” (Jackson & Holvino, 1988, p. 16).

The Multicultural Change Intervention Matrix (MCIM) is a conceptual model based on MCOB but designed for specific application within higher education and student affairs. Presented as a 3 X 2 matrix, this model provides a framework for analyzing a range of activities into three levels of targeted change based on individual, group, and institution. The two-dimensional aspect of the matrix categorizes the type of change into first-order and second-order where the difference is whether or not structural change within the organization occurs. For example, on the individual level a first-order change might be awareness whereas a transformational second-order change would be a paradigm shift in one’s thinking. At the institutional level a programmatic intervention would be an example of a first-order change while a second-order change would be systemic through revision of mission and values to reflect the goals of a multicultural organization. The most significant application of MCIM would be through assessment, strategic planning, and curricular transformation (Pope, 1995).

The multicultural organization models just described are intended to assist organizations affect change in order to move along a continuum from a monocultural to a multicultural organization. Theta Nu Xi, however, is unique in that it was intentionally created as a multicultural organization and does not need to transition along stages to become multicultural. Therefore, the next model discussed is related to organization development for

managing diversity and outlines factors that influence the diversity climate of an organization, presenting characteristics of a multicultural organization.

Interactional Model of Cultural Diversity

Cox (1994) developed the Interactional Model of Cultural Diversity (IMCD) in the field of organizational performance. This model outlines four individual-level factors, three group/intergroup factors, and four organizational-level factors that influence the diversity climate of an organization. The individual-level factors include group identity, prejudice, personality, and stereotyping. Group identities within the context of human behavior in organizations typically include phenotype identity groups based on shared physical characteristics and culture identity groups where individuals have similar values and customs. Social identity theory talks about individual identity being partially defined by membership in a particular group as well as the meaning one places on that membership. Although not the focus of this dissertation, stage of development models of cultural identity such as Cross's (1971) Black identity development and Helms' (1990) White identity development provide insight to the meaning one places on membership within their raciocultural group. Of relevance to this study and Cox's (1994) IMCD theory is that "various group identities play a part in how we define ourselves as well as how others view us" (p. 43), and group identities impact interpersonal relations and events within an organization. Additional individual-level factors include prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping. Cox (1994) presents personality as a source of prejudice, which "refers to attitudinal bias and means to prejudge something or someone on the basis of some characteristic....[and] *discrimination* refers to behavioral bias toward a person based on the

person's group identity" (p. 64). Stereotyping is the act of simplifying meaning and mental processes for greater efficiency based on information known by the individual. While prejudice is based on attitudes and usually viewed as negative, stereotypes can also be negative if based on false information or generalized to someone within a particular group identity.

While the individual-level factors influence the diversity climate of an organization, the remaining three group/intergroup factors (cultural differences, ethnocentrism, and intergroup conflict) and four organizational-level factors (culture and acculturation process, structural integration, informal integration, and institutional bias) are imbedded within Cox's (1994) conceptual framework of a multicultural organization. With regard to cultural diversity in organizations, Cox (1994) defines an organization as being multicultural if it is one in which "members of all sociocultural backgrounds can contribute and achieve their full potential" (p. 225). The conceptual framework Cox (1994) uses to describe the characteristics of a multicultural organization include

1. A culture that fosters and values cultural difference
2. Pluralism as an acculturation process
3. Full structural integration
4. Full integration of the informal networks
5. An absence of institutionalized cultural bias in human resource management systems and practices
6. A minimum of intergroup conflict due to the proactive management of diversity (p. 229).

The first characteristic of a multicultural organization is one that values diversity and appreciates cultural difference. Cultural differences may have some bearing on an organization in such areas as leadership styles, communication styles, time and space orientation, and individualism versus collectivism (Cox, 1994). Cox (1994) typically presents leadership style as being task-oriented versus relationship-oriented. Communication styles can also vary depending on one's culture. Some cultures appreciate modesty and deference while others value bold assertiveness. Individualism versus collectivism is another way that cultural differences can emerge within an organization. "Compared to individualists, collectivists place greater emphasis on the needs and goals of the group, social norms and duty, and cooperation behaviors" (Cox, 1994, p. 113).

The second characteristic of a multicultural organization is an acculturation process that entails pluralism rather than assimilation. "*Pluralism* refers to a two-way learning and adaption process in which both the organization and entering members from various cultural backgrounds change to some degree to reflect the cultural norms and values of the other(s)" (Harquail & Cox, 1994, p. 167). Members of the organization come to depend on one another and appreciate each others' cultures. They also understand the value of preserving those cultural identities. Harquail and Cox (1994) go on to say, "Pluralism is an acculturation process in which the entering members assimilate a limited number of core behaviors and values while preserving important differences along other dimensions" (p. 167).

The third characteristic involves full structural integration, typically measured by examining the diversity within an organization's membership and leadership. Group

composition refers to whether or not there is proportionate cultural representation to the larger community. Tokenism is a concern when there is little to no representation of certain cultures within the group. Balanced representation enhances the ability of the group and its members to achieve their fullest potential. With regard to leadership diversity, the need to recognize power dynamics associated with such roles is important. Power dynamics can be measured through formal and informal sources. According to Cox (1994), “The primary formal source of power is authority, or the right to make decisions and to direct others. Informal sources of power include personal knowledge and personality” (p. 182). Intergroup conflict can result from power imbalances.

The fourth characteristic of a multicultural organization is the integration of informal networks. According to Cox (1994), “The principal aspects of participation in informal groups are (1) access to social networks (informal communication networks and establishment of friendship ties), and (2) mentoring activity” (p. 195). Communication often happens within informal social networks, and there are many missed opportunities if one or more groups are lack access to that circle, for example, women not being invited to play golf with men from work yet many business decisions are made on the golf course. Relationships are developed in those social settings, creating mentoring and support networks. Participation in informal networks and friendships is an important component of a multicultural organization.

The fifth characteristic is a lack of institutionalized cultural bias within the organization’s practices. “*Institutional bias* refers to the fact that preference patterns inherent in how we manage organizations often inadvertently create barriers to full participation by

organization members from cultural backgrounds that differ from the traditional majority group” (Cox, 1994, p. 207). Organizational values are often influenced by the values held by the organization’s “founding fathers,” which may have been a long time ago. Even practices common in Western culture today may unintentionally create institutional bias within an organization such as bureaucratic procedures and brainstorming techniques. Examining the purpose behind ingrained practices raises awareness and visibility of how they contribute to institutional bias, and conducting an organizational cultural audit can provide insight into the the concerns that need to be addressed and lead to culturally sensitive practices.

The sixth and final characteristic of a multicultural organization is the ability to proactively manage conflict related to cultural diversity. Opposing interests that cause intergroup conflict can emerge from power discrepancies, identity affirmation, competitive goals, resources, and cultural differences. Power discrepancies and identity affirmation (assimilation versus pluralism) often involves conflict between the majority group or dominant culture and the minority group. The other three sources of conflict – competitive goals, resources, and cultural differences – can result from majority-minority or minority-minority interactions. According to Cox (1994) group conflict can occur regarding competition for resources such as land and jobs. Cultural differences can result in conflicts due to “misunderstandings and misperceptions that are related to the different worldviews of culture groups” (Cox, 1994, p. 142). Discussed at length above in the first characteristic of a multicultural organization on valuing diversity, cultural differences include such areas as leadership styles, communication styles, time and space orientation, and individualism versus collectivism. Resolution strategies presented by Cox (1994) for managing conflict in diverse

workgroups include collaboration/negotiation/bargaining, alter situation/context (e.g. organization redesign), procedures/rules/policies, alter personnel, alter/redefine the issues of contention, hierarchical appeal, smoothing (emphasize similarities, play down conflict), superordinate goals, structured interactions, integrative problem solving (mediation + compromise). Cox (1994) also recommends that resolution strategies involving conflict around cultural differences include educating the organization about cultural differences to promote tolerance and acceptance and redefining cultural differences as an opportunity rather than a problem.

Invitational Theory

Started in the 1970s and still evolving through research and practice, invitational theory is a model of communication patterns based on human interactions that send positive or negative signals. These communication patterns occur in all human interactions, whether intentionally or unintentionally, and can impact human potential in helpful or harmful ways. Four basic assumptions of invitational theory that provide a framework to guide action include respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality. The continuum of four communication patterns that can affect human potential and development include intentionally disinviting, unintentionally disinviting, unintentionally inviting, and intentionally inviting. Inviting communication patterns tend to depict a sense of being able, feeling valued, and viewed as responsible. Disinviting communication patterns portray messages of being worthless, perceived as unable, and viewed as irresponsible. Behavior and self-concept of one's self is heavily rooted in perceptions others hold of you, perpetuating a self-fulfilling prophecy. The most prominent practice of this theory is known as Invitational Education, an approach

focusing on teaching and learning processes within primary and secondary schools to enhance both school and student success. Invitational theory has also been applied to other settings including college, business, counseling, and health-related fields ("International Alliance for Invitational Education homepage"; Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2008; Schmidt, 2004; Stanley, 1992; Stanley, Juhnke, & Purkey, 2004).

Basic Assumptions of Invitational Theory

As a theory of practice, action that presents an inviting stance toward others is based on four assumptions – respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality. Consistently maintaining behavioral patterns incorporating these four assumptions helps others reach their potential (Purkey & Novak, 1996). According to Purkey and Novak (2008), respect is the concept that “people are valuable, able, and responsible and should be treated accordingly” (p. 12). Respect can be demonstrated through the simple concept of starting and ending a class or meeting on time as well as appreciation for an individual’s uniqueness, which includes cultural differences, interests, and perspectives (Purkey & Novak, 1996). Stanley, Juhnke, and Purkey (2004) define trust as the following premise: “Healthy living is a cooperative, collaborative activity in which process is as important as product” (p. 304). Trustworthiness can be established through interactions that demonstrate genuineness, reliability, competence, and truthfulness (Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2008). The third basic assumption is optimism. According to Purkey and Novak (1996), “Invitational education presents a positive vision of human existence: that individuals are valuable, able, and capable of self-direction and should be treated accordingly” (p. 53). In contrast to being pessimistic, having optimism means believing in and appreciating everyone’s “untapped potential” (Purkey & Novak, 2008, p.

14). Setting the standard expectation to a higher level and believing in another person's ability to succeed allows others to see themselves as competent and more likely to do well (Purkey & Novak, 1996). The fourth and final assumption needed to portray an inviting stance is intentionality. "Human potential can be realized best by places, policies, processes, and programs specifically designed to invite development and by people who are personally and professionally inviting with themselves and others" (Purkey & Novak, 2008, p. 15). This premise relates to being purposeful in one's actions in a way that is welcoming, caring, and beneficial to others (Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2008).

Intentionally Inviting

Invitational theory and practice uses a language of transformation that is inviting rather than disinviting. As previously mentioned the continuum of four communication patterns that can affect human potential and development include intentionally disinviting, unintentionally disinviting, unintentionally inviting, and intentionally inviting. Disinviting language can be intentionally cruel and humiliating or unintentionally hurtful and discriminatory. Examples of intentionally disinviting language or behavior are not hard to imagine. When someone is unintentionally disinviting, such behavior often can be due to a lack of information or understanding. Moving along the continuum, being unintentionally inviting generally happens when someone is helpful or engaging but doesn't incorporate deliberate commitment into their ongoing language and behavior, and they tend to regress to disinviting levels of functionality when faced with challenges. Individuals who are intentionally inviting exhibit purposeful use of skills and knowledge that promotes positive growth and development in others. These individuals also continue to grow and develop

themselves. Everyone will periodically send messages at each point along this continuum, however, the usual level of functioning determines the overall tone of the environment (Purkey & Novak, 2008; Stanley et al., 2004).

Elements of Diversity

Feeling that there was potential for applying invitational theory to diverse populations yet seeing a lack of research in this area, Schmidt (2007) proposes six specific elements of diversity with which to examine individuals or organizations from an invitational perspective: equity, expectation, enlistment, empowerment, encouragement, and enjoyment. Examining policies, processes, programs, and behaviors can indicate the presence of these diversity elements. As a multicultural sorority Theta Nu Xi certainly adds the contextual aspect of diversity to the application of invitational theory and practice.

The first element of diversity from an invitational perspective is equity. According to Schmidt (2007), “Equitable practices...ensure access for everyone to participate in the programs, fair treatment across places, policies, and processes designed and implemented by the organization, and just action when a person or persons require assistance or discipline” (p. 17). Equity and fairness, however, does not mean treating everyone the same. “People and organizations that strive for equity take pride in celebrating unique differences that individuals and groups possess and through which they enrich the greater community” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 17). In examining such structures within an organization for equitable practices, Schmidt emphasized the importance of “observ[ing] how unearned privilege of a select few might upset the balance of fairness within the larger community” (p. 18).

The second element of diversity is expectation. According to Schmidt (2007), “People form *expectations* about situations and relationships based on experience and knowledge....Fundamental expectations, however, begin within basic human relationships” (p. 18). Expectations are often based on perceptions, and care must be taken not to stereotype based on negative or false information. Schmidt (2007) went on to say, “When working with diverse populations, we will be successful to the degree that our expectations limit or expand the relationships we form” (p. 18). Entering a relationship or situation with low expectations versus high expectations will produce very different results. Procedures and behaviors are effective means of assessing the presence of this diversity element.

The third element of diversity is enlistment. “To enlist people, as used here, is...gaining the cooperation and support of people for moving an organization (or a relationship [*sic*]) toward common goals” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 18). Schmidt (2007) expands his explanation of enlistment when he elaborates, “With this definition, enlistment becomes an active stance of creating multiple invitations to involve an expanded audience in the work of the organization. Enlistment is the precursor of partnerships” (pp. 18-19). Involving all members of an organization and valuing their participation can lead to authentic partnerships.

The fourth element of diversity is empowerment. According to Schmidt (2007), “Empowerment is the outcome of establishing and nurturing helpful relationships that combat oppression, negate marginalization, and elevate the elements of equity and enlistment mentioned earlier” (p. 19). Care should be taken to not blindly follow traditions and policies that could be outdated and comprise a legacy of privilege that marginalizes one or more groups of people. Stereotyping groups of people and making assumptions as to why a certain

group does not succeed or flourishes can be disempowering. The invitational philosophy, on the other hand, encourages policies, processes, programs, and behaviors that creates a safe space and allows individuals to become empowered.

As the fifth diversity element, “encouragement is an important element to use when applying invitational assumptions and principles with diverse populations because it incorporates the fundamental philosophy of *being with* versus *doing to*. In contrast, praise is a doing to process” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 20). Members of marginalized groups who have been oppressed and discriminated against may not have the self-confidence to speak up or take action, and encouraging such individuals promotes a sense of being by their side long-term whereas praise presents a short-term lack of commitment. Encouragement helps bridge the gap between “individualistic and collectivist worldviews” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 21). While the five elements of diversity just described are vital when applying invitational theory to diverse populations, the sixth and final element serves to enhance the other pieces.

The sixth and final element of diversity is enjoyment. According to Schmidt (2007), “Being with people of diverse cultures, backgrounds, religious beliefs, ethnicity, and other characteristics provides abundant opportunity to enrich our experiences and develop more fully our personal and professional lives” (p. 21). Gaining pleasure out of being with diverse people and being able to recognize and celebrate the diversity you each bring to the relationship enhances the experiences you have together and what you take away from such relationships. While the first five elements of diversity just discussed are essential, enjoyment enhances them.

Applications in a College Setting

Although the most prominent practice of this theory focuses on teaching and learning processes within primary and secondary schools, invitational theory has also been applied to other settings including college, business, counseling, and health-related fields ("International Alliance for Invitational Education homepage"; Purkey & Novak, 2008; Stanley, 1992; Stanley et al., 2004). Following publication in 1970 of the seminal book on invitational theory, the first application of this theory to a college venue was an unpublished Doctoral dissertation in 1976 focusing on an assessment instrument for teacher invitations and effectiveness as reported by students in a post-secondary setting. Until the peer-reviewed *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice* began publishing in 1992, most of the other ten documented applications of invitational theory to college settings were papers presented at conferences, unpublished Master theses, and a newsletter article. One article was published in the *Journal of College Student Personnel* and one in the *Journal of College and University Student Housing*. The focus of these articles ranged from creating inviting residence halls, invitational teaching behaviors and strategies, and a student's personal reflection as well as application at community colleges and with graduate students. The application most relevant to my research is an article about ethnic minority college students (Stanley, 1992). Parker, Scott, and Chambers (1985) encourage student personnel administrators to work on creating an intentionally inviting atmosphere for college students from ethnic minority groups by applying the invitational theory of practice. Within the context of a university setting, the authors describe intentionally disinviting communication patterns as being characterized by treatment of minority students as outsiders. The

unintentionally disinviting level of invitation references administrators who “mean well but are unaware of their condescending, patronizing attitudes toward students from ethnic minority groups” (Parker et al., 1985, p. 83), such as believing negative stereotypes based on cultural backgrounds. Administrators who naturally connect with a broad range of students but do not have specific cultural knowledge and skills may be unintentionally inviting, whereas intentionally inviting student personnel administrators easily work with students from various cultural backgrounds but also have appropriate training to be more effective. “Specifically, these administrators are able to develop a supportive atmosphere whereby differences are genuinely accepted and appreciated” (Parker et al., 1985, p. 83). The article ends by describing several programs and services provided by the University of Florida that work to create an intentionally inviting atmosphere for ethnic minority students.

More recent articles of invitational theory present broader applications within a college setting. Rakes (2000) proposed a research alliance between counseling faculty and practicing alumni based on invitational theory in light of counseling practitioners infrequently reading mental health publications due to a sense of irrelevancy. Cowher (2000) looked at male attitudes toward women in authoritative positions. Her research consisted of one study in 1984 of undergraduate males and a follow-up study in 1995-1999 with some of the same men who participated in the first study. Results indicated that the men in the study viewed women as biologically less capable, creating an uninviting environment for women. The most recent application of invitational theory within a college setting is also somewhat relevant to my research topic. Heeding the call of Schmidt (2004, 2007) to apply invitational theory to diverse populations, Thompson (2009) assessed whether or not undergraduate and

graduate students in a teacher education program could, through curricular training and instruction, increase their multicultural disposition in order to ultimately provide an intentionally inviting stance in the classroom upon entering the field. This study found supporting evidence that such instruction is beneficial, also finding a natural connection between multicultural education and invitational theory and practice.

Understanding Privilege and Becoming Social Justice Allies

Diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice are similar yet distinct concepts. As defined earlier in this chapter, diversity involves the physical presence of people representing different characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and so on (Talbot, 2003). Having diversity within the student body as well as among the faculty and staff at an institution does not guarantee equality but does contribute to an environment where people can learn about those who are different from themselves, enhancing their critical thinking and better preparing them to live and work in our pluralistic society (Gurin, 1999).

Multiculturalism goes beyond just being present in a diverse environment to incorporate learned knowledge and skills necessary to comfortably and effectively interact with different social groups (Hoopes, 1979; Talbot, 2003), which Gurin (1999) refers to as “structural diversity.” Lechuga, Clerc, and Howell (2009) frame social justice in the context of power, privilege, and oppression. Social justice “combine[s] both distributive and procedural justice toward a goal of full and equal participation for all groups, where resources are equitably distributed and everyone is physically and psychologically safe” (Reason & Davis, 2005, p. 7). Social justice, therefore, involves attitudes and actions toward achieving this goal.

“Structural diversity is a necessary foundation on which multicultural skills and social justice

ally attitudes are developed. It is within diverse environments...that social justice ally attitudes are most directly tested and turned into actions” (Reason & Davis, 2005, p. 8). Examining these concepts also entails a discussion about privilege and what it means to become a social justice ally.

Johnson (2006) examines how privilege, power, and difference play into the intersecting systems of oppression. He places responsibility on each one of us and explains how everyone is part of the problem and, therefore, must be part of the solution. “Societies in which privilege and oppression exist have three primary characteristics – they are dominated, identified, and centered on privileged groups” (Lechuga et al., 2009, p. 231). Part of understanding these interactions involves recognizing the social construction of group identity and that individuals can have multiple identities and subjectivities, some of which may benefit from privilege while other identities may be oppressed (Reason & Davis, 2005). Using a sociological framework, Johnson’s (2006) objective “is to change how we think so that we can change how we act and, by changing how we participate in the world, become part of the complex dynamic through which the world itself will change” (p. viii). In addition to raising awareness, he does not allow readers to slip into the realm of guilt and denial. Although he admits there is no easy solution, he offers key approaches to working through to issues of privilege and oppression, starting with acknowledging it exists. From there we must pay attention and continue learning about the issues. Learn to listen to comments and concerns around these issues and take them seriously. Finally, take risks and do something to make a difference (A. G. Johnson, 2006).

Focusing specifically on White privilege, Kivel (1996, 2002) offers practical advice on how White people can help uproot racism and work for social justice rather than standing by passively while unintentional and overt discrimination and even race-related violence occurs on a daily basis within our society. Starting with helping White people see and understand the benefits and costs of their Whiteness, Kivel (1996, 2002) goes on to discuss the dynamics of racism, the effects of history, and how to be an ally on individual and macro levels. Rothenberg (2005) collected key writings by various authors about the power gained through the invisibility, historical past, and privilege that come along with Whiteness. She ends by presenting the power of resistance, encouraging White people to speak up and become allies. At the end of each section of the book, the author provides questions to readers for thinking, writing, and discussion. Based on many years of personal experience, Kendall (2006) helps her readers understand what it means to be White and the privilege that comes along with it for individuals who want to create authentic relationships across race. She ends with a candid discussion about what it means to be an ally.

There are a variety of ways in which student affairs professionals and student organizations can enhance knowledge and skills and promote social justice attitudes and actions. One approach where students learn citizenship and become empowered to make campus-based change is the Fraternal Futures initiative. Members of Greek letter organizations learn about civic engagement and becoming change agents as a means of countering organizational concerns and improve the collective future of Greek communities on their campus, helping such organizations change their image and return to their original values (Roberts & Huffman, Sept-Oct 2005). Another approach includes encountered

situations such as role-playing and immersion to enhance knowledge and skills. Encountered situations allow students to learn from planned interactive experiences and incorporate their own lived experiences into the activity. Role-playing consists of a brief scenario based on real-life situations. Immersion programs such as the Tunnel of Oppression are more in-depth activities where “students are exposed firsthand to the realities of privilege and oppression” (Lechuga et al., 2009, p. 235). Three components should be included in order for encountered situations to be most effective: discussions beforehand and afterwards to prepare and process the experience as well as the activity itself. Lechuga, Clerc, and Howell (2009) “contend that before student affairs professionals and students create, facilitate, or participate in learning activities that promote social justice, they should possess a basic understanding of how power and privilege maintain existing social systems that inhibit progress towards equity” (p. 232).

Intergroup dialogues are a third approach, which consist of 12 to 16 students from different social identity groups meeting over an extended time in an attempt “to build relationships across cultural and power differences, to raise consciousness of inequalities, to explore the similarities and differences in experiences across identity groups, and to strengthen individual and collective capacities to promote social justice” (Nagda & Gurin, 2007, p. 35). Intergroup dialogue incorporates three components when engaging students. Critical analysis and understanding of difference and dominance helps individuals personalize and connect to concepts of power and inequalities. Discursive engagement across differences entails dialogue to foster better understanding, empathy, and respect. Dialogue is different from discussion, which is typically based around decision-making.

“Four building blocks crucial to dialogue [include] suspending judgment, deep listening, identifying assumptions, and reflection and inquiry” (Nagda & Gurin, 2007, p. 37). The third component to intergroup dialogue involves sustained and conjoint community building and conflict management. “Community in intergroup dialogue honors separate social group identities and encourages an appreciation of a common group identity constructed around alliance building and the work of social justice” (Nagda & Gurin, 2007, p. 39). Conflict is not viewed negatively but rather as an opportunity to enhance learning. These three approaches are examples of ways to enhance knowledge and skills and promote social justice attitudes and actions in college students.

Taking on social justice attitudes and actions can ultimately lead someone to become a social justice ally. Broido and Reason (2005) present an overview of ally development models, including two models more broadly applied to the general population and one model specifically applied to college students. With the Becoming an Ally model, “Bishop (2002) provided a six-step framework for understanding the development of social justice allies that combines both cognitive and behavioral components” (Broido & Reason, 2005, p. 19). This model stresses the interconnectedness of all forms of oppression as well as the need for allies to not co-opt leadership and to maintain hope that change will eventually occur. The second model is the Social Identity Development Theory, which is built on the premise that “social identity, according to Hardiman and Jackson (1992, 1997), is a function of the degree to which individuals accept external messages about their social group” (Broido & Reason, 2005, p. 20). By definition allies are members of the dominant group. Ally development occurs as individuals recognize and reject the privilege that comes along with a dominant

group social identity. College Student Ally Development is the third model presented. “At this time, only one study (Broido, 1997, 2000) has looked specifically at how college experiences affect the development of social justice allies” (Broido & Reason, 2005, p. 21). Participants in her study generally entered college with accepting attitudes towards difference; desired to acquire new information about social justice issues, typically through coursework and friends from different social identity groups; and worked to make meaning out of the information they learned. Participants also gained confidence in their beliefs as their knowledge increased, wanted to develop skills related to social justice work, and became involved in ally behavior primarily by chance or recruitment. “Social justice ally development can be affected by formal and informal interactions, courses and workshops, and the messages institutions send to their students” (Broido & Reason, 2005, p. 23).

Being a social justice ally involves creating institutional and cultural change, inspiring and educating members of the privileged social group, and supporting oppressed social group members, and self-understanding provides a solid foundation in order to sustain this work. Allies must know why they are doing this work. It must not be for charity reasons or to help those less fortunate but rather for the benefits that will be gained by all in a more equitable society. Self-understanding also involves constant reflection on the impact privilege and power play in one’s life and a commitment to continuous personal growth (Kendall, 2006; Reason & Broido, 2005). While “diversity education aims to promote feelings of unity, tolerance, and acceptance *within the existing social structure*” (Nagda & Gurin, 2007, p. 35), social justice works to create institutional and cultural change. Allies share the responsibility to change an organization and challenge unfair policies, not take the

lead. As Kendall (2006) so eloquently noted, “When we take the lead we get to keep ourselves central and see ourselves as riding in on a white horse (color chosen intentionally) to take care of everything” (p. 152). As members of one or more privileged groups, allies have access to other members of those social groups. Using that access and one’s own privilege to inspire and educate other privileged people is an important aspect of social justice ally work. Speaking up and helping people understand that their actions or comments are oppressive is key because many people often do not realize the harmfulness of their behavior. This component of ally work also involves serving as a role model to other dominant group members and encouraging others to take positive action. As previously discussed supporting oppressed social group members is not about saving them or co-opting leadership roles. Ally support may include calling attention to inequalities and serving as witnesses to inequalities, often because such experiences are ignored or made invisible. Members of oppressed groups must decide what ally support looks like, and members of privileged groups “must be asked or accepted as an ally” (Kendall, 2006, p. 143). Several suggestions for being a strong supporter include listening, diversifying your friendship group, educating yourself, and being visible in your support (Kendall, 2006; Reason & Broido, 2005).

Being a social justice ally also presents a set of challenges that should be considered. Taking a stand against the dominant group norms must be done privately and publicly, which risks rejection from that group. Allies are not members of the oppressed group, potentially resulting in a sense of isolation and lack of belonging to any particular social group. “Allies understand that emotional safety is not a realistic expectation if we take our alliance

seriously” (Kendall, 2006, p. 153). Also of importance in being an ally is to not expect praise, be prepared to apologize when necessary, and maintain perseverance. Engaged allies are human and, therefore, will make mistakes. Mistakes must be addressed and hopefully a lesson will be learned, but it is important to also be able to laugh at oneself and the challenges faced on a daily basis in order to maintain sanity and resolve. Social justice ally work is not easy, but the rewards of an equitable society in the end make the effort worthwhile (Kendall, 2006; Reason & Broido, 2005).

Peer Groups

While recognizing the importance of interactional diversity during college, the impact of peer groups must also be considered. A peer group viewed from a sociological perspective is a group of individuals who identify and affiliate with each other. Identification refers to similarities in values or personal qualities, and affiliation with a peer group requires active involvement with individuals of equal status. The individuals also seek approval and acceptance in the sense that their own beliefs and behaviors conform to the expectations of the group. A caveat to keep in mind is that a student is not considered part of a peer group if she does not seek approval and acceptance, even if she affiliates with that group through regular interactions. In wanting to gain approval and acceptance by a peer group, an individual is more likely to change their behavior and beliefs to be more aligned with the norms of the group. “The student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on the growth and development during the undergraduate years” (Astin, 1993, p. 398).

Astin’s (1999) theory of student involvement posits that personal development and learning increases due to greater participation in college experiences. Becoming involved in

one's campus refers to investing time and energy in academic as well as extra-curricular activities in a manner that evokes a sense of quality and commitment to the experience. These experiences must elicit active participation from students rather than simply exposing them to content and ideas. "The theory of student involvement is...concerned with the behavioral mechanisms or processes that facilitate student development (the *how* of student development)" (Astin, 1999, p. 522). Specific forms of involvement might include living on campus in a residence hall, participating in an honors program, interest in their courses along with good study habits, joining a sorority or fraternity, participation in extracurricular and athletic activities, and becoming a member of student government (Astin, 1999).

A Multicultural Sorority as a Unique Model

History of Greek Letter Organizations

The history of Greek letter organizations at American institutions can be traced back to 1776 with the founding of Phi Beta Kappa, an honorary fraternity, at the College of William and Mary. The social emphasis of fraternities began at Union College in 1825 when Kappa Alpha Society was founded (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998) and spread to most northern colleges by the mid-1800s. These organizations helped fill a void for young men created when they left home to attend school by providing a feeling of family in the college environment of long, monotonous days. The socialization institutionalized by Greek letter organizations also contributed to a sense of escape for these young men (Rudolph, 1990). As the first generation of women began entering colleges in the mid- to late 1800s (Gordon, 1997), the fraternal concept soon followed. The first female secret society was founded in 1851 as the Adelpian Society at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, and is now known as

the sisterhood of Alpha Delta Pi ("Alpha Delta Pi homepage"; Olivas, 1996). During this time college faculty and administrators were not overly pleased with the development of various social organizations including Greek letter ones but felt unable to stop their development (Rudolph, 1990).

The next influences on Greek life revolved around religion and discrimination. Until the start of the 20th century, fraternities and sororities often were founded with a Christian affiliation and some contained strong religious covenants. In response to feelings of anti-Semitism and exclusion from existing organizations, Jewish students began organizing social and fraternal organizations of their own, emphasizing their Jewish religion and heritage. Zeta Beta Tau was the first Jewish fraternity, founded in 1898 at Columbia University. However, by the 1920s most Christian and Jewish based Greek letter organizations looked virtually identical, and by the middle of the 20th century the majority of both groups had removed the restrictive covenants based on religion. During this same time Black fraternities and sororities were developing at segregated, historically Black colleges and universities and in response to the isolation students were feeling at predominantly White institutions (McKee, 1987; Wechsler, 1997).

The generally held view is that Alpha Phi Alpha, founded in 1906 at Cornell University, was the first fraternity established for Black men, and Alpha Kappa Alpha was the first Black sorority, founded at Howard University in 1908 (Anson & Marchesani, 1991). Kimbrough (2003), however, provides a detailed analysis of historically Black GLOs. Although it only existed for approximately 14 months, Alpha Kappa Nu Greek society was formed in 1903 at Indiana University. Founded in 1904 and still thriving, Sigma Pi Phi is the

first Black Greek letter organization, although membership primarily has only been open to college graduates. The organization functioned more like a secret society and only since the early 1990s has awareness of and acknowledgement about their existence spread. Gamma Phi Fraternity was founded in 1905 at Wilberforce University in Ohio. “Gamma Phi existed at least three decades at Wilberforce and established at least three additional chapters for some point in time” (Kimbrough, 2003, p. 30). The major Black GLOs were founded between 1905 and 1930, and in 1930 five Black GLOs collaborated to form the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) that would work for the betterment of all its member organizations and ultimately grow to include nine GLOs, collectively known as the Divine Nine. Although many other Black GLOs have existed and in some cases still exist, most would be classified as local or regional organizations. Groove Phi Groove was established in 1962 during the Black Power era (Kimbrough, 2003) as a social fellowship for men and still has dozens of undergraduate and graduate chapters throughout the USA today (“Groove Phi Groove social fellowship homepage”). Swing Phi Swing was founded in 1969 as a sister organization for Groove Phi Groove and currently has over 50 undergraduate and graduate chapters across the country (“Swing Phi Swing social fellowship homepage”). However, the nine fraternities and sororities belonging to NPHC are the largest, claiming international status, and they dominate collegiate Black Greek life. This brief history on the early development of Greek letter organizations provides the overview necessary to better understand the challenges resulting from the current trends in Greek life.

Diversifying the Greek Community

Significant social changes resulting from the Civil Rights Movement include the growth in cultural fraternal organizations on college campuses. Faculty and administrators were suddenly forced to deal with diverse student populations. With this also came an increasing presence of Asian and Latino students. During the 1970s the establishment of historically Black Greek letter organization chapters more than doubled – and in some cases quadrupled – per year. Latin fraternal organizations also began developing during this period (Kimbrough, 2002). Although the first Latino fraternity was established in 1912 and merged with another Latino fraternity in 1932, Latina sororities did not exist until 1975 (Layzer, 2000b). The 1970s also saw the development of several other Latino fraternal organizations, the beginning of a trend that continues to grow. The first Asian fraternal organization was founded in 1926, and by 1979 there were as many as 12 Asian fraternities in existence (Kimbrough, 2002). Moderate growth continued through the 1980s with the founding of approximately eight Asian and 16 Latino fraternal organizations. With a continued increase in student diversity, the 1990s brought about the development of Greek letter organizations specializing in specific Asian cultural groups such as Filipino, South Asian, and Asian/Pacific Islander. In 1994 the first Native American sorority was founded ("Alpha Pi Omega homepage"), and the first two Native American fraternities were established in early 1996, all in North Carolina ("Epsilon Chi Nu homepage", "Phi Sigma Nu homepage"). The 1990s also saw the creation of 17 Asian and at least 29 Latino fraternal organizations, bringing the estimated total number of Latin fraternities and sororities up to 50 with some estimates climbing as high as 70 (Kimbrough, 2002). Interestingly, while the Latino

fraternities grew threefold during the 1990s, the Latina sororities increased their numbers six times over during this time period (Noble, 2002). Contributing factors to the trend of significantly more Latina sororities might include a desire by these women for a support network that understands the additional stress they may be feeling due to separation from family and attending college, which contradicts traditional gender roles in the Latino culture (Olivas, 1996). Special interest fraternal organizations also emerged, focusing on a range of issues such as enhancing the college experience of gay and lesbian students, promoting social activities in addition to professional development within certain fields, and emphasizing spirituality and religious tenets. Many of the newer Greek letter organizations were founded because students did not feel as if their needs were being met through existing organizations, were looking for a sisterhood or brotherhood that held similar beliefs to their own, wanted to celebrate their cultural heritage, or needed support as a minority at a predominantly White institution.

Of particular interest to this study are indications that nearly 30 multicultural fraternities and sororities currently exist in the United States. All of them were founded (or reestablished in one case) since 1981 with the majority of the groups developing in the 1990s. Some of the multicultural organizations have established themselves only on one campus while others have expanded to over 20 campuses. Multicultural sororities outpace fraternities, with 22 compared to 12 organizations, and the three organizations that have established more than 20 chapters are all sororities (Wells & Dolan, 2009). In reviewing the history, purpose, and mission of the multicultural organizations, a distinction can often be made. Some groups primarily seek diverse membership within the context of a social

fraternal organization while others stress their desire to promote diversity through social change not only in the organization but also on their campuses and in the larger community (personal communication with a member of Theta Nu Xi, November 4, 2002).

At predominantly White institutions (PWIs), the structure of campus Greek governing councils often mirrors their national umbrella organizations. Governance at the national level has typically consisted of three organizations: the National Panhellenic Conference, the North-American Interfraternity Conference, and the National Pan-Hellenic Council. The National Panhellenic Conference is the national umbrella organization for the predominantly White sororities and consists of 26 member organizations, last admitting a new sorority as a member in 1951 ("National Panhellenic Conference homepage"). Corresponding campus governing councils are often called the Panhellenic Council or Association – Panhellenic for short. Similarly, there are 66 predominantly White fraternities in the North-American Interfraternity Conference, the largest and oldest national organization designed to bring together and promote the men's fraternal movement on college campuses ("North-American Interfraternity Conference homepage"). Their member fraternities are in a campus governing council usually called the Interfraternity Council, or IFC for short. The National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) is a coalition of the nine largest historically Black fraternities and sororities, with their campus governing councils typically referenced as NPHC. All three of these national umbrella organizations have existed since the early 1900s, and a similar governing structure often duplicates this model at the campus level. I periodically refer to groups belonging to these three national umbrella organizations as "traditional" GLOs. Also of important note, the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations, Inc. (NALFO)

was created in 1998 to promote Latina/o GLOs and currently has 19 member organizations consisting of 12 sororities and 7 fraternities ("National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations homepage"). The National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC) was officially established in 2003, although various multicultural GLOs conceptualized the idea in 1998 and worked together to establish a national organization that would ultimately support and provide a forum for member organizations and promote multicultural diversity. The NMGC currently has 10 members consisting of 7 sororities and 3 fraternities ("National Multicultural Greek Council homepage"). There has also been talk about creating a national Native American Greek council (B. Locklear, personal communication, November 7, 2002).

When Greek organizations colonize on campuses that already have the three primary governing councils but are not affiliated with any of those national umbrella organizations, administrators typically have the option of placing them under one of the existing campus councils or creating new councils. In response to the establishment of such diverse organizations, many institutions are creating broader Greek councils so that those groups have a voice at the larger campus Greek life table. Depending on how many and what types of fraternities and sororities exist, institutions may choose to create a specific cultural Greek council, a multicultural council, or a more inclusive allied council. Several examples include the Diversified Greek Council at the State University of New York at Albany, the Asian Greek Council and Professional Fraternity Council at the University of Southern California, the Multicultural Greek Council at Texas A&M University, the United Sorority and Fraternity Council at San Diego State University, the Council of Independent Organizations at Shaw University, the Greek Alliance Council at the University of North Carolina at Chapel

Hill, and the Collaborative Greek Council at North Carolina State University. A few campuses such as Rochester Institute of Technology and American University are recognizing NALFO as a campus governing council specifically for Latina/o GLO chapters. Kimbrough (2002), however, expresses concern about placing groups with different cultural emphases into one council, and the implications of different models need to be explored in greater detail.

The Gender Factor

Various studies have examined gender differences in attitude and cultural awareness in precollege and college age students. In his study on the development of student attitudes toward race, Milem (1991) found that of the characteristics among entering first year students with a positive relationship to the stated outcome, gender played a significant role; his findings “indicate that women are more likely to be committed to issues of racial awareness than are men” (p. 21). In a national longitudinal study, Astin (1993) found that men were “more committed to the views that racial discrimination is no longer a problem and that the individual can do little to change society” (p. 405). De Hon (1995) stated that women are socialized to communicate differently than men – “to move in groups, to touch a lot, to tell secrets, and to openly show feelings” (p. 14). This language difference must be taken into account in addition to other differences in order to have quality intercultural dialogues. Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, and Nora (2001) conducted research in part to determine factors that influenced college students’ receptiveness to “challenges to their beliefs and values and who are open to interacting with and learning from others who are different from themselves” (p. 174). In addition to positive correlations between openness to

diversity and challenge and age, a nondiscriminatory racial campus environment, student acquaintances, and participation in a racial or cultural awareness workshop, Whitt et al. (2001) found that not only were women more open to diversity and challenge than men during their first three years of college, but “women also were significantly more likely than men to change in the direction of greater openness, whatever their precollege attitudes” (p. 189).

Current Greek Life Literature

Most studies and literature on fraternities and sororities focus on the activities of predominantly White Greek letter organizations (Whipple, 1998) with limited literature on historically Black fraternal life (Kimbrough, 2003). Astin (1993) found that members of these organizations “in many ways conform to the stereotype of the ‘Greek’: having a Protestant religious affiliation, being white, being politically conservative, [and] coming from an affluent family” (p. 178). Whipple (1998) acknowledges that the challenges and solutions presented in his book are primarily based on predominantly White groups due to differences in “organization, membership, and traditions” (p. 3) between historically Black and White sororities and fraternities. The little available information on cultural, special interest, and multicultural Greek letter organizations is primarily limited to such formats as conference presentations (see Layzer, 2000b; see Olivas, 1996), unrefereed e-zines (see Castro, April 2005; see Kimbrough, 2002), doctoral dissertations (see Accapadi, 2005; Guardia, 2006; Layzer, 2000a; see Olivas, 2006; Patterson, 1998; Reis, 2004; Reyes, 1997), and news sources (see Noble, 2002; see Reisberg, 2000; Troha, 2002). More recently a peer reviewed journal article was published that examined ethnic identity development of Latino

fraternity members (see Guardia & Evans, 2008). Torbenson and Parks (2009) just published the only book of its kind focusing on diversity in college Greek letter organizations, dedicating complete chapters to Asian American, Latina/o, Native American, gay, religious, and multicultural fraternities and sororities. The chapter of multicultural fraternities and sororities presents an historical overview of this contemporary movement, sharing a list of organizations, when and where they were founded, their foundational ideals, growth patterns, and nuanced differences between the groups (Wells & Dolan, 2009).

In a content analysis of sorority/fraternity research published between Fall 1994 and Summer 2004 in the two primary journals for student affairs professionals, Molasso (2005) categorized the articles by issues addressed. Of the 63 articles that contributed significantly to the sorority/fraternity community, the largest percentage at 27% (17 articles) addressed issues related to alcohol and other drugs. The next largest percentage at 14% included 9 articles addressing issues about “students of color/NPHC” with a primary focus on Black students and Black Greek letter organizations. Eleven percent (7 articles) addressed psychosocial development, and 10% (6 articles) addressed cognitive/academic achievement of fraternity and sorority members. Tied at 6% (4 articles each) were the subjects of sexual assault education, homogeneity primarily within predominantly White sororities and fraternities, and adjustment issues. The remaining 20%, ranging from 1 to 3 articles, addressed issues related to recruitment, advising professionals, gay men, athletes as members, hazing, gambling, and eating disorders. Molasso (2005) noted an unexpected outcome of his content analysis: “A large percentage of the published research was focused on the heavily publicized negative aspects of the campus community. However, overall, the

research published was more positive about the fraternity/sorority community than expected” (p. 7). Both Molasso (2005) and professional colleagues he consulted expected the published research to only focus on alcohol and hazing. Although 29% of the articles did focus on alcohol and hazing, most of the articles during this 10 year period “were either positive, indifferent, or did not place a value judgment on the fraternity/sorority experience” (Molasso, 2005, p. 7). This aspect of the findings may encourage leaders of Greek organizations to be more receptive to future research of their communities.

In my own review of the same two journals – the *Journal of College Student Development (JCSD)* than the *NASPA Journal* – for the six-year period from Fall 2004 to Fall 2010, I found 13 articles that contributed significantly to the sorority/fraternity community. Although not a rigorous content analysis, I attempted to employ the same categories used by Molasso (2005) to identify the issues addressed in the articles and found 3 articles or 23% in each of the following four categories: alcohol, cognitive/academic achievement, psycho-social development, and students of color. Within the category addressing issues related to students of color, each of the articles focused on a different racioethnic group to include Black, Latino, and Asian American, whereas Molasso (2005) indicated that most of the 9 articles he found addressing students of color often related to NPHC organizations. The one remaining article dealt with gambling. Similar to Molasso’s (2005) content analysis, I found that the majority of articles were positive or nonjudgmental. I, too, found several less substantive articles that included book reviews of or reference to the sorority/fraternity community in the methods section, literature review, or as an example.

Likewise, I found more articles in the *JCSD* than the *NASPA Journal* (8 compared to 5 articles) that contributed significantly to the sorority/fraternity community.

Of important note and reflected in the significantly lower number of articles I found in my review is the establishment in 2005 of *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors*, a peer reviewed electronic journal published biannually. In a review of the eight issues of *Oracle* published between August 2005 and June 2010 (no issues were published in 2007 due to lack of submissions), there were a total of 44 articles, six of which were editorials. Once again attempting to use the same categories as Molasso (2005) to identify the issues addressed in the articles, I found the greatest number focused on psycho-social development with 11 articles or 25%. Three articles, including Molasso's (2005) original content analysis of the *JCSD* and *NASPA Journal*, plus all 6 editorials focused on research – the need for it, how to interpret it, and how to conduct it as the research relates to the sorority/fraternity community. I found 5 articles (11%) focusing on cognitive/academic achievement while 4 articles (9%) focused on alcohol and 3 articles (7%) focused on hazing. One article each focused on homogeneity, eating disorders, gambling, and advising professionals. Interestingly, the article focused on advising professionals related to the need for increased assessment to demonstrate the effectiveness of sorority and fraternity involvement in contributing to institutional goals and the feeling of inadequacy by student affairs professionals in conducting such assessments (Strayhorn & Colvin, 2006). I also found a couple of articles focusing on several categories combined and a couple focusing on new issues that did not seem to fit within any of the other categories such as fraternity members' views and perceptions of negative stereotypes of their

organizations. Having a journal focusing specifically on sororities and fraternities helps to professionalize the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors and encourage more research focused in this area of higher education (Hesp, 2005). While all but the current issue of *Oracle* is available to the public via the Association's website, at this time the journal's articles are not included in the ERIC (Educational Resource Information Center) database, creating a missed opportunity to reach a larger audience lost in the shift of articles away from *JCSD* and the *NASPA Journal*.

Summary

After providing a list of definitions, the literature relevant to this study was reviewed. In order to consider the possibility of social equality within the context of a culture rooted in privilege, greater awareness of our differences and similarities must occur. The college campus provides an environment where students are going through critical developmental stages at a time when they have multiple opportunities to learn about people different from themselves. Higher education and student affairs often attempt to tackle diversity issues through a variety of approaches, preparing students to live in a multicultural society. College peer groups allow for close interaction with other students who have similar values, and a multicultural sorority provides a unique model for intercultural student development. The writings outlined above could indicate greater potential for college-age women to be more receptive to developing cross-cultural friendships than college-age men. Applying these ideas within a college sorority stressing the promotion of diversity and social change around multicultural issues provides the context of this qualitative study. The next chapter outlines the methods used to conduct this study.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

To promote leadership, multiculturalism, and self-improvement through academic excellence, involvement in and service to the campus and community, as well as being living examples of sisterhood across different races, cultures, religions, backgrounds, and lifestyles.

- Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority, Inc. mission statement

While most Greek letter organizations have in their mission aspects of community service and academic achievement, few emphasize the promotion of multiculturalism. This study involves looking within one self-identified multicultural sorority at a Southeastern research university. The purpose of this study is to understand how members of this particular sorority define and address intercultural issues on their college campus.

This chapter outlines the methods that I used for this study. I explain the rationale for my choice of a qualitative case study as my research design and discuss the research question I explored as well as the significance of feminist inquiry and the subjectivity I bring to the study. I briefly describe the participants of the study, including the organization selected and its background, my access to the organization, the participant selection criteria, and number of participants. Data collection consisted of interviews, documentation review, observations, and physical artifacts, and I present the timeline of my research and ethical considerations. A discussion about data analysis is offered, and I finish this chapter presenting limitations of the study, trustworthiness concerns, and strengths of the study. The strong research design

and methods of this study helped me to better understand the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus.

Research Design

A field of inquiry that crosses multiple disciplines, qualitative research places the observer in the world being observed. “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry... They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10). As opposed to the positivist approach taken by quantitative research, meaning is derived from the perceptions of individuals being studied and the proposition that their realities are socially constructed (Merriam, 1998). Stake (1994) explains that “we come to know what has happened partly in terms of what others reveal as their experience” (p. 240). Additional characteristics contained within all qualitative research include the use of natural settings for the study, the integral role the researcher plays in collection and analysis of data, the inductive reasoning often employed to better understand a phenomenon, and meaning presented through vibrant accounts. Many qualitative studies also contain characteristics such as flexibility, small samples, emerging designs, quality over quantity, and hypothesis generating rather than hypothesis testing (Merriam, 1998).

Case Study

Within qualitative research, case study is considered one of the common types of inquiry, particularly in education (Merriam, 1998). Case studies are distinguishable from other types of qualitative inquiry by their emphases on a single case or bounded system from

which we wish to learn something specific (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994). Whether simple or complex, a case is specific and is an integrated system with patterned behavior. The greater the specificity and uniqueness of the case, the more researchers can learn from the study. “A case study is both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning” (Stake, 1994, p. 237).

There are various types of study within case study inquiry. Stake (1994) identifies three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. The purpose of an intrinsic case study is to better understand the uniqueness of a particular case that is of interest in and of itself to the researcher without necessarily intending to generate theory or obtain generalizability. An instrumental case study is designed to “provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory, [and] the case is of secondary interest” (Stake, 1994, p. 237). Finally, a collective case study is used when there are multiple cases a researcher desires to study concurrently in order to achieve greater understanding. Yin (2003) also identifies three types of case studies within social science research: descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory. A descriptive case study attempts to understand the interpersonal phenomena within a bounded system over a period of time that has been subjected to little previous study. According to Yin (1994), an explanatory case study involves the researcher posing “competing explanations for the same set of events and to indicate how such explanations may apply to other situations” (p. 5), looking for a causal effect between two events. Finally, an exploratory case study does as its name indicates – explores a topic with some purpose in mind, rather than a proposition, as well as criteria by which the study can be determined successful. Ultimately, the researcher decides which type of inquiry best fits the conditions

established by the events to be studied and the questions to be asked (Stake, 1994; Yin, 2003). This particular case study is intrinsic because the multicultural sorority itself is of interest to me as a researcher, and I wanted to better understand the role of such an organization and its members on a college campus. In addition I classify the study as descriptive in its attempt to describe a particular subculture that has not yet been studied.

Research Question

I selected one chapter of Theta Nu Xi as the case to study for this research given the use of “multicultural” in the sorority’s name and the emphasis in the organization’s mission statement to promote multiculturalism and be living examples of a diverse sisterhood. Given that the purpose of this case study is to understand how members of this particular sorority define and address intercultural issues on their college campus, participants included chapter alumnae and current members who participated in the organization at least one year so that they had sufficient time to experience various aspects of membership. From the perspective of the multicultural sorority chapter members, this study explored how they work toward achieving their mission. This is important because there is little to no published literature on multicultural Greek letter organizations, and an organization such as this one presents a unique way of promoting multiculturalism within our increasingly diverse society.

Specifically, one overarching question guided this research:

- What describes the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus?

To support this overarching research question, three areas were explored:

- Identity
- Structure

- Activities

Identity

The identity and core mission of the sorority as an organization was investigated. Through examination of its purpose via written and personal interpretations of the mission statement by its members, I hoped to discover the level of significance it plays in the individual members' lives as well as how it guides the sorority's activities on campus. Specifically, I planned to explore how the sorority members define multiculturalism individually and collectively. I wanted to understand how the members internalize the sorority's mission statement, particularly around promoting multiculturalism, and potentially change their actions and beliefs to become living examples of a diverse sisterhood. In their construction of a space for sisterhood, I wanted to know if they identify themselves or the work of their sorority as feminist.

Structure

Surveying the structure of the organization provided a systematic perspective of how the sorority functions organizationally and how this may influence the nature of the roles played by Theta Nu Xi. Structural issues external to the organization that may affect functionality include the Greek council in which they are administratively placed and the decision to be a sorority rather than a student organization. Structural issues internal to the organization potentially affecting functionality include cultural differences, structural integration, and organizational characteristics. Cultural differences may have some bearing on the organization in such areas as leadership styles, communication styles, and time and space orientation. Structural integration of Theta Nu Xi involves the heterogeneity of its

members and within the positions of power. Examining the cultural diversity of sorority membership and the chapter presidents over time provide insight into the formal and informal power distribution within the organization (Cox, 1994). As a sorority wanting a culturally diverse sisterhood, then creating a space where they “can engage in open critical dialogue with one another, where [they] can debate and discuss without fear of emotional collapse, where [they] can hear and know one another in the difference and complexities of our experience, is essential” (hooks, 1994, p. 110). The internal structure of the sorority was analyzed using Cox’s (1994) six characteristics of a multicultural organization.

Albeit intended for large corporations, the framework still applies to smaller organizations such as the sorority being studied. In addition, the size of the sorority chapter and its overall structure shape the identity of the organization on campus as well as the number and types of their activities.

Activities

Delving into the activities of the sorority presents supporting evidence of how the sorority goes about promoting multiculturalism. The types of activities conducted, with whom they collaborate, and how they interact with others reflect their perceived identity and play an important role in the sorority attaining its mission and contributing to its external effectiveness. For example, a presentation on female genital mutilation (or cutting) co-sponsored with an historically Black fraternity may be received differently than if it were co-sponsored with the campus-based Women’s Center; the attendance may be quite different because of different constituency bases if such a program is co-sponsored with both a Black fraternity and the Women’s Center. Programmatic activities for the campus community

might have a learning objective for participants. Learning if the sorority tends to bring in guest speakers for diversity programs versus presenting the material or facilitating the discussion themselves can indicate their level of understanding and interest in knowing the information at a deeper level. Activities also include what the sorority does together socially or programmatically that may increase their own understanding of multiculturalism such as a sorority sleepover or volunteering with the Girl Scouts. Determining how the members perceive what types of formal and informal activities promote multiculturalism connects back to the mission and identity of the sorority. Looking at the basis of identity for sorority members along with how the organization is structured and the activities conducted as a group offers a descriptive picture of the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus.

Qualitative case study was selected as the most appropriate method with which to approach this research due to the ability to study a bounded system (a multicultural sorority) within its natural setting (a college campus), taking into account the many components that encompass the holistic picture of the sorority's role and range of influence on a college campus. The richness of these women's voices based on their experiences present another benefit of selecting a qualitative research design. Through explanation and analysis of the data, I will help people better understand this particular multicultural sorority. While there are other methods of inquiry that could be used to examine a multicultural sorority in a college setting, the overarching research question as well as the factors just mentioned preference a qualitative case study. Exploring Theta Nu Xi in the areas of identity, structure, and activities provides a contextual framework to better understand the overarching research

question of what describes the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus.

Ethical Considerations

Although a code of ethics specifically for qualitative research does not exist, ethical principles must be adhered to when doing research. When conducting research with human subjects, protecting subjects from harm and informed consent are the overarching guidelines in deciding between right and wrong (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). As the researcher my personal values and the code of ethics within my professional fields also guide my actions. Because I see myself as a social worker choosing to work in higher education, I abide by the ethical principles of student services and social work. The core values embraced within the social work profession include service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence ("National Association of Social Workers homepage"). The five ethical principles suggested for the student affairs profession are respect autonomy, do no harm, benefit others, be just, and be faithful (Kitchener, 1985). "Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (Stake, 1994, p. 244). All of these values are aligned and overlap in many ways, and they guide my research within this study. No potential risks were anticipated, and the participants may have gained a better understanding of the benefits they obtain by having joined a multicultural sorority.

In order to protect my research participants, several steps were taken. First, I applied for and received approval from the Institutional Review Board at North Carolina State University, who oversees compliance for the ethical treatment of human research subjects, to

conduct this study (see Appendix A). Second, I reviewed an informed consent form with each interviewee outlining the focus of my study, their voluntary participation and withdrawal options, and study's level of confidentiality, after which each person signed the form and received a copy to keep for their records (see Appendix B). Confidentiality for this study entailed storing the data securely for a set time following completion of the research and only making that data available to persons conducting the study. If used, any names of individuals, campus organizations, and colleges or universities were given pseudonyms to protect their identities; for example Monarch University is not the name of a real higher education institution. I attempted to provide as much richness of the data as possible without revealing the identity of the institution or the person speaking. For the three women whose 2001 interviews I wanted to include in the data set, I had them sign a separate consent form granting that permission (see Appendix C). I also obtained signed consent forms to use photographs of sorority members as part of this study (see Appendix D). All of these steps help ensure the ethical treatment of my study participants.

Feminist Inquiry

This study is considered to be feminist research based on distinguishing characteristics. Rather than saying there is a feminist method to research, Harding (1987) identifies three characteristics of research that present the strongest examples of feminist inquiry in the social sciences. Because traditional social science primarily consisted of men's experiences and asked questions from a male perspective, the first characteristic involves researching women's experiences. The power of this characteristic comes from not only researching women's experiences but also including them in the asking of the questions and

recognizing that there is no one woman's voice or experience but multiple experiences based in political struggle. "The questions an oppressed group wants answered are rarely requests for so-called pure truth. Instead, they are queries about how to change its conditions" (Harding, 1987, p. 8). By asking questions rooted in women's experiences, the second characteristic naturally evolves into research for women. Whereas social research for men tends to look at ways to control or pacify women, research for women provides explanations for what they need for emancipation or development. "In the best feminist research, the purposes of research and analysis are not separable from the origins of research problems" (Harding, 1987, p. 8). The third characteristic of research presenting strong feminist inquiry requires locating the researcher in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter. By including the researcher's race, class, gender, culture, and beliefs as part of the evidence, "introducing this 'subjective' element into the analysis in fact increases the objectivity of the research and decreases the 'objectivism' which hides this kind of evidence from the public" (Harding, 1987, p. 9). This characteristic is not distinctively feminist because other theoretical approaches addressing marginalized groups also include this perspective. The distinctive power of feminist research, therefore, is demonstrated by providing new empirical and theoretical resources through women's experiences, establishing new purposes of social science for women, and adding the researcher as new subject matter of inquiry.

Several other considerations should also be made in considering a study to be feminist research. Female researchers studying women does not make a study feminist research; men can and have contributed to the field, and all women do not have a common feminist consciousness (Harding, 1987; Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). While qualitative

research methods lend themselves to feminist research because they more easily allow for women's experiences and voices to be heard, quantitative methods can also elicit feminist research and no method is limited to only producing feminist research. Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) also support Harding's (1987) stances on locating the researcher in social inquiry process and grounding the research in women's experiences. I have placed myself subjectively into this research study that examines a diverse group of women and their potential for social change around diversity issues for members of an organization committed to multiculturalism, defining this study as strong feminist research.

Subjectivity Statement

I am a woman – a White, heterosexual, non-religious, feminist woman interested in multicultural issues who never joined a sorority. My many identities along with my childhood and life experiences brought me to where I am now and will continue to guide me in the future. Race and gender are central to my overall identity and interests, and they ignite the passion that drives me. This is my personal history that influences both my academic and professional choices.

The first significant event in my life revolves around race. I was born and raised in the South, and when I was in third grade, my mother married a Black man. This was in the mid-1970s in North Carolina, where public schools had been desegregated for barely a decade. The initial reactions by both Black and White people to their dating and marriage were extreme on both ends of a continuum and were my first exposures to discrimination and racial oppression. I was 12 and 15 years old respectively when my sisters were born, and the next layer of oppression came in their early childhood. The question of whether or not they

were adopted, even as their mother or I stood there with them and their father, became the despised indication of ignorance for me. As my sisters grew older, I witnessed their emotional reactions to being teased by classmates for their biracial identity or being forced to choose one race over the other on the requisite school forms. Having been born and raised in the South where Black/White relations tended to stay in the forefront of the headlines and day-to-day issues along with my personal experiences growing up with a Black step-father places the Black/White dichotomy at the top of my mental list when I think about race and diversity. I am aware of my propensity to think first about Black/White racial relations, and I consciously work to acknowledge and recognize other racial and cultural groups when considering diversity.

I stumbled into women's issues and empowerment in an attempt to deal with the second significant event in my life. As a teenager I experienced gendered violence and sought assistance from the local rape crisis and domestic violence agency. This experience opened my eyes to various forms of violence against women, its damage, and the causal factors. Gendered violence was another form of oppression with which I had been living during my childhood. In moving on with my life, I wanted to give back to the agency that so graciously helped me. I became a domestic violence crisis counselor and eventually received my bachelor's degrees in social work and sociology. Shifting my focus to community organizing around equity issues, I interned at a campus-based women's center for my master's degree in social work. This is where I first identified myself as, and accepted the label of, feminist. As a Student Affairs administrator, I discovered my desire to work with traditional-aged college students. Higher education also provided a unique environment in

which to combine my interests in gender, race, and other forms of oppression as well as potentially inspire future leaders of our society to become committed to social justice issues. I had the privilege of serving as the administrative advisor for the chapter of Theta Nu Xi studied in this research for their first two years on campus, gaining insight of and respect for the organization. I see in this sorority a model of an intercultural community that has the potential to influence social change for the members and those around them. This research is important to me because it positively intertwines my multiple identities through a feminist lens that gives me hope for our future.

Participants of the Study

Organization Selection and Background

As previously mentioned Theta Nu Xi was selected as the case to study given the use of “multicultural” in the organization’s name and the emphasis in the organization’s mission statement to promote multiculturalism. I chose this particular sorority because they self-identify as multicultural, their membership visually looks multicultural to the casual observer, and they have a stated social justice purpose beyond being a racially diverse social group for its members. I also wanted to study a multicultural sorority whose chapter was in existence for at least four years in order to establish themselves on campus and be perceived by the majority of students as established. Officially recognized by the campus Greek Affairs office in the spring of 1997, Theta Nu Xi was founded by an undergraduate, bi-racial woman who did not want to choose between her Black and White identities within the existing structure of Greek letter organizations on her campus. Yet she still desired a sisterhood of strong women, leading her to form a unique kind of sorority. By 1999 Theta

Nu Xi had become incorporated and formed the national organization, expanding to 22 undergraduate chapters by the fall of 2005. Theta Nu Xi limits chapter sizes to no more than 30 members with an average membership of 10 women in order to ensure a close yet diverse sisterhood experience ("Theta Nu Xi homepage"). The newness of this particular sorority and multicultural sororities in general tend to present small samples for study with little to no prior research having been conducted. The solid establishment and quick growth of Theta Nu Xi nationally provides a firm foundation and strong belief system in which to examine the broader questions associated with the role of a multicultural sorority on a college campus.

Access

While several chapters of Theta Nu Xi exist on college campuses in relative proximity to the author of this study, I have several connections to the chapter selected. First, I served as the administrative advisor to the sorority their first two years on campus. I also examined the selected chapter in a pilot study conducted by the same author (S. L. Johnson, 2001). Knowing that time would pass before beginning this study, I intentionally maintained periodic contact with chapter members, introducing myself to each new chapter president and indicating my desire to eventually study the sorority for my dissertation. Their continued positive response gave me no cause for concern. Access to the sorority was obtained through contacting members of Theta Nu Xi, including current students and alumnae. I asked the chapter president for permission to observe sorority activities, particularly non-public events such as chapter meetings. My familiarity with multiple members provided me easier access to the selected chapter and sorority (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Morse & Field, 1995).

Participant Selection Criteria

Encompassing the case within one chapter of Theta Nu Xi, interview participants were selected based on several criteria. The first criterion desired was the active membership in this particular chapter of Theta Nu Xi for at least one full academic year beyond the semester in which they joined the sorority. This eliminated from the study students who recently joined the sorority and those who joined in their senior year of college, potentially limiting their commitment to and involvement with the organization. With several of the alumnae sorority members still living in the area but one known to currently reside outside of the United States, the second criterion was accessibility. Finally, consent and time restraints on behalf of otherwise eligible sorority members applied. Based on the initial selection criteria, 20 sorority members were eligible for participation in the study.

Number of Participants

While an attempt was made to include as many as possible of the 20 eligible members in the study in order to achieve the greatest range of diversity and length of time affiliated with the sorority, the actual number of individual interviews conducted for this study was 10 due to most of the women having already graduated by the time the research was conducted. Additionally, three of the alumnae interviewed for this study were the same three women I interviewed for my pilot study (S. L. Johnson, 2001), and those three interview transcripts were included in the data analysis. A detailed profile of the sorority and the study participants is provided in Chapter Four.

Data Collection

According to Yin (2003), there are six primary sources of evidence collected when doing case studies: interviews, documentation, archival records, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts. While each source has its own strengths and weaknesses, they all compliment one another and as many sources as possible should be obtained. Having a reasonable timeline for the study and accounting for ethical considerations are also part of the data collection process in a qualitative study.

Interviews

A major technique of data collection in this study involved interviews. Each of the 10 eligible and amenable individuals participated in one in-depth interview lasting from 1 hour to 2 hours 30 minutes that occurred in a location satisfactory to both the researcher and interviewee. All participant interviews were conducted face-to-face. Rather than rigid inquiries I conducted a semistructured interview, which prompts me to gather necessary data while allowing participants leeway to explore other related topics (Morse & Field, 1995). Using an interview guide (Appendix E), I asked targeted yet open-ended questions in the form of a guided conversation seeking facts and opinions. In an attempt to use good interview techniques, I looked for an interview location with minimal distractions or potential for interruptions, avoided asking awkward questions, was a good listener, and used active listening skills (Morse & Field, 1995). I also consulted Holstein and Gubrium's (2003) *Inside Interviewing* for additional guidance in conducting effective interviews. With approval by the interviewee, the interviews were digitally recorded via iPod and transcribed to avoid inaccuracies due to poor recall (Yin, 2003).

I personally transcribed several of the interviews, but due to time constraints paid someone to transcribe the majority of my participant interviews. In order to maintain closeness to my research and verify transcription accuracy, I personally reviewed all transcripts while listening to the interviews regardless of who transcribed the interview. Participants were asked to review their interview transcripts to verify accuracy and provide an opportunity for clarification of the information or include additional comments. Of the 10 women interviewed, only 3 reviewed and returned their transcripts with feedback. I made jotted notes during the interviews to help me remember a thought or description and wrote more complete field notes following each interview to include greater description and initial analysis (Glesne, 1999). Although interviews emerged as the primary source of data, the additional sources described below provided supporting evidence that confirmed and complimented the information gained through the interviews.

Documentation and Archival Records

The data collection also included review of documentation and archival records such as the sorority mission statement, meeting minutes, event flyers, newspaper clippings, survey data, and guidelines of operations. Two interest meeting flyers are included as examples of these data sources in Chapter Four along with survey data collected by the sorority (Appendices G and H) and a newsletter published by Theta Nu Xi (Appendix I). I was able to keep, print, or maintain copies electronically these materials for additional review at later times as needed, so there was never a need to take full field notes being both descriptive and analytic when reviewing such documentation (Glesne, 1999). While access to certain documents may be restricted and confidential, such information provided important

corroboration of other evidence over time and was both visually stable and unobtrusive. To guard against skewed evidence, I reviewed such documents and archival records through a lens questioning the accuracy and purpose behind such evidence (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glesne, 1999; Yin, 2003).

Observations and Participant-observations

I made observations of organized activities such as regular chapter meetings, elections, interest meetings for potential new members, and programming. I also conducted participant-observations of a couple of sorority programming events where I actually participated rather than peripherally observed. Vignettes describing two of my observations are included in Chapter Four to show the value of these data sources. This insider perspective allowed me the opportunity to perceive reality from a different viewpoint. I observed six activities lasting no less than 1 hour each. While time-consuming, observational evidence provides real time coverage of events and interactions as well as places them in context (Yin, 2003). Depending on the situation, I took full field notes or jotted notes when feasible. Certain situations, however, were not conducive to note taking, so I took mental notes until after the observation period, at which time I promptly wrote up full field notes from memory (Glesne, 1999). I believe the benefits for this case study outweigh the potential problems of collecting evidence through direct observations and participant-observations, especially in conjunction with the other forms of evidence collection, and I diligently worked to limit the impact of their weaknesses.

Physical Artifacts

The final source of primary evidence is physical artifacts. Physical artifacts typically include “a technological device, a tool or instrument, a work of art, or some other physical evidence” (Yin, 2003, p. 96). While not relevant to case studies as often as the other sources of evidence, they can serve an important role when applicable. In the case of this study, photographs of sorority member interactions and activities proved significant in demonstrating the visual diversity of membership. One of the photographs reviewed is included in a sample flyer in Chapter Four. The multiple sources of evidence outlined above help establish trustworthiness of the study (Yin, 2003). Using descriptive and reflective field notes provided additional documentation of people and events as well as my thoughts and ideas about observations made (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

In summary, I used all six primary sources of evidence as outlined by Yin (2003) in collecting data for this study: interviews, documentation, archival records, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts. Interviews served as the primary data source while the additional sources provided supplemental evidence.

Timeline

Upon successful defense of my proposal in spring 2006, I submitted paperwork for and received IRB approval. I met with the sorority chapter in October 2006, where I discussed my research interests and received their permission to study them. I conducted 10 interviews and observed 6 sorority activities between October 2006 and November 2007. Interviews were transcribed and sent to the interviewees for review. Data analysis and writing began in October 2007.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an attempt to make meaning out of the data collected as it relates to the original purpose of a study. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define data analysis as “the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others” (p. 157). Miles and Huberman (1994) identify three components of qualitative data analysis as being data reduction, data displays, and conclusion drawing/verification while Baptiste (2001) identifies four phases as defining the analysis, classifying data, making connections by constructing stories and theories, and conveying the message by writing it up. I used a combination of these two models as outline below to analyze my data.

First Phase of Analysis

In doing qualitative data analysis according to Baptiste (2001), the researcher must first define the analysis. This entails determining “the goals of the analysis; what counts as appropriate and sufficient information, and on how best to capture, record, interpret, and convey the information” (§ 14). This aspect of data analysis was presented above through discussion of the research design including the research question, the participants of the study, and data collection methods. Having a clearly defined research question that anticipated the goals of my analysis simplified the process of the second phase of analysis.

Second Phase of Analysis

Miles and Huberman’s (1994) concept of data reduction has imbedded in it Baptiste’s (2001) first phase of defining the analysis. “*Data reduction* refers to the process of selecting,

focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). According to Baptiste’s (2001) second phase of analysis, data is classified by tagging important concepts and then labeling those concepts in a way that attaches meaning. Through this process of coding, themes emerge by grouping these meaningful concepts together. The processes of defining the analysis, classifying the data (Baptiste, 2001), and data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1994) happen anticipatorily before as well as during and after the data collection period through deciding upon a conceptual framework, designing research questions, and coding techniques.

After my interviews were transcribed, my data analysis process began with reviewing the written transcripts while listening to the interview audio recordings. Only 3 of the 10 women interviewed chose to participate in member checking by reviewing their transcripts and providing feedback. While checking for transcription accuracy, I was also listening for important and repeated concepts and kept a running list of these concepts but did not affiliate them with any particular interview. I initially worked in serial order, reviewing one transcript completely then moving on to the next and so on. In addition to tagging inductively, I also developed a list of concepts about tagging based on literature from my proposal. I also wrote profiles for each of the women interviewed, which allowed me to concisely document their demographics, gain a better understanding of what each person was like, determine if there were any needed follow-up questions, and my reactions to the interviews. I chose, however, not to include the individual profiles in my dissertation due to concern about confidentiality and preferring the composite overview of participants as presented in Chapter Four.

The next step in my data analysis process involved importing the transcripts from these 10 interviews along with the three interview transcripts from the pilot study (S. L. Johnson, 2001) into HyperRESEARCH, software that helped me manage the large amount of data and run reports based on codes I assigned sections of text. Through developing an inductive list of tags and one based on my literature review, what emerged was a combined list that eventually became my code list. The codes folded nicely into the three contextual areas of my research question regarding identity, structure, and activities, so I began coding my transcripts first by those three areas. I then switched to reviewing the data in parallel, taking one contextual area at a time and subcoding within that topic, starting with Structure because it was the smallest section and, therefore, easier for me to grasp the concept of data reduction to a point where I could write up the findings. By printing out the report for all text coded as Structure, I was able to focus on hand coding within that one concept. I continued this funnel approach, which clarified and refined the codes, for example, within Structure to four overarching components of sorority versus student organization, Greek social structure, size, and safe space. Examining just the sorority versus student organization data presented three more subsections. Each level deeper narrowed the data with which I was working, continuing to bring the ideas and subcodes into greater focus. This was a process that I had to learn to trust because I generally think in a much more structured and analytical way. See Appendix F for a codes sample of this reduction process.

Third Phase of Analysis

The third component of data analysis, conclusion drawing and verification, is where decisions are made about what the data mean based upon such factors as patterns,

regularities, and propositions. Data displays refer to “an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11) either through extended text or visually via charts, matrices, networks, or graphs. Baptiste (2001) talks about making connections by constructing stories and theories that creates new understanding and knowledge. Findings must be interpreted by the researcher in a subjective manner rather than left up to the reader to intuit. The conclusions are then verified to ensure validity by testing for data quality, looking at what the patterns are not saying, testing the explanations, and getting feedback from informants. Data displays and conclusion drawing/verification occur during and after data collection while all three components of data analysis happen concurrently through an interactive, iterative process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Five findings of this study are discussed at length in Chapter Six, where I stepped back and asked myself, “What have I learned?” This dissertation is in and of itself the fourth phase of qualitative data analysis of conveying the message by writing it up as defined by Baptiste (2001).

Limitations of the Study

There are several potential limitations of this study categorized by the investigator as human, insider/outsider dynamics, and the generalizability of the findings:

As mentioned above a characteristic of all qualitative research is that the researcher plays an integral role in collection and analysis of data (Merriam, 1998). This fact cannot be avoided and is critical to determining strong feminist research (Harding, 1987; Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). Advantages include the flexibility to respond and adapt to the data, changing directions as needed to find the missing evidence. The limitation, however, is that

“the investigator as human instrument is limited by being human – that is, mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, personal biases interfere” (Merriam, 1998, p. 20). I am aware of my own personal subjectivity with the study and attempted to monitor my own biases and reactions through journaling, however, my own perceptions and experiences may also be reflected in the study.

Insider/outsider status of myself as the researcher with regard to positionality and power are two complex concepts to consider with this study. Positionality refers to my status as the researcher compared to the research participants across many social variables such as gender, race, class, or age. Given the expected diversity of participants with regard to race, culture, ethnicity, class, and religion, I estimated insider status with regard to gender. I am an outsider with regard to age because the research participants are predominantly in their late teens through mid-20s age-wise. I am in my late 30s and may not understand or recognize some of the age-related cultural innuendos. Of most relevance is my outsider status from never having joined a Greek letter organization. There were certain aspects of the sorority, such as initiation procedures, that are secret and, therefore, were not shared with me as an outsider. If such secret procedures were shared confidentially, I chose not to publish that information due to ethical constraints, and I made every effort to determine what information can legitimately be shared. The second concept of power refers to the potential inequities surrounding the relationship between researcher and participant. I served as the administrative advisor to the sorority chapter being studied for two years prior to the formal research being conducted, and I interviewed three members of the sorority earlier in my graduate career for an introductory course on qualitative research methods. This prior

relationship between the sorority and myself may not be consequential but should be taken into account. Alternatively, this prior relationship may have provided easier access to and greater openness by members of the sorority for research purposes. As the researcher I experienced being both an insider and an outsider with the two positions providing me different yet valid perspectives (Merriam et al., 2001).

As a qualitative case study, there may be concern that insufficient evidence exists for scientific generalization. In a descriptive case study such as this one, findings “would be limited to describing the phenomenon rather than predicting future behavior” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). Yin (2003) refers to this as analytic generalization rather than statistical generalization. Case studies offer “a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables...[and] help structure future research; hence, case study plays an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). While the research on this multicultural sorority may not be generalizable to other multicultural sororities or even other chapters of the same sorority, the findings may provide insight and understanding that can lead to further studies and improve practice.

Strengths of the Study

There are several strengths of this study, both of me personally and of the study design. The study benefits from my 10-15 years of experience and knowledge base from working in a college campus climate. Specifically my work experience involves gender issues, one of the key components of this study. I also bring my training as a social worker, allowing me to quickly enhance the comfort level during an interview situation and use the appropriate amount of active listening skills. While also a limitation, my insider/outsider

status also adds to the strength of this study. I believe that I was able to connect with members of the sorority as a woman and someone who is also interested in multicultural issues. The access described earlier that I had to the sorority through being a former advisor and maintaining contact certainly was a strength, and the time lapse since I advised the organization reduced the strategic considerations that they may assume I know the answers to my questions. Strengths of the study design include triangulation of data from multiple sources and the strong need for research and publications about multicultural Greek letter organizations. All of these factors ensure the overall strength of this study.

Trustworthiness

As with any research, reliability and validity of the data are critical, and qualitative case studies are no different. The concerns about verifying reliability and validity, however, are somewhat different from quantitative research due to the very nature of qualitative research with regard to such issues as the size of the sample and the integral involvement of the researcher (Merriam, 1998). Yin (2003) discusses four tests for judging the quality of case studies in particular. To ensure proper operational procedures, construct validity entails the use of multiple sources of evidence and the establishment of a chain of evidence during the data collection phase as well as having key informants review drafts of the study. As mentioned above, multiple sources of evidence in this study include individual interviews, participant observations, and analysis of various documents. When attempting to show a causal relationship, internal validity should be obtained by doing pattern-matching, explanation-building, and time-series analysis during the data analysis phase. Using replication logic in multi-case studies during the research design phase uses external validity

to determine if the findings of a study are generalizable to other studies. Because it is virtually impossible to find a case truly representative of other cases, Yin (2003) states that findings should be generalized to theory rather than other cases. This study, however, is not attempting to show a causal relationship nor generalizability to other situations. Finally, to ensure reliable case study results, during the data collection phase researchers should operationalize procedures by using case study protocol to document all steps and develop a case study database. Stake (1995) uses the term triangulation to refer to conducting interviews, observation, and reviewing of documents as a means of providing validation to case studies. Applying various techniques at different stages of the research process helps assure valid and reliable findings.

Summary

In an attempt to better understand the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus, this qualitative research followed an intrinsic case study form of inquiry. Historical background has given context and provided significance to the need for such research while the review of relevant literature provides a specific focus to the study. I established an overarching question that guided the study and outlined the selection criteria for participants. Personal interviews with 10 women were conducted along with observations of group activities, document reviews, and the inclusion of three pilot study interviews. Concerns of validity and reliability were considered to ensure trustworthy results from the study, and both limitations and strengths of the study were discussed. The next chapter provides foundational information to assist with context of the campus community

and the multicultural sorority that was studied for potential social change around diversity issues for its members and the larger campus community.

CHAPTER FOUR - FOUNDATIONS

I'm in a sorority, but...

we're not like traditional sororities.

- Theta Nu Xi Member

Before looking at the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus, the groundwork needs to be laid in order to set the scene for those findings. An institutional profile will provide context of the campus community within which the sorority chapter I researched functions. Next I invite you along on a journey to a couple of sorority activities as a way to share with you some of my experiences and the environment Theta Nu Xi attempts to create on campus. A detailed sorority profile will compare Theta Nu Xi to traditional Greek letter organizations, provide national demographics and an overview of the sorority, and present details of the participants interviewed for this study.

Institutional Profile

Monarch University (a pseudonym) is a predominantly White institution (PWI) located in the Southeastern part of the United States of America. The main core academic area of this large research university is situated on over 900 acres and located in an area of the state where it is in proximity to a variety of institutions, including public, private, historically Black, women's, and community colleges and universities. Offering bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, Monarch University is known nationally for its academics as well as its athletics.

Monarch University is a highly selective institution that strives to provide a liberal education to its undergraduates. According to the university's website, "We embrace openness to scholarly experimentation and welcome intellectually restless students who use their talents to put ideas and preconceptions to the test." Monarch University is also committed to diversity, as indicated in its literature:

Less than two decades ago, more than nine of 10 undergraduates entering [Monarch University] were white. Today, more than a third of entering students are ethnic or racial minorities. The number of African-American students, for instance, has more than tripled in the past 20 years, while the number of African Americans teaching at [Monarch] has more than doubled.

Fall 2007 undergraduate enrollment figures reflected a significant increase in diversity with only 52% of the student body being Caucasian. The next largest demographic on campus was Asian-American at 20%. African-Americans grew to be 10% of the student body. The remaining student body was 6% Hispanic/Latino, 6% International, and 6% Other/Unknown. The gender ratio for the Fall 2008 entering class was 50% women and 50% men.

Other factors also contribute to the campus climate. The majority of undergraduate students are traditionally aged, predominantly 18-22 years old. Monarch University is a highly residential campus with approximately 88% of undergraduate students living on campus. Social interactions, therefore, predominantly occur on campus and with other Monarch students. The university has a need-blind admission policy and promises to meet the demonstrated financial need for 100% of their students. Only four out of 10 undergraduate students, however, receive need-based financial aid to attend Monarch

University. The assumption can be made that the majority of students are from wealthy families, which creates an air of privilege and the appearance of a collective group that dresses and acts the same. Another potential indicator of privilege is that by the time an incoming class graduates, nearly half will have studied abroad. Over the years students from a lower socioeconomic class have expressed to me the struggles they faced with fitting in on a campus with the particular climate created by these dynamics.

There is a social hierarchy at Monarch University that revolves around Greek letter organizations (GLOs). GLOs, however, do not live in traditional fraternity and sorority houses. Most of the predominantly White fraternities officially live together in sections of the residence halls, but none of the sororities or other fraternities have official residential sections. According to the university website, “More than 40 percent of [Monarch] women and nearly 30 percent of [Monarch] men participate in one of the 38 recognized chapters here at [Monarch]. In total, around 37 percent of [Monarch] students are Greek affiliated.” Join me now as we take a small step into this world.

A Semester in the Life of Theta Nu Xi

I want to take you on a journey so that you may gain a sense of what students and the campus community experience through involvement with Theta Nu Xi. We'll start with membership recruitment and then experience a program event planned and facilitated by the sorority. Becoming a member of Theta Nu Xi has components that are generally open and aspects that are secretive. The open recruitment process for joining Theta Nu Xi usually occurs over a couple of weeks and involves attending a General Interest Meeting, participating in ONE Week activities, and being invited to a Formal Interest Meeting.

Following an extensive application and interview, the remaining intake process is secret but typically lasts longer than a week but less than a semester. Theta Nu Xi has a strict no-hazing policy as stated at an Interest Meeting I attended as well as during several interviews I conducted with sorority sisters.

Several Interest Meetings are typically held on different days and times in hopes of optimal attendance. During an Interest Meeting female students can meet current sisters and learn more about the sorority in order to decide if they want to pursue membership. Without divulging confidences, the essence of the secret intake process is a time for the women who want to join Theta Nu Xi to gain a better understanding of the sorority and themselves.

According to the chapter website,

The intake process at the undergraduate level is an intensive, yet rewarding, experience. It represents a unique opportunity for interested women to demonstrate their dedication to the sorority, form life long relationships with a diverse group of women, and develop herself as a leader as well as a team player.

They likely will learn and appreciate the sorority's mission statement, tenets, and history.

The process should also provide opportunities for them to reflect on who they are and how they connect personally with the concepts of the sorority and what it means in practice. Once the intake process is complete, the new sorority members are publicly introduced to the campus at an event called the Emergence. The following vignettes are based on a composite of my personal experiences and observations as well as components of my interviews with sorority sisters.

Sorority Membership Interest Meeting

I walked into the classroom for an Interest Meeting around 8 p.m. on a Monday evening in October. The sorority's shield, made of plywood and painted in the sorority colors, was leaning against a table draped in a purple tablecloth in the front of the room. A small assortment of cookies and crackers was on a table in the back of the room along with a jug of water, cups, and plates. Six current sorority sisters, an alumna sister, and the chapter advisor, who is also an alumna sister, were standing and sitting throughout the room, which was arranged with some of the desks in a circle and others pushed to the side in traditional rows facing the front of the room. Four sorority sisters were wearing black Theta Nu Xi t-shirts with their Greek letters in lavender and powder blue. "ΘΝΞ Multicultural Sorority Inc." was also written in blue and purple chalk on the board at the front of the room. Three students who are interested in learning more about joining the sorority, called aspirants, were sitting at desks in the circle; they appeared to be Asian, Caucasian, and South Asian.

After an official welcome, the eight members of the sorority introduced themselves and talked briefly about why they chose to join Theta Nu Xi. The first sister to speak described herself as really shy and said that she was attracted to the sorority because she saw a flyer picturing really dynamic women as members of Theta Nu Xi. The next sister was looking for a group with whom she could "fit in," and the multicultural aspect intrigued her. Having been adopted from a Latin American country, the third sister identified herself as a Southern international Jew and realized that she was not like everyone else; Theta Nu Xi appealed to her because other sororities had Christianity as part of their mission. The fourth sister to introduce herself helped establish the chapter at Monarch University, seeing it as an

opportunity to change the face of the campus. She came from a biracial background and thought Theta Nu Xi could help bring people together in light of the self-segregation she was witnessing on Monarch's campus. Reflecting back on meeting members of the sorority for the first time, she stated,

I was just like I would love to know these girls on a more personal level and I like what they stand for and all those things, and it came together. And so not only was it bringing something to Monarch that was appealing, that was different – you know, different is good – but it had so much meaning for me personally. I had a problem with the self-segregation and I wanted to bring something that would change that. So it just, it just came at the right time.

She also spoke about how membership in the sorority involves a life-long commitment rather than just something to do in college. The fifth sister went to a high school that was not very diverse but then attended a conference focusing on the power of unity and inclusion, so when she came to Monarch, she was already used to the idea of wanting to change the environment on campus and promote multiculturalism. The next sister joined because of the concept of multiculturalism. She never thought about multiculturalism and a sorority going together, but she saw how the women at an Interest Meeting cared about one another and were guided by the tenets of the sorority. The sorority allowed them to be themselves, and they continued to maintain passion for the sorority because they saw its potential to educate others on campus. The seventh sister shared that she came from a small town and small school so the small chapter size “felt like falling into the ordinary,” and the sorority was her family away from home. The final sister explained that she came from a biracial background and that she

was not interested in sororities when she came to Monarch but felt as if she was limiting herself by not exploring the options. She described being in the sorority as having someone you can rely on and talk to, that there is always someone there for you.

The three aspirants then introduced themselves, sharing their names and year in school. As an icebreaker activity, they were also asked to share the most memorable Halloween costume they ever wore. The sorority sisters were very interested in what each person was saying and giggling lightheartedly with one another. There was even a sisterly argument about Halloween costumes, generating a remark from the chapter advisor to the rest of the room: “They’re acting like sisters!” The atmosphere in the room was very relaxed and comfortable. Wanting to stay on task, however, they moved into the next part of the Interest Meeting, a visual slide presentation with additional information about the sorority.

The slides provided text interspersed with photographs and quotes as sisters took turns talking about the sorority’s mission and tenets as well as explaining how Theta Nu Xi was formed and the history of their chapter. They went on to discuss the sorority’s focus on sisterhood. They shared about their weekly sisterhood dinners where they catch up on a personal level without doing any sorority business. They also talked about group study sessions with one another, monthly sisterhood events, and birthday celebrations for each sister. Other typical activities included movie nights, parties with other Greek letter organizations and cultural organizations, sleepovers, making pancakes, and just hanging out. As they explained why they call themselves multicultural and talked about the diversity of their membership, a quote by Jimmy Carter appeared on the screen: “We become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings,

different hopes, different dreams.” The sorority sisters firmly believe that people of different backgrounds can dialogue openly, which is the purpose of the multicultural events coordinated by the sorority. To clarify a common myth, the sisters explained that someone only has to be interested in multiculturalism to be in Theta Nu Xi, not *be* multicultural with regard to their racial or ethnic background. At the same time the sisters present appeared diverse by superficial factors such as looks or their names: two Latinas, two biracial women, two White women, one Asian, and one self-identified Southern international Jew. In summarizing Theta Nu Xi’s purpose, membership, and activities, one sister said, “We’re not like traditional sororities.”

The discussion then moved to the intake process, with a sister emphasizing that it is a selective process, not a competitive one, and stating, “If you want to be a part of Theta Nu Xi, there is a spot for you.” Because scholarship is one of the tenets of Theta Nu Xi, they went on to explain that there is a 2.5 GPA requirement to join the sorority. The sisters informed the aspirants that Theta Nu Xi has a strict no-hazing policy and that no one would ever be asked to do “stupid things.” Without pressuring the aspirants the sisters invited anyone who was still interested to sign up for participation in ONE Week activities to be held the following week. Aspirants are required to attend at least two of the events, which are centered around the five tenets of the sorority – scholarship, service, leadership, sisterhood, and multiculturalism – as a means of having opportunities to interact with current sisters and other women interested in joining the sorority within the context of the sorority’s larger purpose. To continue in the intake process following ONE Week, the sisters shared that aspirants would receive an invitation to a Formal Interest Meeting and would be required to

submit an extensive application including a transcript and references. They then would be interviewed by the current members before being notified if they were selected to continue further with the process. Before opening the conversation up for a question and answer period, the sisters ended by describing what they were looking for in a sister and stressing that the aspirants should not communicate their interest to anyone outside the sorority. The sisters explained that, while they hold events to promote the tenets of the sorority, what really is important are the personal interactions between sisters.

After the three aspirants left, the sorority sisters spent a few minutes processing how the Interest Meeting went. They debated whether or not they stayed within their allotted time and lamented that no one showed up at the previous Interest Meeting. One of the sisters complimented another sister for a particular quote she had included in the slide presentation. The conversation then moved to general chit-chat, and I was able to catch up with the alumna member with whom I had worked during her time as an undergraduate in the sorority.

Gender Feud Program

On a chilly November evening, I walked into the multipurpose room of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Center for a program sponsored by Theta Nu Xi. The program was one of several events that week designed to promote Theta Nu Xi's broader governing council and all of that council's member organizations. Typically each member organization plans and facilitates one event during their council's Greek Week. A group of seven women and three men that included one member of Theta Nu Xi was sitting around a big rectangular table on one side of the room. On the other side of the room was a sitting area with three sofas positioned in a "U" shape facing the wall that featured a television on a

low, contemporary stand. Another member of Theta Nu Xi was sitting on the floor at the coffee table in the middle of the sitting area, eating her dinner before the program started. Thinking I would have a good, central vantage point to make observations, I made myself comfortable on the center sofa that backed up to the big rectangular table as three more women and a man arrived. A woman who appeared slightly older than the students in the room walked over to where the Theta Nu Xi member was eating her dinner and sat down on the floor beside her to talk. I suspected that she might be a member of the local graduate and professional chapter of Theta Nu Xi who came to the event to support their undergraduate sisters. The two of them discussed a sister who graduated the previous May and how she was spending her time this fall. Several men walked in wearing Greek letters for an organization that I did not recognize. I later learned that although Theta Nu Xi was facilitating this program, it was co-sponsored by two other organizations within their governing council at Monarch University as well as a multicultural fraternity at a nearby university – the men that had just walked in the room.

Another member of Theta Nu Xi arrived carrying a big piece of paper. Seeing her arrival, the sister sitting at the big table got up to help hang the poster on the wall just left of the television in the sitting area. The poster was made of black bulletin board paper and had a purple box along the top that stated “Gender Feud.” Numbers one through five were placed in a straight line down the left side of the poster. Two more members of Theta Nu Xi arrived, including the one who would be facilitating the program. She stepped up near the poster, which suddenly became the front of the room, and called everyone to order, encouraging people to move to the sitting area. There were at least 25 people in the room by

this time, and several students brought chairs over from the large table so that they could sit in the semi-circle that was forming in the sitting area. The facilitator explained the activity, which was modeled after the Family Feud game show. She continued to explain that members of Theta Nu Xi surveyed 100 people across campus with the questions that would be asked as part of the game, which is how the answers had been determined. The questions the teams would be asked focused on gender relationships, and their goal is to give the top five answers as received in the survey. The higher the answer on the list, the more points the answering team would win. One of the men in the room yelled out, “What do we win?” The crowd erupted in laughter when the facilitator promptly responded, “Self respect!”

The student facilitating the activity got the game started by announcing that we would be playing “the boys versus the girls” on teams of four. Team members were randomly assigned, and she passed out pink and blue cards to identify which team people were on. Calling the first team up, she had the women sit on the sofa to her right and the men on the sofa to her left as she faced the room. The first question was asked: what can men do to show affection to their partner? People around the room lightly made fun of the answers and joked with one another as both sides attempted to answer the question. At one point there was a discussion about the rules of the game, so the facilitator picked two people in the audience who were not playing the game – one male and one female, of course! – to serve as judges and determine if any close answers given would be considered correct. The women were in the lead. Several more people arrived as the next round began. The question was asked: what attributes does a man have that a woman does not? A member of the male team answered first, but he gave a wrong answer. The atmosphere was fun and friendly. As the

game continued, laughter and disbelief about some of the answers given were expressed. Not everyone wanted to play, but there were enough people present that three different teams played one another.

After calling the game to an end, the student facilitator pulled the group closer together for a discussion about the game and its content. She designated a television remote control as a “talking stick” in order to maintain an orderly and respectful conversation. Someone started by admitting surprise that “sex” was not in any of the game’s answers. What evolved was a very interesting and open discussion between women and men about sex, dating, and multiculturalism. Some light banter ensued because it was a woman who first brought up the subject of sex. A couple of men said that maybe males do not think about it as much as women think they do, and several women responded that maybe women *do* actually think about sex. The discussion took on a more serious tone as a male brought up a socially imposed gender difference by talking about the dynamic that women who sleep around are viewed as whores while “guys are players.” Acknowledging the impact cultural differences have on the topic of sex, a first generation Hispanic student said the topic of sex was never discussed at home because it was taboo. With all sincerity another participant asked a question with regard to dating in the LGBT community, “Do you have to have bad sex to know your sexuality?” Another participant explained that sex and attraction are two different concepts, and that bad sex would not change the gender to which someone is attracted. Everyone seemed very open to discussing these sensitive topics and some even tried to place themselves in a position different from their own in order to better understand. I found the openness of the dialogue to be very refreshing and promising when thinking

about the amount of ignorance and oppression that still exists in our society today. As the discussion came to an end, the program wrapped up with announcements about other Greek events happening later in the week.

Sorority Profile

When telling people that I am studying a multicultural sorority, I often receive the surprised response, “They exist?” Theta Nu Xi is so different from any other Greek letter organization (GLO) available in current literature that providing a sorority profile to establish a basic understanding of the sorority is warranted. A comparison of Theta Nu Xi to traditional GLOs, including similarities and differences, will be explored. Demographics of Theta Nu Xi will be presented based on two member surveys conducted by their national office along with a detailed description of the sorority. Finally, an overview of this study’s participants within one chapter of Theta Nu Xi will be shared, providing information about their age, identity, and why they chose to join a sorority.

Comparison to Traditional Greek Organizations

The women I interviewed often made some version of the statement, “I’m in a sorority, but...we’re not like traditional sororities.” With regard to the term sorority, one sister even stated, “I mean it’s a weird term, and I wish that sometimes we wouldn’t use it, just because we’re not even attracting that kind of person.” So the question begs to be asked, how is Theta Nu Xi different from traditional Greek letter organizations, and are they at all similar? There are definite similarities and differences, so let us examine them both.

Similarities

Theta Nu Xi was intentionally created as a sorority and, therefore, functions in that realm and behaves like other Greek letter organizations (GLOs) in many ways. Inherent similarities Theta Nu Xi has in common with traditional GLOs include participation in Greek life activities and governance; a general emphasis on scholarship, leadership, and service; a sense of belonging and sisterhood (or brotherhood); and a network of alumnae/i. Chapter size is discussed as a transition between similarities and differences between Theta Nu Xi and traditional GLOs.

Governance and emphasis. As discussed in chapter one, the founders of Theta Nu Xi wanted the sisterhood that comes with the selective membership and rituals that bond a fraternal organization, but they also recognized the role GLOs play in setting the tone of student interactions and saw entry into that powerful system as a means of effecting social change within the campus community ("Theta Nu Xi homepage"). Integrating themselves into that system by participating in Greek life activities and governance is necessary and may include rituals as part of the intake process, holding officer positions in their broader Greek council, and participating in retreats and cosponsoring events with a variety of different GLOs from other Greek councils. At Monarch University there are four governing Greek councils, and Theta Nu Xi is part of a broader council called the Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) along with Latino and Asian Greek letter organizations. Theta Nu Xi's involvement with the Greek social structure at Monarch University is elaborated upon in the thematic findings under structure and activities. Another common thread typically found in most GLOs is the emphasis on scholarship, leadership, and service among their members (Astin,

1993; Dunkel & Schuh, 1998; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). According to information on Monarch University's website, the Greek community volunteered more than 10,400 hours in 2007-2008 and raised more than \$44,500 for charitable organizations. Emphasis is also placed on scholarship, with many GLOs organizing study hours to ensure new members maintain focus on their academics. While the minimum grade point average (GPA) for potential members varies by chapter within NPHC, the other three governing councils require a minimum GPA of 2.5 for any students wishing to join one of their sororities or fraternities. The weighted GPA for all Greek students for Spring 2008 was 3.461 according to the Monarch University website.

Sisterhood. Greek letter organizations are known for the dynamic of sisterhood and brotherhood they create and present themselves through such language. One scholar stated, "Sororities structure and formalize bonds among women, institutionalizing women's friendships and legitimizing close and caring relationships between women. As a result, they encourage a certain solidarity among their members" (Handler, 1995, p. 238). Several women who joined Theta Nu Xi were looking for that sisterhood. All of the sisters I interviewed talked about the sense of belonging and support they felt with their sisters and the lifelong friendships that they formed through the sorority. A sister shared with me:

I think that as a sorority, you go beyond knowing that person in a business setting. You find out about these people on all different levels, and you want to know about them beyond the things that you're currently doing, and they become a part of our life. And I think that it's much more effective as a sorority than as a student organization

because it's a more powerful and more cohesive group of women. And I think, especially Theta Nu Xi, it's a life-long relationship. It doesn't end after graduation. One sister even expressed surprise at how deeply the sense of sisterhood developed for her:

The biggest part of the sorority for me now is the sisterhood...and the friendships that I've made...Even though I told myself that, oh yeah, this will be great or whatever, I still kept thinking well you know I have my own group of friends and so that was still my safety net. And I didn't really think that I would get all that close to these girls just because I was thinking of it more as like a club or an organization. But it really has become a sisterhood...So I would say that the primary thing with the sorority that touches my life the most is the sisterhood.

Many of the women expressed satisfaction in knowing that their sorority sisters would be there for them during good and bad times, providing support and encouragement along the way. Greater elaboration on sisterhood interactions within Theta Nu Xi is provided in the thematic findings under activities.

Network. The large network of alumnae/i created by GLOs brings to mind an instant connection between strangers and access to people in powerful positions because of that connection. Some sisters I interviewed were looking for a network of women when they joined the sorority, while other sisters seemed to discover this aspect of sorority involvement. The newness of Theta Nu Xi compared to much older GLOs means that there are significantly fewer elders who have aged into positions of power and are available to mentor younger members, so this aspect of the network concept did not clearly emerge in my research. The women I interviewed were aware and appreciative of a larger network beyond

their chapter, which served as a resource for education, support, and socialization. The instant connection was definitely there. One sister stated, “If you know that someone’s a sister, it’s just an open door for anything that you would like to do.” Another sister commented, “If I know that somebody’s in the sorority, I can go up to them, immediately we have a bond, and it kind of sets the stage for where we go from here.” This sister associated that connection with the core values of the sorority:

Just the knowledge of being tied to something that's so great would allow that person to just welcome you because they understand that you share a set of core values that they also identify with. And that experience and that network is just, it's amazing.

The sisters stay connected through a national listserv and topical listservs, which they use to help educate each other about various issues such as breast cancer awareness or a recent social injustice. Sisters might also ask for various kinds of support, from financial pledges or rallying from the sidelines if they are running a marathon to emotional encouragement if they are having a bad week at work. The social aspect of networking among sisters was the most prevalent and included being able to travel to a city in another part of the country where a sister lives or where there is a sorority chapter and asking, without hesitation, for a place to sleep and someone to show them around. Being able to have an instant group of friends beyond college also plays into the social aspect of the sorority’s network:

I feel like I have a base wherever I go – sort of a foundation. If you take for example just relocating, I know I sort of chose certain cities where I'd want to live based on where chapters are, and I've seen other sisters do that, too.

One sister was hoping to gain more mentorship from older women than she received and indicated that is lacking as an aspect of networking within the sorority.

Chapter size. The size of chapters varies greatly from one governing council to another. According to the Monarch University website, Panhellenic sororities tend to be the GLOs with the largest membership, averaging 124 members per chapter in Fall 2007. IFC fraternities are not known for small chapter sizes either, averaging 62 members in each of their organizations. Significantly smaller is NPHC, averaging only 15 members per chapter. Although not the same, several study participants felt a kinship to NPHC organizations with regard to Theta Nu Xi's small size and similar recruitment process. The sororities and fraternities in the governing council to which Theta Nu Xi belongs average eight members per chapter, and the national undergraduate chapter size of Theta Nu Xi averages 10 members. Although Theta Nu Xi has certain similarities to traditional GLOs, there are definite differences as well.

Differences

Theta Nu Xi is inherently different from traditional GLOs in many ways, including member demographics, an emphasis on multiculturalism, a lack of legacy, the sorority as a romantic heterosexual resource, and even certain rules that must be followed.

Member demographics. As discussed in Chapter One, Astin (1993) found that members of predominantly White GLOs tended to be politically conservative, of Protestant faith, from an affluent family, and White. Membership in these organizations also presented a negative association with discussing racial or ethnic issues and reduced chances of social activism. Challenges facing GLOs include lack of diversity, sponsoring racist and sexist

activities, hazing, and alcohol and substance abuse (Whipple, 1998; Winston et al., 1987). In commenting on the lack of diversity, one member of Theta Nu Xi described it as a “huge racial divide within the Greek system.” National demographics of Theta Nu Xi membership, discussed in detail below, are drastically different from the images portrayed in the literature with regard to racial or ethnic background, religion, and political views. Theta Nu Xi’s founders were thoughtful when writing the sorority’s mission statement to include being a sisterhood across different backgrounds and lifestyles. One sister commented, “I feel like that it was pretty progressive for its time. For example, there is the phrase lifestyles. It’s clearly written in there and it’s about LGBT sisters...They [also] took into account class.” The chapter of Theta Nu Xi that I researched definitely has members from different socioeconomic backgrounds. This also emerged as a topic of discussion for members based on the women I interviewed in 2001 and in 2007.

Multicultural focus. Multiculturalism is a unique ideal that forms the foundation of Theta Nu Xi. According to the sorority’s national website (“Theta Nu Xi homepage”),

While other Greek organizations are and continue to grow more diverse, our organization explicitly seeks members with multicultural ideals and interests; we seek to use our sorority as a vehicle to educate the surrounding campus and community on issues of diversity. We recognize that diversity is not limited to race, and we are proud to say we have achieved a sisterhood which is quite diverse with respect to not only race, but religious heritage, geographic origin, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, nationality, political ideology, and even choice of major and career.

The website goes on to explain, “Ultimately, multiculturalism is the belief that there is inherent value in discovering, understanding, and appreciating all the ways in which people are different from each other” (“Theta Nu Xi homepage”).

Lack of legacy. Because Theta Nu Xi is such a young organization, there is a lack of legacy compared to traditional GLOs that have existed for 50 or 100 years or more, which impacts the sorority negatively in several ways. Elders within a family are not able to pass down knowledge and excitement about the sorority because it did not exist when they were in college. Young women going off to college are not yet able to hear stories by their mothers and aunts about the activities they did within the sorority nor do they have opportunities to meet sorority sisters of family members and observe close yet diverse sisterhood interactions. Interestingly, none of the women I interviewed talked about coming from families with any strong Greek tradition. When the subject did arise, it was in the context of not having that tradition. One sister stated, “My father and my mother are not Greek. I do have an uncle who’s an Alpha, and so he has a lot of pride about that. But other than that, we’re not really a Greek, heavily Greek family,” and another sister explained, “I’m an immigrant and so obviously my parents have no history in terms of sororities, either.” One woman I interviewed said that neither of her parents went to college, so they had no opportunity to join a GLO and pass along such a legacy. The lack of knowledge about GLOs in general and Theta Nu Xi specifically means that the sorority has to spend extra time and energy during membership recruitment focused on general education about Theta Nu Xi as an organization as well as how they differ from the negative stereotypes they each held prior to joining the sorority. The youthfulness of the organization and lack of legacy also means

the sisterhood network is small and most members are young professionals still trying to establish themselves. In discussing the need for alumnae to remain active dues-paying members in order for the organization to keep running, one sister who served on the sorority's national board noted,

So every dollar helps and all that kind of stuff, and we don't have any kind of endowment or somebody who's going to come along and make a big donation just out of the kindness of their heart. We're just not at that point yet.

The perception by sorority members and Greek life administrators is that membership dues are lower than traditional GLOs, possibly in order to make the sorority accessible to women of different socioeconomic backgrounds or because their insurance costs and smaller size require reduced financial outlay. According to the Monarch University website, annual dues for IFC fraternities range from \$600 to \$1000 with an average of \$800, but most of these fraternities have designated campus housing, which may increase their dues. Annual dues for Panhellenic sororities range from \$420 to \$900, averaging \$639. NPHC sororities and fraternities pay annual dues ranging from \$200 to \$400, while organizations in the broader governing council to which Theta Nu Xi belongs have annual dues ranging from \$150 to \$300. There may also be one-time fees associated with new members joining a GLO, and those amounts will vary depending on the organization. Providing her perspective on dues, one sister explained,

I think that when I see women who are in other sororities, sometimes it's a privilege that can be gained by class. The fact that they can afford to be in it is- says a lot. But I think Theta Nu Xi's really good about that. Like the dues are, from what I

understand, are much lower, and if you can't afford it right away, there's payment plans. And it's not even like a set, there's not like [a] standing payment plan – you give when you can.

The financial burden created for this young organization wanting to be more accessible than traditional GLOs limits the amount of money chapters have to facilitate programs, and a significant amount of funds at the national level covers the cost of requisite insurance.

Romantic heterosexual resource. Theta Nu Xi does not appear to participate in the inter-Greek dynamics that often pair sororities and fraternities together in social settings. Analyzing sororities as a gender strategy based on a case study of one nationally-recognized predominantly White sorority, Handler (1995) discusses how sororities structure relationships between women and men, stating, “On both the individual and group levels, men are a focal point of sororal life” (p. 244). She goes on to explain how pledges in the sorority she studied were assigned “big brothers” who belonged to one or more fraternity and described weekly mixers between one sorority and one fraternity that rotated between most of the GLOs as an institution of Greek life. “Mixers are an avenue of access to both alcohol and fraternity members....[and] are open only to the fraternity and sorority involved” (Handler, 1995, p. 244), creating a dating scene for sorority women that is dominated by members of predominantly White fraternities and heterosexuality. Berkowitz and Padavic (1999) also found evidence of White sororities encouraging heterosexual romantic pairings through informal parties (mixers) and other aspects of social life centering around men, emphasizing what they call “getting a man.” Their ethnographic study, however, indicated that Black sororities do not concentrate on social activities encouraging romantic pairings,

but rather the activities of these sororities focus more on community service and careers (“getting ahead”). Although Black and White sororities may be functionally different, Kimbrough (2003) points out that there are intentional pairings between Black sororities and fraternities through brother-sister bonds in one instance and a constitutional brother-sister alliance in another, and the generally recognized first collegiate Black sorority and fraternity are connected under a “First Family” motto. There is no evidence through my personal experience or research indicating that Theta Nu Xi pairs with any fraternity as a romantic heterosexual resource or that their social activities “promotes and structures relationships between women and men” (Handler, 1995, p. 238).

Rules of behavior. An unexpected difference found in this study between Theta Nu Xi and traditional GLOs involves an internal sorority policy. Among other activities, the policy in effect prohibits members from drinking alcoholic beverages, smoking, or cursing while wearing their Greek letters or anything identifying them as Theta Nu Xi. In Barry’s (2007) review of scientific literature exploring the impact of Greek membership on alcohol-related beliefs and behaviors, which included 31 articles regarding research from 1984 to 2003, his overall finding was that involvement in GLOs was indeed an indicator for increased alcohol consumption and abuse. Predominantly White GLOs at Monarch University are notorious for sponsoring parties involving alcohol, which are a core component of the campus social scene for many students. Although Black sororities and fraternities may have alcohol at their parties, their social scene does not revolve around alcohol. Native American GLOs, however, do take “a strong stance against the use of alcohol” (Kelly, 2009, p. 133) due to the historical abuse of alcohol within Native American

communities. The implications of Theta Nu Xi not being able to host or attend events containing alcohol are discussed below under structural thematic findings. When asked about the purpose of the rule, this sorority sister's justification made sense despite being different from most other GLOs:

Just to respect your letters. Respect the organization. And for most of the public stuff, like smoking, drinking, it's just to, you know, present a good face to others who see your letters and they see you. I mean you are the representation of the organization at the moment they see you.

The inability to smoke or curse in the sorority's letters was certainly a surprise for me as well as for my colleagues who, I knew, were in traditional GLOs and informally polled about the subject.

The following demographics of Theta Nu Xi provide additional supporting information about very distinct differences of the sorority's membership at the national level compared to the images portrayed in the literature.

National Demographics of Theta Nu Xi

Theta Nu Xi explicitly solicits diverse membership into their sisterhood. The national sorority office conducted surveys in 2001 and 2008 that demonstrate their diversity. The Theta Nu Xi 2001 Membership Diversity Poll included 77 respondents (see Appendix G). Having been founded in 1997, this survey was an attempt to poll the first 75 women who had joined the sorority. A pie chart without percentages indicates their membership was almost equally distributed between White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Multiracial, with the White pie wedge being just slightly larger and a small sliver of the pie reflecting "other."

Backgrounds of sisters represented a variety of religions, including 36% Protestant, 18% Catholic, 15% Mormon, 8% Non-Denominational, 6% Nothing, 4% Hindu, 4% Buddhist, 3% Jewish, 3% Muslim, and 3% Other. Many sisters in the 2001 survey were bilingual or multilingual, speaking 20 languages ranging from Thai, Haitian French Creole, Farsi (Iran), Pushto (Afghanistan), and Gujarati (India). The 2001 survey also presented information on the percentage of members with ancestors from various world regions and the academic areas of respondents.

Theta Nu Xi conducted another demographic survey of their members in 2008, asking a greater variety of questions and allowing more response categories (see Appendix H). As shown in Figure 1, the racial or ethnic representation of the membership still reflects significant diversity, with the two largest percentages of any one ethnicity being African/African-American at 28.7% and Caucasian at 24.5%. These percentages are based on 310 responses, and this particular question allowed for multiple responses from a single individual. The response rate is not provided, but more than 600 women had joined Theta Nu Xi by Fall 2007 according to two alumnae I interviewed. Religious diversity still exists within the membership with additional categories such as Baha'i and Wiccan/Pagan/Druid included, although the three largest categories are Non-Denominational Christian 28.6%, Roman Catholic Christian 20.1%, and Protestant Christian 11.2%. According to Figure 2 and based on 263 responses, the political ideology of members is 61% Liberal, 14% Very Liberal, and only 10% Conservative. These demographics already drastically counter the predominantly Protestant and conservative backgrounds of White GLOs presented in the literature.

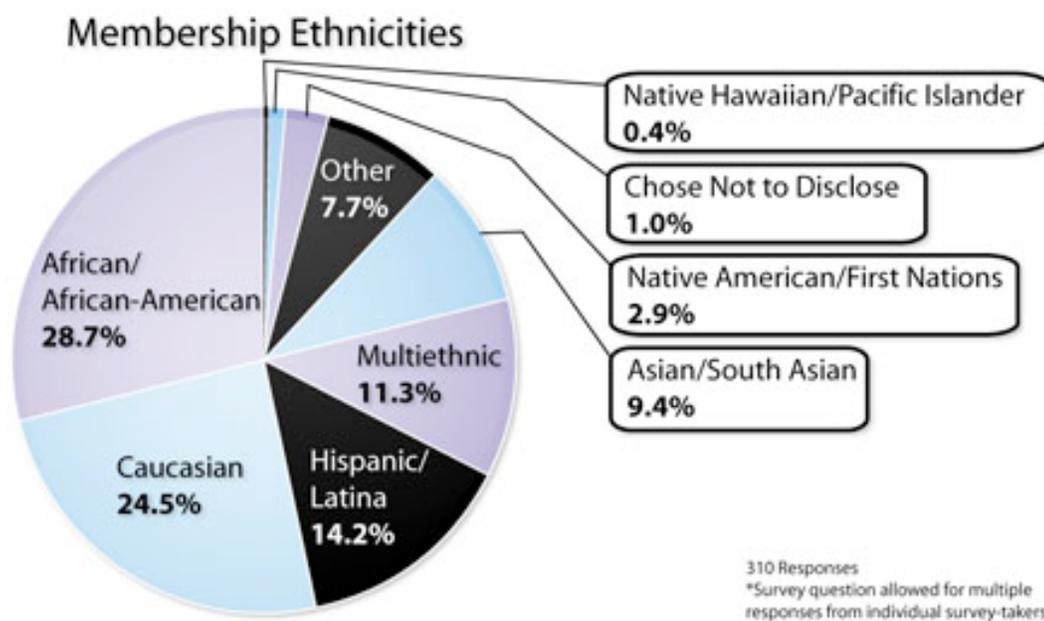


Figure 1. Theta Nu Xi 2008 National Membership Ethnicities.

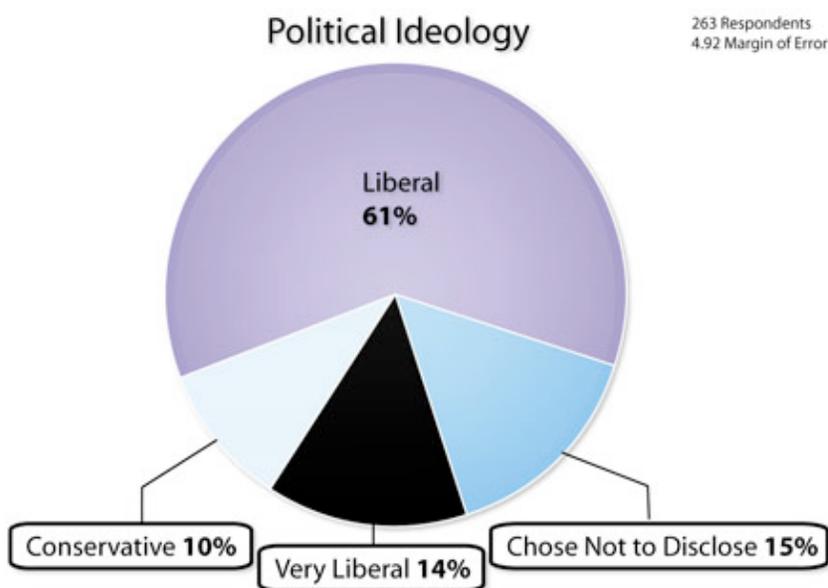


Figure 2. Theta Nu Xi 2008 National Membership Political Ideology.

Continuing to emphasize the diversity of Theta Nu Xi, out of 267 responses about half (47%) of the membership speak only one language while 39% speak two languages, 10% speak three languages, and 4% speak more than three languages, with 23 different languages represented. Sexual identity was a new question included in the 2008 survey, with 89.8% identifying as Heterosexual, 4.5% as Bisexual, 3.0% Lesbian, 1.5% Questioning, and 1.1% choosing not to disclose. Also asked on this survey was gender expression, and the 263 respondents indicated 99% Female, 0.4% Gender Queer, and 1.0% chose not to disclose, with gender queer being defined as “individuals who cannot be categorized as male or female but exist entirely outside the traditional male/female binary as male & female or neither male nor female” (“Theta Nu Xi homepage”). The 2008 survey also presents information on membership ages, membership classification (undergraduate versus graduate and professional), highest degree completed or in progress, a detailed breakdown of majors, and voter registration.

Sorority Overview

Theta Nu Xi was founded on April 11, 1997, when the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill officially recognized the first chapter of this multicultural sorority. The previous spring a female student who identified as biracial was looking for sisterhood, but she did not want to choose between the predominantly White and historically Black sororities accessible to her at the university. Such a choice, she felt, would be to deny part of her heritage. She, therefore, located six other women also interested in a diverse sisterhood, and they worked to establish a new Greek letter organization on campus based on the principle of

multiculturalism. As of January 2010 Theta Nu Xi established undergraduate chapters on 29 campuses across the country with over 890 members, expanding as far west as Utah and Arizona, southward to Texas and Florida, and as far north as Michigan. Seven of those chapters are inactive at this time. Fourteen Graduate, Alumnae, & Professional (GAP) chapters currently exist, although four of them are currently inactive (A. Tomchak, personal communication, January 12, 2010).

According to the national website ("Theta Nu Xi homepage"), Theta Nu Xi's mission statement is "to promote leadership, multiculturalism, and self-improvement through academic excellence, involvement in and service to the campus and community, as well as being living examples of sisterhood across different races, cultures, religions, backgrounds, and lifestyles." The sorority's motto reads: "Sisters of Diversity Together as ONE." Lavender, powder blue ("Carolina blue"), and black are the sorority's colors, and their symbol is the Tiger Swallowtail butterfly. Chapter sizes are intentionally kept small in order to maintain a quality sisterhood with close personal friendships. The average undergraduate chapter size is 10 members with no chapter expected to have more than 30 members.

Scholarship, service, leadership, sisterhood, and multiculturalism are the five tenets guiding sorority activities. The importance of scholastic achievement is reflected in a minimum 2.5 grade point average (GPA) required to join and remain in Theta Nu Xi as well as through annual academic awards for specific chapters that excel. Each sister is required to commit a minimum of six hours of service per month to the campus and community. Each chapter is responsible for raising money for Theta Nu Xi's national philanthropy, a non-profit organization working on similar goals as the sorority, as well as awarding a local community

scholarship to a woman not in Theta Nu Xi who exemplifies the sorority's tenets. Leadership development and the self-confidence that comes along with such opportunities abound given the small chapter sizes. Sisterhood is instilled into each member through the organizational structure and many bonding activities, bringing women from different backgrounds together into a close-knit and meaningful support system. Multiculturalism, a tenet not usually found in predominantly White and historically Black Greek letter organizations, is a unique ideal that forms the foundation of this sorority and is elaborated upon below. Accepting women of different backgrounds and lifestyles, Theta Nu Xi creates a sisterhood that crosses societal boundaries of race, religion, culture, and class with a primary goal to "bring women together who believe in the ideal of multiculturalism and [want] to promote multiculturalism in their everyday lives" ("Theta Nu Xi homepage"). In addition to these five tenets, Theta Nu Xi also has several stated objectives including the promotion of unity among Greek organizations and building self-esteem through sisterhood.

Overview of Participants

Age and Identity

For this study I interviewed 10 women in Theta Nu Xi, all members of the same chapter. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative research typically entails small, purposeful samples within a contextual environment rather than the large, random, and representative sampling associated with quantitative research. Three of the women were interviewed twice – once in 2001 as part of a pilot study and again in 2007 along with the other seven women. Their ages ranged from 18 to 27 years at the time of the interviews. At the time of the 2007 interviews, 5 of the women were current students and 5 were alumnae.

Interviewing alumnae provided a reflective perspective of their undergraduate participation in the sorority. Some of the women interviewed identified as being from a lower socioeconomic background while others acknowledged that they did not need financial aid to attend college. For many of these women who chose to join a sorority emphasizing the multicultural education of oneself and others, defining their own racial or ethnic identity does not fit easily into neat categories, despite the simplified pie chart from the national membership survey (see Figure 1). Some sisters struggled internally with the question, “What am I?” Sometimes these same sisters as well as others struggled with the external question by others, “What are you?” Some women explained their responses with caveats such as not liking the term Caucasian because of its historical roots or not liking the term biracial because the assumption is that one parent is White and the other is African American. Another woman responded that the question was hard to answer: “I don’t feel like White really approaches it because White is so broad and there are so many categories...I usually associate with being from the South...I usually don’t have to say being from a White family.” Some women indicated their specific heritage such as Korean American, Cuban American, or Chinese. See Figure 3 for an overview of the interviewees’ ages and self-described racial or ethnic identity. With no disrespect for how the women I interviewed self-identified racially or ethnically but in an attempt to provide a simplified summary of how the larger society might identify these women, I would say that one is Chinese, one is Black, two are White, two are Asian American, two are Hispanic/Latina, and two are bi- or multiracial. The sorority, however, provided a safe space for the sisters to dialogue about these and many other potentially sensitive issues.

Age in 2001 Interview	Age in 2007 Interview	Self-identified Racial or Ethnic Identity (2001 / 2007)
19	25	hard to answer - "I don't feel like White really approaches it because White is so broad and there are so many categories...I usually associate with being from the South...I usually don't have to say being from a White family." / pretty White, pretty Caucasian
18	25	Korean American / Asian American, East Asian American
21	27	African American and Korean (doesn't use biracial because usually connotes Black and White)
N/A	27	Asian American
N/A	22	Hispanic - half Cuban and half Caucasian American
N/A	21	White (doesn't like the term Caucasian)
N/A	21	Cuban American - father Cuban, mother Caucasian from USA
N/A	21	Chinese (an immigrant)
N/A	21	mixed or biracial - mother White, father African American
N/A	27	African American

Figure 3. Age and Self-identified Racial/Ethnic Identity of Interviewees

Why Join a Sorority

I was fascinated by the similarity of their responses as to whether or not they were looking to join a sorority, their reasoning, and why they were attracted to Theta Nu Xi. The sisters interviewed consistently said they would not have joined a sorority had they not joined Theta Nu Xi, as indicated by the following quotes: “I *never* would have imagined myself being in a sorority,” “I came to school thinking, oh, there’s no way I’m going to join a sorority,” and “Other sororities weren’t an option for me. If Theta Nu Xi were not here at [Monarch University], I wouldn’t have joined a sorority at all.” See Figure 4 for an overview of the interviewees’ thoughts about whether or not they were looking to join a sorority. See Figure 5 for a flyer announcing upcoming Interest Meetings and how they used this internal knowledge to potentially attract new members.

Two sisters indicated that they were interested in the sisterhood but did not want to choose between the Black or White sororities on campus. Several interviewees indicated that this topic was discussed often among sisters and that there was consensus beyond the women I interviewed. Reasons often included negative stereotypes associated with traditionally White sororities, and historically Black sororities were excluded from consideration due to stories of hazing or not feeling like they would fit in. A sister stated, “I thought that from what my preconceived notions of sororities were at the time, I didn’t think it really fit what I was looking for...I don’t think the existing ones out there are really for me.” One of the sisters interested in sisterhood had the following to say:

I had all these typical stereoty- like, stereotypical ideas of what it meant to be in a sorority. Being kind of like the teeny bopper, being like the girl who partied a lot and things like that...and then I had heard enough truth and rumors of what the Black sororities did that I knew that I was not going to be doing that. That process was not going to be for me...I mean, the fact of the matter is they do haze. The elements of how hard that goes depends on the university, but any type of specific hazing I am completely against in any form whatsoever because I think it’s completely antithetical to the idea of forming a sisterhood to have hazed in the process of joining, so I refused to take part in any of that, so I did not look much further.

She went on to state that Theta Nu Xi does not haze, “We have a very strict anti-hazing process, and we actually very much so adhere to that.” See Figure 6 for an overview of the interviewees’ reasons for not joining a different sorority.

Was Looking to Join a Sorority (2001 / 2007)
never - "My situation is a little different from some people because I don't prefer sororities in general. I <i>never</i> would have imagined myself being in a sorority." / "I didn't fit in [at Monarch University]. I didn't feel comfortable, and I particularly didn't want to be a part of a sorority."
no way - "I came to school thinking, oh, there's no way I'm going to join a sorority." / "Originally as a freshman, I wasn't drawn to sororities at all."
not sorority type - "My sisters would agree that they initially felt like they weren't the sorority type, and I totally feel the same. Sororities just didn't appeal to me." / "I think I would have been fine not joining any sorority. I wasn't really looking as a freshman."
no interest - "When I came to school I wasn't really thinking that the soror- a sorority was really my thing."
never liked idea - "I never really like the idea of a sorority. I definitely didn't think that I would join a typical sorority if I did."
only Theta Nu Xi, no other (older sister in Theta Nu Xi) - "I wasn't going to join any other sorority because I knew that they didn't fit."
never thought she'd join - "I never really thought that I was going to join a sorority ever."
other sororities not an option - "Other sororities weren't an option for me. If Theta Nu Xi were not here at [Monarch University], I wouldn't have joined a sorority at all."
wanted sisterhood but not drawn to White or Black sororities - "While I wanted the sisterhood, I knew that [the stereotypical ideas of what it meant to be in a sorority] wasn't what I wanted."
wanted sisterhood but struggling between White or Black sororities - "When I was deciding that I wanted to be part of a fraternal organization, I looked at what we had on campus and we had two options, which were very different from each other...and it was a tough decision, and I didn't know what to do."

Figure 4. Was Looking to Join a Sorority

Don't think Sororities are your "thing"?



Interest Meetings

*Mon, 10/30, East Bldg 105
8pm*

*Wed, 11/1, Sociology 124
9pm*

Neither did we.

Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority, Inc.

Figure 5. Sorority Interest Meeting Flyer A

Why Not Join Another Greek Letter Organization
doesn't agree with the exclusion of people or the stereotype generated by it - "They don't seem to have, like, a goal that they work towards. It seems like they're just this unifying body, and what do they do, they sit around and drink. You know, there's like this stereotype."
"The historically Black sororities were never even - I didn't ever consider an option for me...I just didn't feel like...like I would belong or that I would fit in, and I would just stick out like a sore thumb...And then the historically White sororities or traditionally White sororities, um, I just didn't think that I was the quote unquote sorority girl type."
briefly considered joining an NPHC sorority, but it just didn't appeal to her - "Because I don't really like cliques."
"I thought that from what my preconceived notions of sororities were at the time, I didn't think it really fit what I was looking for...I don't think the existing ones out there are really for me."
"When I first came to [Monarch], I thought that, you know, you have that stigma about sororities - they're all social. You know, it's very much of a ditzzy thing. I don't know - that's, that's just the impression that I always got from them."
"I really don't feel like I merge very well culturally with any of the Panhellenic sororities...I feel it's quite stifling....And it definitely works for a lot of people, but I know that I don't feel accepted in that....But that's probably more of an issue of socioeconomic, um, I don't know, identity rather than like racial."
"I just um didn't, the stereotypes associated with sororities were not something that I considered myself, that I wanted to be a part of."
"I wasn't interested in joining other sororities just because to me, I never really had known what sororities were. I'm an immigrant and you know, so obviously my parents have no history in terms of sororities either. So, I just, I wasn't really interested....I think I just understood it was a week of social stuff and basically people judge you based on just a few minutes of interaction and decide whether you'll be in their sorority, and that, you know, and for other reasons too, because they're really huge and, and dues are just so expensive."
"I had all these typical stereoty- like, stereotypical ideas of what it meant to be in a sorority. Being kind of like the teeny bopper, being like the girl who partied a lot and things like that...and then I had heard enough like truth and rumors of what the Black sororities did that I knew that I was not going to be doing that. That process was not going to be for me, and so those groups were not going to be something that I was going to be looking into in any real depth."
felt like was having to choose between the predominantly White sororities and the historically Black sororities

Figure 6. Why Not Join Another Sorority

Visual diversity of Theta Nu Xi's membership providing initial interest was a recurring theme that drew many of these women in to learn more about the sorority and eventually join. Several sisters shared, "I was drawn by that poster, and I didn't know that there was anything else out there other than White or Black," "I saw a flyer on campus for Theta Nu Xi and I saw various faces on there, different races, and it really sparked my

interest,” and “I was really impressed with the diversity, just physical appearance, like it just *looks* diverse.” See Figure 7 for an overview of the interviewees’ reasons for joining Theta Nu Xi, and see Figure 8 for a flyer promoting an interest meeting for the sorority similar to the one previously described. See Appendix I for a Theta Nu Xi newsletter (“Theta Nu Xi homepage”) portraying the visual diversity of the sisterhood, particularly in photographs from their 2009 national convention.

Why Join Theta Nu Xi
"I saw this sign and I saw these women, and they were of all different races and cultures and they talked about the five tenets...I was kind of looking for a group that wasn't going to look at me - wasn't going to look at how I looked. I mean, I didn't want a materialistic group. Didn't care about how I looked, just cared about who I was and what I wanted to do. So I was like, I'll try it out."
"I was drawn by that poster, and I didn't know that there was anything else out there other than White or Black. And then being at [Monarch] and seeing as a freshman how the social structure at [Monarch] was very Greek - was very heavy in the Greek system, it was intriguing to me not only that I could have that social network, but also that I could start something to create that social network for people to follow."
"I was really impressed with the diversity, just physical appearance, like it just <i>looks</i> diverse...It was the initial not wanting to but then seeing it, and seeing the closeness of the sisters...they made me feel really welcome."
"And in my sophomore year I'd seen posters about Theta Nu Xi, and that really intrigued me. And I think a lot of it was the visual, like, presentation of the members that were in it at the time. And it just looked very appealing to me that such different people, at least from appearance-wise, can be together and get along and form really strong friendships and sisterhood. So that's what attracted me at first, when I saw the poster...And the things they were saying really mirrored my own beliefs about what, um, how people should interact and not self-segregating and that kind of thing."
"We went to the first meeting, and um, really just the people. I loved the mission...I liked their relationship with each other. I liked how, how close they were, and not on such a superficial level."
"I hate to act like I limited it down because [that] wasn't really the case...I try not to, you know, do things that my sister did, but I mean, that's, it definitely played a role in it. But I, but I knew all the sisters. Like I met them through [my biological sister], and so I met them and I loved them....and of course, multiculturalism is something that's important to me."
"grappling with an identity crisis of being Hispanic or not Hispanic enough - "I ran into the Theta Nu Xi members at the [dining hall]. They were handing out flyers, and so first of all the multicultural stuck out at me...And so multicultural grabbed me but then, I guess, the most important thing that made me want to join Theta Nu Xi was the people in it, and just they seemed like very dynamic, very exciting women, and so I was like hum let me find out more about this organization."
"So I decided to join a multicultural sorority because...it is very small and tight knit and I, so basically for me the choice was between Theta Nu Xi or no sorority at all."
"Then later on through researching and finding Theta Nu Xi, the fact that they were multicultural, and so the fact that I wouldn't have to be like worrying whether I was like being too White or too Black because I am biracial was really important to me."
"And so I saw a flyer on campus for Theta Nu Xi and I saw various faces on there, different races, and it really sparked my interest, and that's what led me to investigate if it was on campus, how it could come to campus, and what I needed to do to be involved in something like that. Basically, just, I walked by a bench and I saw the flyer and I was like, oh wow, this sort of solves my issue."

Figure 7. Reasons for Joining Theta Nu Xi

Want to be a part of a **Diverse Sisterhood?**



Join ΘNE!

Find out more about

Theta Nu Xi

Multicultural Sorority, Inc.

Wednesday August 27th

Thursday August 28th

101 Campus Bldg – 8 PM

thetanuxi@monarch.edu

www.thetanuxi.org

Figure 8. Sorority Interest Meeting Flyer B

Summary

After providing a profile of the university that is home to the sorority chapter I studied, I took you, the reader, on a brief journey of a semester in the life of Theta Nu Xi. I was able to share with you the experience of attending a membership interest meeting and participating in a program addressing gender issues. The sorority profile provided a sense of how this multicultural sorority is similar to and different from traditional Greek letter organizations along with details about the sorority itself. The overview of participants gave insight to the women I interviewed about their age and racial or ethnic identity as well as information about their initial interest in joining a sorority and why they chose to join Theta Nu Xi rather than another sorority. This foundation sets the stage for the next chapter, which will present the findings of my research.

CHAPTER FIVE – FINDINGS

*I feel like the racial barriers are really getting broken down,
especially between women.*

- Theta Nu Xi Sister

Given my concerns about the future of human relations and desire to explore opportunities for respectful interactions among diverse individuals, I chose to study one chapter of Theta Nu Xi for this research given the use of “multicultural” in the organization’s name and the emphasis in the organization’s mission statement to promote multiculturalism. From the internal perspective of its members, this study explored how they defined and addressed intercultural issues on their college campus. Specifically, one overarching question guided this research: what describes the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus? Three areas were explored – identity, structure, and activities – to support this overarching research question. Thematic findings are presented in these three categories, followed by two themes identified through open coding. If used, any names of individuals, campus organizations, and colleges or universities were given pseudonyms to protect their identities. I also used the term “sister” and “alumna” interchangeably to refer to the alumnae interviewed in 2007, depending on the situation and emphasis I desired to elicit.

Thematic Findings

Based on the overarching research question of what describes the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus, thematic findings are presented in three distinct areas that were explored during the study: identity, structure, and activities.

Examining the personal and group identity as well as identification with the core mission of the sorority gave insight into the level of significance these identities played in the members' lives. Themes emerged around individualized identity, how members internalized the sorority's mission statement, their concept of themselves as a woman, and possible individual and group identity as feminist. Surveying the structure of the organization provided a systematic perspective of how the sorority functions organizationally and how this influences the nature of the roles played by Theta Nu Xi. Structural decisions such as being a sorority rather than a student organization, the overarching Greek social structure at Monarch University, size of the sorority and governing council, and the creation of a safe space for open yet critical dialogue have implications on the functionality of the sorority. The sorority's activities provided supporting evidence of how the sorority spends its time promoting multiculturalism among members and to the larger campus community. Themes emerged regarding formal activities conducted by the sorority for non-members, informal interactions with people and groups outside of the sorority, activities planned internally for the sorority members, and informal interactions among the sisters of Theta Nu Xi.

Identity

Despite many negative stereotypes the women interviewed held about traditional sororities and the tendency for many sisters to think they would never join a sorority, these women allowed themselves to further explore the multicultural sorority, at which point they began the development of their identity with the sorority and its mission. Individualized identity became apparent through feeling accepted as an individual, struggling with their personal identities, and development of their own identity. Internalization of the sorority's

mission was demonstrated by members having a sense of larger purpose with being in Theta Nu Xi, broadening their definition of multiculturalism, expressing a desire to learn about differences, and becoming more accepting of others who are different from themselves. The last theme to emerge around identity was their concept of themselves as a woman and exploring the possible individual and group identity as feminist.

Individualized Identity

A key component of identity found in the data analysis is the individualized aspect taken on in the sisters' views of themselves and others. Part of what drew many of the women to the sorority is being immediately accepted as an individual, with all of their differences and potential contributions respected and valued. As sisters struggled with their own personal identities, the sorority was there to support them through the process. Development of their own identity was obvious in many of their comments. According to the sisters I interviewed, they joined Theta Nu Xi because they were attracted to the concept of multiculturalism for one reason or another. One sister said rather matter-of-factly, "In general people wouldn't find it appealing if they didn't want to spend all their time promoting something that's, you know, talking about diversity and multiculturalism." Individualized identity emerged through acceptance of the sister, struggles sisters had with personal identities, and the sisters' apparent identity development.

Acceptance. Several sisters were further drawn to Theta Nu Xi because of the acceptance they felt when first meeting members of the sorority. Other sisters expressed embracing the acceptance they felt as part of the sisterhood within their chapter and by sisters in other chapters. One of the sisters who founded the Monarch University chapter described

the warmth she felt upon visiting another chapter of Theta Nu Xi when tentatively contemplating joining the sorority:

It was the initial not wanting to but then seeing it, and seeing the closeness of the sisters. Because being there at [another university's chapter event], they made me feel really welcome. They didn't know me. And they were just like, oh hi, you're from [Monarch], you guys are the Monarch girls. And they were just really sweet and just – I was just like I would love to know these girls on a more personal level and I like what they stand for.

Feeling as if she did not fit in at Monarch University during her first semester, another sister shared her desires and reactions about attending a sorority interest meeting:

I was kind of looking for a group that wasn't going to look at me – wasn't going to look at how I looked. I mean, I didn't want a materialistic group. Didn't care about how I looked, just cared about who I was and what I wanted to do. So I was like, I'll try it out. Maybe it's going to be expensive, but I'll try it out. And then I went there and I just loved the people. Like how accepting they are. That was my biggest thing – was the acceptance. They were so accepting of everyone, and they were so accepting of me. And it wasn't like, you're not wearing the right clothes, obviously you're just not, you know, you're not the image of our sorority. I mean they just looked at me, and they were like, you know, we're so interested in you. What do you have to share? And everything after that was just like, wow, we're so excited, we think you have such a perspective or we, you know, we're really excited about you

joining the sorority. It wasn't about this whole, I don't know, you know, if she's right or not. It was just totally accepting, and that's really the bottom line, I think.

Once in the sorority, many women recognized the deep level of acceptance by the sisters in their chapter, a space where they could relax and be themselves. One sister stated, "Even though they realize that I'm totally different, they still respect and love me for my differences." Another woman described her sisters as "people who really care about my life, you know, as opposed to thinking it's so out there...I can bring anything to them, and they don't think it's weird...I just feel like they actually care, they really care." In this quote the sister expands acceptance from differences in personality and ideas to include moods:

I think [being in the sorority] means to me the chance to have sisters who will accept me. Like, no matter what my mood is – I can be happy or I can be pissed off, and the fact of the matter is they'll always be there for me if I need something.

Three sisters framed the acceptance they felt in the context of personal identities when one said, "I feel like, especially in the sorority, you can appreciate the individual and you're not looking to categorize them, and so, like appreciating their differences, not in a demographic sense but as, but as an individual." The second sister described

A very accepting, universal sisterhood...I don't feel like I'm carrying the banner for all biracial people, or even they don't expect, the ladies don't expect me to explain all things African American or all things Asian and, I mean, I've never had to really explain a whole lot about myself to them. So maybe if we were talking about another organization, maybe I'd have to.

The third sister illustrated how acceptance extended into sorority operations when she connected it with her socioeconomic status:

And the first time it was just like, well, they're going to think that I can't pay, you know...[that] I just don't want to pay my dues, but really I just *can't* do it – it's hard for me. And they were just so accepting about, just about, like, well we'll work out this [payment] plan.

Another sister expressed the reciprocity of acceptance she felt:

I feel like I know that they're going to accept me, and I don't have to- they know that I'm going to accept them, so it's like, it's building personal relationships without having to worry about, um I don't know, social expectations.

In getting to know a new member of the sorority over lunch through an in-depth conversation about their families and religious beliefs, a sister about to graduate described the manner in which acceptance develops into a deeper understanding:

I mean it was just like us sharing of, you know, like our experiences with no judgment on either side. And I don't mean that an authentic multicultural conversation should not have judgment, but I don't think that she really judged me, and she just, we just learned more about each other.

One sister reflected on where the acceptance might come from:

I don't know if it's as simple as in the mission statement or if it's, I guess, a sharing about people involved. Experience during the pledge process. The things that they have learned, you know, not only what the founders wanted for this organization, but just the general bonding that comes initially through the pledge process...And I think

just in the title, multicultural in part of the name, um, you're saying a lot. You're saying that we want you because you're different or regardless of whether or not you feel like your, if you, even if you don't feel like you have any differences, you do and we want you.

Summarizing the very personal nature of acceptance within the chapter sisterhood, one sister observed, "I feel like I have people that I can be around...that accept me for all of who I think that I am."

Several women I interviewed also expressed appreciation for the feeling of acceptance by sisters from other chapters when encountering them individually or at national gatherings, which seems to go beyond the concept of networking discussed in the previous chapter. One sister described it this way:

I can go somewhere, you know, on the other side of the country and meet sisters and be like, Hi, I'm Mary! You know, and just hug them and everything's okay because you might be different but you know that they're going to respect you for who you are, that I'm respecting them for who they are.

Another sister explained how she felt when she attended the sorority's national convention:

And then when I go to a national convention and meet all of those women, and it's just a natural, like, we love you and you're special and you love the same things I love and that kind of thing...[It's a level of acceptance] about every facet of your life, not just part of it.

A third sister shared the dynamic associated with meeting other members of Theta Nu Xi whom she previously had not known and the sense of being embraced by a total stranger:

“It’s like, I don’t even know you guys, and you guys make me feel so welcome...They’re still strangers but they won’t give you a hard time...you don’t have to pass any sort of test to be good enough.”

Enhancing the importance of acceptance felt within the sorority, sisters shared stories of limitations to feeling accepted by others outside the sorority. One sister observed the stipulations she experienced which influenced her level of acceptance by other students on campus and hint at the campus culture:

I’ve been able to use the fact that I’m a minority, even though I don’t really consider myself that, to relate to other people. I find it much easier to relate to other cultural groups as a minority than I do as Caucasian. It’s weird...It’s a lot easier for me to say, well, I’m Hispanic and this is how I’ve dealt with certain issues. And that makes me automatically, I feel like, more accepted by other cultural groups...Because I identified as Hispanic. But it’s odd to me. It shouldn’t be that way. I feel like I shouldn’t have to do that. If I don’t want to mention that I, you know, not that I’m not proud of it, if I don’t want to mention that I’m Hispanic, I shouldn’t have to. And sometimes I feel like I do, just to make people feel more comfortable. Because then otherwise they’re like, why is she so interested in these issues, I don’t understand. They don’t get it.

These limitations and feelings of not being accepted often occurred during the first year of college and were very judgmental. The limitations on acceptance ranged from personality differences to identity to personal values. One sister recalled,

For some reason I remember freshman year...as she was introducing me to her mom, she said, oh this is Susan and she's different. Meaning like, for some reason I wasn't clicking with that group. You know, and I was just like, OK. I was like OK, well, no like – I don't know if, it, it had to do more with just not matching personality-wise, I think, but I just remember that.

Taking an interdisciplinary course focusing on diversity, another sister relayed the typical reaction to her by students in that class when she commented,

Just kind of like people getting – looking down on me for one because I'm poor...Being from Alabama and being White. I felt a lot of people were just like, oh she's just a White girl. And then all the people were like, she's from Alabama, she's got to be stupid.

Another sister, who is White, acknowledged,

[Traditional White sororities] definitely work for a lot of people, but I know that I don't feel accepted in that, and so I can't imagine women of color feeling comfortable...I just know that I did not fit in with them...But um, with regard to Panhellenic organizations, I definitely knew that I did not fit in, so. Which I'm not unhappy about...But that's probably more of an issue of socioeconomic, um, I don't know, identity, rather than like racial. But I feel like socioeconomic plays into the ah, with my cultural identity.

In sharing with them about an alternative service-learning trip during Spring Break focusing on homelessness and poverty, Susan went on to say, "Again, with those same ladies from freshman year...I just had this really wonderful experience, and bringing it back to them,

they were just kind of like, you did *what* for Spring Break? We're going to Daytona!"

Finding a space where one feels accepted may be important during this developmental stage in life, especially given that many of the sisters I interviewed were struggling with their own personal identities.

Struggles. Individualized identity also emerged through struggles sisters had with their personal identities, including race/ethnicity, culture, and class. Six of the women I interviewed felt fairly secure in their racial or ethnic identity, but I am intrigued by the struggles that the other four women experienced. Two women who identified being of Hispanic or Latino descent, both having one White parent and could themselves pass as White, grew up in strong Latino communities. Their struggles with personal identity did not occur until they went away to college. One woman commented on the sudden awareness she felt:

Before I came to Monarch, I never thought much of being Latina. Never. I never thought that it was a big deal because I came from a place that was mostly Cuban. So I came to Monarch, and it was really surprising. Everyone was like, they made it a point to point out the fact that I was Latina...and so I kind of felt, I guess, you know, that makes me different...it didn't hit me until I came here that I was a minority.

The other sister revealed having similar feelings:

When I came to Monarch it was very odd because some people would consider me Hispanic...but then back [home] I was always considered the least Hispanic of my friends, because I'm only half Cuban so it was, I guess, like kind of an identity crisis I was grappling with coming to Monarch, like trying to figure out what I really was.

She went on to elaborate on the internal struggle with which she was dealing around this issue and how she's grown personally and felt more liberated:

I felt kind of guilty coming here. I didn't know whether, like when people asked me what do you consider yourself, whether I tell them, oh, I consider myself Cuban or I consider myself Caucasian....I felt like it was a lose-lose situation because if I describe myself as Cuban and my Cuban friends could be like you're not really Cuban, you know. And then if I describe myself as Caucasian, and my Caucasian friends could be like with a last name like yours there's no way you are Caucasian, OK. So I'm like, well what am I then?....And so now I've realized that I don't have to define myself so clearly. Like I can maybe put it in the context of talking to them more about my experience. And I guess not having to come out with labels so clearly and not feeling guilty for not coming out with labels.

Two women who ultimately identified as White struggled with that particular label, but that personal identity often bled over into their cultural identity. Interestingly, their interviews occurred six years apart, so their involvement in the sorority chapter did not overlap. In describing her racial or ethnic identity, one sister stated,

I would probably say White. I really don't like the term Caucasian...And um, I'm White and that's my race, but my ethnic identity, I mean I definitely say that culturally kind of thing, there's a lot that's going on within the race of the White race. So I feel like there's a lot of different stuff going on, but um...I definitely identify with being Southern. But probably, I mean if you're going international, then I

probably identify mostly with like Italian heritage. Because I mean I'm second generation, um, second generation Italian American.

The other sister observed,

I don't feel like White really approaches it because White is so broad and there are so many categories. So when I usually think about racial and ethnic approach, I usually say I'm from – I usually associate with being from the South and um...I usually don't have to say associated being from a White family.

Having taken a course focusing on diversity, this same woman elaborated on the struggles she encountered during that class regarding her personal identity:

I had a lot of issues with it at first. It was difficult because everyone was like – yeah, I'm Black or I'm Asian or whatever – and I'm like I don't feel like saying I'm White. What group is that? It's like this huge, broad group of people that I'm associating myself with, and I'm also associating with certain stereotypes with that. And I don't – I don't like it, you know. And I'm just kinda like, why can't – why do I have to be White? Why can't I just be like non-colored or something. Just like all colors. I don't know. I just really am hesitant to say that I'm White.

Her personal identity is very much intertwined with coming to terms with her Whiteness as well as acknowledging her southern culture and its stereotypes, and Theta Nu Xi has played a significant role in her growth and development. She explained,

I grew up in backwoods Alabama and went to a public school, and there was no one there of a different color. And it was just really weird, you know. And I'd never thought that people that were different colors – that they were bad, but I had these

certain misconceptions that were just kind of ignorance....Being from Alabama, I am expected to be racist. I am expected to be a White supremacist. I'm expected to be that way, and people look at me and think that I have to be that way and, I think, even people in Alabama, like being from a small town, they expect you to be that way. Expect you not to know anything...And even though I don't agree with the way that people there think and the way that women are oppressed there especially, I mean women are just, you're not allowed, you're not supposed to do anything...Even though I came out of that, I just want to give back to the community because I feel like it's ignorance, a lot of it. And I've come to terms with the fact that these [are] misconceptions about race and class, and I understand it has a lot to do with ignorance. And Theta Nu Xi really breaks down ignorance. It helps people come together as a *group* of people.

These same two women also struggled with adjusting to their college environment, and their personal identities played into those experiences. One woman confided,

When I came to Monarch, there was just so much chaos and like, like cultural crisis, I guess. Because I mean, you get here and you think you have stuff in common with people, because they live in your dorm or they're from your home state or you take classes together or your look like each other or you have whatever. And you find out that none of that is true. And you're like, oh OK, well, we have all these things in common but ah I don't like you. Or we have nothing...like there's nothing, like there's nothing there...there's no connection there. Even though we have all this stuff in common, we have all these shared interests, there's nothing there. And I feel

like – when I got to Monarch that was just, that was just like all of a sudden, I was like, I don't have anything in common with any of these people. And I was like, how am I going to, how am I going to make friends? I don't know, you know what I'm saying like, I don't like any of these people...I mean like, it's not like I have to like everybody. I have to respect everybody – I *do* respect everybody. I feel like I respected everybody that, but um. That said, being in a sorority, I feel like they really, um, they allowed me to appreciate my cultural identity.

The second woman articulated a similar dynamic, although they did not attend Monarch at the same time, having entered the university four years apart:

Monarch was kind of hard in the beginning, but it wasn't hard for the typical ways. I think a lot of people, when they go college, it's hard because they're away from home and they miss their family, you know, and they don't know how to live on their own. And for me, it was hard because I didn't like the people there, I didn't feel comfortable around the people. I didn't miss home or anything, but I was just like really kind of wondering if I had made the right decision in going to Monarch, if it was really that great of a place. I mean, of course it is, it definitely turned out very well for me, but in the beginning it was hard, a little rough right there....And also I had come from a residential high school...So I came into Monarch with a very different sort of background. I think all the freshmen on the campus had kind of all, never lived away from home before, and they were kind of going wild and just being really pretentious and I, I didn't fit in. I didn't feel comfortable, and I particularly didn't want to be a part of a sorority. I was like, that's stupid. Like, why do you need

to buy your friends, you know. It just kind of, to me, sororities sort of epitomized everything that had made me very uncomfortable at Monarch. Like just feeling very left out because of my financial background and my cultural background really.

Having worked at Monarch University for many years, I can attest that socioeconomic status was always the pink elephant in the room – everyone knew it existed as a significant difference on and around campus, but no one wanted to talk about it. Class was seldom included in diversity dialogues. Given this thundering silence within the campus culture, I was very pleased to see that class issues were discussed openly within the sorority, albeit with difficulty at times. One of the sisters above who had difficulty adjusting to Monarch University shared that her parents never went to college and that her family was not financially well off. She went on to say,

Money is really the only uncomfortable issue I have....The only time that I think there would be discussions that might be difficult is when you get around money because...or for me, because I have these stereotypes about people who have money and I know I shouldn't have them. And most people here do have a lot of money, and I have to be really careful and I get uncomfortable because, that's why I want to change that stereotype because I feel uncomfortable when I talk about it because I'm like, this is not right, why am I saying this?

Feeling accepted by and having open conversations with her sorority sisters, however, allowed her to explore such stereotypes and attempt to work through them. A couple of other sorority sisters who identify as being from a higher socioeconomic status provided their perspectives on discussions involving class issues and money. One woman explained,

I think that one of the biggest problems that we have is money – financial differences...I would say that that's probably – economic levels are what divide us the most. It's class issues. And I hate to talk about that. And I don't know if I hate to talk about it, I just hate for that to be what divides us...I don't feel like this should be an issue, we really don't feel like this should separate us so much, but it really does sometimes, you know, like bitter remarks are made sometimes like oh because your parents can afford it, or your father can afford it or something like that. And so there's some bitterness, and I hate when that happens, because it's not what you can say, there's nothing you can say, um, it's true, you know. So, and it's not even that it's so unfair because it is, it's the truth...it's meant to be a little bitter, but it's really hard because you can't deny it...And then I try so hard to like, make that not a barrier, you know, into conversations. We try to relate, but at the end of the day sometimes when people are really offended by something that you've done or something that's said or something, it always comes down to like, yeah, you don't have to worry about that, you know, [when that was not what the original conversation was about at all].

The other sister reflected on the awareness that emerges from such dialogue:

I think one issue that is really difficult to talk about is on money. Like we have people in our sorority from completely different socioeconomic backgrounds...and \$5.00 to them is not the same as \$5.00 to me. So, like there've been some conversations with money that have been kind of heated, and not in the sense of like, oh like why can't you just go bowling but more like why can you not realize, why are

you not taking into account, like you form plans to go bowling or go to the movies, and you have to realize that you're overlooking some things, that like we can't just drop everything and use our money to do that. We need to save it for food or for tuition or whatever. And then it can also be the reverse, stuff like people saying, assuming that just because people like me, like I have parents that can provide for me, that money doesn't mean anything to me...So, I think those can be the most sensitive, but I think we've gotten a lot better in trying to educate ourselves on both aspects, just realizing that just because you have money doesn't mean you're spoiled rich kids. And just because you don't have money doesn't mean you should be ashamed of it or that people shouldn't realize that you work hard for your money.

As sisters struggle with their personal identities in the safe space of the sorority, they continue to develop in other ways.

Identity development. After being attracted to Theta Nu Xi in part because these women were accepted for who they were and finding the safe space to struggle with personal identities, they were able to expand their own identity development. Speaking generally about identity development and not based on a specific theory, the women I interviewed were cognizant of how they viewed themselves, found opportunities to explore their own identity and that of others, and discussed breaking away from stereotypes and essentialized categories. Development of their own identity was obvious in many of their comments. Several women shared the positive view they held of themselves and credited the role their parents played in its development. One woman explained,

My father would say, oh you guys have the best of both worlds. And in, and in that sense he meant African America/Asian...just making me feel good and being empowered and saying, you know, don't worry if people say mean things or whatever, like, you have the best of both worlds.

Another sister stated,

I mean, my mother's always been White, my dad's always been Black, and I've been really lucky that I've never had issues with that. I've seen other people with issues, but for me, my mother's always treated me like an individual, and I am who I am, and so I went into the world thinking I am who I am. It doesn't matter what my skin is.

A third woman derived a positive self-image from her lower socioeconomic background:

My parents have raised me very well. I mean, their issues with money and the things that they have taught me about value and acceptance have really come through in me, and that's made me who I am, and I wouldn't give that up for anything. So that's definitely a strong part of my identity.

The identity development process within the sorority setting allowed students to explore their own identity and that of others. Having just emphasized the importance of acceptance above, one sister eloquently connected that concept to the identity development process:

I think we're all trying just to figure out, you know, who everybody is. And it's really funny because in college, you really don't quite know what you're all about yet. And so it's allowing people to like work with you as it comes together. Like, nobody really hides, but if I decide, you know, I'm gonna go do this tomorrow, they'd be like, oh OK, you know, they'd just take it.

Two women alluded to how the identity development process occurred for them, and the importance of interactions with people different from themselves emerged. Having previously discussed how she was offended when strangers asked about her racial background, one sister went on to remark how it should naturally come out through personal interactions:

I think it's like race and a lot of other things, like religion and sexual orientation, those types of things. When you're with your friends, it'll come up, you know, naturally. Like, I'll be with my friends and I can say, oh I was eating Kimchu and rice with my mom, and they'll say, like, what's Kimchu, and then I'd explain or something. And then it'll just come naturally. It's so much like, when you give that information voluntarily it makes a huge difference.

Unknowingly touching on the concept of intersubjectivity, which will be elaborated upon in the next chapter, another sister explained some of those personal interactions within the sorority:

I feel like the sorority is all different kinds of cultures and all different kinds of people. And I don't think culture is about race. I can be White and in the sorority and be multicultural. Everyone has a culture, I feel like, and you have something to contribute. Me being White, I feel like I have, you know, being White for one thing, being from the South is another thing, being from Alabama, being from a rural area and being poor. I think that really has a good – I feel like I had a lot to contribute to that group. And my place in the sorority, I feel like, is just to communicate things like that. Like, I am – this is who I am, and I talk about it, and we talk, you know, we

laugh about different things, and we talk about our culture, and that's part of my culture, and I bring it up in different situations.

The development of self-identity by two sisters, who both happen to be White, focused on gaining a more positive self-image and a deeper understanding of who they are as individuals. One sister maintained,

[I'm] definitely more confident in my cultural identity...The first thing is that I don't really feel like I understood all the aspects of my culture and what culture means, you know. What culture means to different people and what role that might play in your life and that sort of thing. And I feel like I really understand, I've broadened my sense of what multiculturalism means since I've been in the sorority. Because I mean, people, we're just so different in that...

She went on to say,

Being in the sorority, I feel like they really, um, they allowed me to appreciate my cultural identity...I think if you're not of color then a lot of, then it might be difficult for you to be culturally accepted. Just like if you, you know, if you are of a particular race, then you might have a cultural identity that is different from other people in your race, you know what I mean...But I feel like since I joined the sorority, I was able to accept, you know, well understand/accept what I was versus what being White defined me as. It's really hard, I feel like being in a sorority really helps you- really helped me break down, um, like no longer look at racial identity, like I know that it's part of multiculturalism, but people don't *only* describe themselves as their race. That is just what you appear to be.

Another sister observed,

So, I guess part of me, it really took a while for me to be like, you know what, I am just as good as you guys are if not better, to not, to kind of start to gain my self-confidence. And I think joining the sorority really like gave me the extra self-confidence because I was doing, I was a part of something that, I felt like I was making a difference and I was going out there and really championing for a cause. And the women in the sorority always made me realize that I'm very special and that I'm very unique in that I should have, they really helped fuel my self-confidence, and I think that's something that I really needed because that first year was hard, and it was a lot of hard blows. And the women were just always just, they were so inspiring, and I think that them, through them inspiring me, and then also through the kind words and just sort of the encouragement they gave me, it really, really helped me, pushed me forward. And I think I did pretty well for myself.

Two sisters did not feel that their self-identity changed much if at all, but they did indicate a change in how they viewed other people. One woman said, "I'm just more aware of others' identities and what that means." Another sister explained the insight she gained:

I had no idea about a lot of issues that affect – that I've talked to my Black or African American friends, like a lot of issues that I never thought would affect them, just like how they feel like, well, some of them feel like they can't divorce themselves from their race, like Black is a really – like it's just part of their identity. And for me, I feel like I can, um, kind of like Hispanic or Latino or whatever you want to call me, it's

not necessarily a part of my identity all the time, like I can separate myself from that if it's most convenient to me, and, but it's not the same for them.

Several other sisters shared how they had been able to explore and develop their own identity and their perceptions of others as well as the interrelationship between the two. One sister noted, "I can see myself now more in relation to other people...the similarities that I have with other sisters and of other ethnic backgrounds and differences and what all." Another sister commented,

It has made me more aware of my difference, of the fact that I'm not of – I am an ethnic minority...I'm an immigrant...It has made it more obvious though, just my difference more obvious to me. Like the effect that difference may have...[I feel more aware] of the way that other people perceive my difference.

Development also occurred around one's own racial background as explained by this sister:

I was told once by someone who was very angry by the term Hispanic that there's no Hispania. So, I found that interesting. But really it's never been a big difference for me. Like I haven't, like I said I didn't think I was a minority, so when I came here, I guess, they were like are you Latina or Hispanic? ...Most other cultural groups are just trying to be, um, how do you call it, they're just trying to be politically correct, and so they'll say Latina. And I've heard Latinos correct them and be like, no, I'm Hispanic, I don't use that term...I never had to use that word until I got to college, so, either word. I'm just Cuban, you know. In Miami you distinguish between the Latino groups. You say I'm Venezuelan, I'm Columbian, I'm Cuban, you know.

Another sister described the realization she had about herself and others that then allowed her to begin breaking down stereotypes about others:

Just being able to meet these people of different races except I'd never met them before and realize that they're not, like, this bad – they're not different from me, basically that's more what it was. I'm like, they're not different from me. Like, they're just as different as I am as an individual – that's what makes us different is that we're individuals, not because they're of a different race and culture.

The powerful synopsis of identity development within the sisterhood of women that I interviewed can be found in this insightful comment:

You want to be able to have your individuality and appreciate that but also know that not everyone is going to be the same as you, and that's a good thing...you don't have to sacrifice your individuality or your own belief system by knowing about someone else's. So, I think it's a very ideal way of people getting along, I think, just appreciating differences but not losing your uniqueness.

Finally, several women discussed their development in the context of being able to break away from stereotypes and essentialized categories. One sister explained how her racial or ethnic identity had changed since joining the sorority:

I think it has made me be able to kind of look outside of the traditional Asian stereotypes and reidentify myself beyond the restrictions...I feel that I'm not as restricted in my own beliefs about what I can or cannot be or who I can end up being, you know...So I think that I've kind of broadened my idea of who I, um, have gone beyond the cultural stereotypes.

Specifically referencing stereotypes associated with Greek letter organizations and alluding to a desire to learn about others, another sister declared,

I'm willing to take each person specifically at face value or what that person is individually, not just as a member of their perspective- like respective organizations because it's so much, like they're more than that. And so I guess my ability to not put people in boxes has been enhanced by Theta Nu Xi. Probably more so than anything else but I, of people in Greek organizations because there're just too many stereotypes associated with that label, and so my being in a Greek organization and incorporating that mission statement, I think, has made me more able and willing to want to talk to the person and know who the person is, and not just know what organization they're a part of and leave it at that.

Attempting to break away from stereotypes is not without its challenges, as described by this sister:

I will admit my fault to you – I have a problem with stereotyping White rich people. Snobs, people you see and automatically you're like, oh, she wears heels to class, she's got to be a snob. Or these little girls all dressed up in their little Kate Spade bag and big glasses, perfect outfit, everything is in place, taken care of. But they just look all high and mighty like they can't talk to you, can't look at you. You know, that whole stereotype. And I struggle with it every single day, and I am fighting it with all my might, and it's hard, and it's ingrained in me, you know, and I, I'm really bitter about it, and so I'm working on getting over that.

She went on to explain ways in which she is working to break down stereotypes, believing the process takes effort and work by people on both sides of any given stereotype. Another approach she likes to take is telling people information about herself that can possibly counter and break down some of their stereotypical beliefs, particularly as they relate to her. “That’s really what breaks down stereotypes. It’s just fighting the ignorance and not allowing the stereotypes to keep you from getting to know someone because you want to give it a chance.”

Mission

Also important in exploring the concept of identity as it relates to the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus is mission. This study attempted to understand how members internalized the sorority’s mission statement, particularly around promoting multiculturalism, and potentially changed their actions and beliefs to become living examples of diverse sisterhood. The importance of the sorority’s mission emerged in how sisters felt a sense of larger purpose, defined multiculturalism, desired to learn about differences, and accepted others who were different from themselves.

Internalization. In order to be living examples of a diverse sisterhood and promote multiculturalism as emphasized in Theta Nu Xi’s mission statement, I found that members of the sorority incorporated the values espoused in the mission statement into their daily lives and felt a sense of larger purpose in being part of the sorority. This internalization of the mission carried over beyond their college years, continuing to guide the actions and beliefs of alumnae interviewed. One sister explained that the sisterhood was fundamentally life-changing because the members came together “[sharing] a set of core values that they also

identify with.” Another sister described the role of the mission statement and its importance to members of the sorority:

[The sorority mission] really sets the tone for what we stand for and what we should strive to achieve. It basically lays out everything that the sisters are expected to do in their daily lives...People are really committed to those tenets outlined in the mission statement. So, I mean it’s a fundamental part of, I think, every sister in the sorority.

Two sisters talked about how the sorority’s mission statement guided daily interactions in their attempt to be living examples of a diverse sisterhood. One shared,

The mission, I think, is just the way to live your life and it’s something that can, that you can hold onto when you leave the campus because it’s about promoting acceptance but like doing it through a variety of mediums. So you can do, like you can promote acceptance through educational events or just being an example in your own life or maybe not even just doing anything that active from an educational sense, but just like by living your life according to accepting people with different beliefs and different backgrounds and different lifestyles. So, to me it is something you can take with you once you leave Monarch. It’s not something that’s just a part of the sorority mission.... And then, a thing that I say about it is that we try to tell people – um, prospective members – like Theta Nu Xi doesn’t define you, you define it.

The other sister explained,

It’s me walking around and believing in what Theta Nu Xi’s trying to do that makes me a living example of it because I don’t, like I mean I make no assumptions or I try very hard [not] to. It’s like I want to talk to everyone. I want everyone to be able to

talk to me. I want these new experiences in whatever avenue they might be in. So it's me incorporating that even more so into my daily lifestyle, just how I go about my day and what I think about when I look at people and my interactions with people that make me a living example [of the sorority's mission]...I think that's something that I just am as a member because I've made the tenants and the goals of Theta Nu Xi a part of my life.

Two sisters touched on how they have internalized the mission personally, with one noting, "Being in Theta Nu Xi in particular means that I have a mission to uphold and sort of...almost like expectations of myself that others have and that I have, that I wouldn't otherwise have." The other sister elaborated on the internalization process:

I think the sorority mission is kind of like the bare bones skeleton of the organization, and that the mission is kind of what I thought of when I first joined. You know, it was a great mission, um, just talking about races and cultures and religions and, bridging barriers and serving. I really wanted to do all of those things but I didn't – I mean, when you hear the mission statement of the sorority, you don't put too much emotion into it. It's just kind of like, oh we're – well, I didn't. I didn't, I just thought, oh well this is, these are great causes. But I didn't really think about the people who were behind those causes, who wanted to serve and who wanted to bridge the gaps. And um, so, I guess the mission to me has changed in the way, in the connotation it has because it still means to me what I want to do through the sorority and the purposes and things like that. But the connotation is different in that it's more of a personal endeavor, and it's more of something that we all struggle with internally

and that we all, ah, like racial issues and cultural issues that we know that we struggle with and that we can talk about. So it's not so much a political agenda anymore but it's a collective struggle. And we all realize that we're all going through these issues and we can all talk about it with one another.

When I spoke with this same sister six years later as an alumna, she shared an insight that moved from an individual perspective to a macro-level view encompassing the sorority as a whole:

[The sorority mission] really does a good job of defining who we are because I think that we are a group of strong women that do all of those things and do believe in all of those things and even if not all of us are doing all those things at the same time, put us all together in a room and we are what the mission statement says that we are.

Another alumna sister who helped establish the chapter of Theta Nu Xi at Monarch

University described her continued attraction to the sorority and its mission:

I look at the mission and I see that there are all those pieces to it, and I feel like that it was pretty progressive for its time. For example, there is the phrase, lifestyles. It's clearly written in there and it's about LGBT sisters. Um accepting all races, religions, backgrounds, lifestyles. They took into account class. For ten years ago, those women who got together they definitely thought, I feel like, of all the pieces. And as I look at the mission statement, I don't personally see something that's missing, so like it's a very comprehensive set of words that, that still appeal to me, still resonates, um, I still want to be that woman who brings together people on campuses and in communities and, you know, and hit on all of those pieces...So I

still think it works and it just has staying power, the mission statement. It hasn't faded, and I think it's still the core of why people still want to be Theta women. One sister shared her attraction to the sorority in 2001 when I first interviewed her and then discussed the ongoing impact six years later of having internalized the sorority's mission, goals, and tenets:

To me that whole [mission] statement means so much because it encompasses all the things that I believe in: service, leadership, accepting people regardless of their race, culture, background, lifestyle. All that is so important to me because you can't – looking at people and excluding them because of these material differences is just wrong. And I think part of really getting to know people and learning a lot about other people and having real friends is accepting them for who they are, regardless of those things, and that's pretty much what the mission statement – I mean, it just encompasses so many things that I totally believe in.

In 2007 she explained,

I know I emphasize it a lot, but I just want to emphasize again that it really has changed everything, and it's made every part, I mean it's really enriched every part of my life in a lot of ways. And I don't think that, I really like, I mean I feel like I just need to thank Theta Nu Xi for everything. I just feel like even now, in my day-to-day interactions, like I've been working on my PhD, I'm in, I'm going to a foreign country and I'm dealing with a different culture, and I catch myself thinking about things in such a well-rounded way when it would really be easy to be like, I don't like [them]. You know, they're very different, and they scare me. More than like, well

there are things that I enjoy about the culture and there are things that I don't, just like it is here in the United States. So it's really, it's really helped me change my perspective about the world and help me interact with people. I think it's always hard to interact with people you disagree with or people that you don't, you know, your values don't mesh. And I think with Theta Nu Xi I learned how to interact with those people and how to get along and how to like hopefully impress people and be an example through what you do rather than being all talk.

This sister's comment seemed to connect how she has internalized the mission to a sense of a bigger purpose to being in the sorority:

I think a lot of it is, for me, just kind of an everyday way of life...It goes beyond just an organization – how you live your everyday life, that you don't see everyone for just their skin color or their religious beliefs or whatever. You see them as a whole, so I think it kind of, the ideal kind of transcends to everyday life.

One sister asserted how Theta Nu Xi serves a larger purpose for her and the campus community:

I think it's really an agent for change on Monarch's campus, and so it was important for me to try to be a part of something that could make me a student leader and show me tangible change that was being made.

In talking about what she hoped to gain from the experience of joining Theta Nu Xi, another sister also connected to a larger purpose:

Another thing was having an impact on campus, sort of like taking what I believe in and what the sorority stands for and sharing that with other people and letting them

know about multiculturalism and what that means and sort of changing the dynamics of the campus.

When asked if she felt like they were successful in making such changes, she did acknowledge that it was a little tough at times. Another sister had a sense that she was part of a movement when I interviewed her in 2001:

I feel like the racial barriers are really getting broken down, especially between women. And we're the wave, we're the next group that's coming in, we're pioneers in a way. And that just really attracted me to the group. In that aspect I really wanted to be a part of that, um, to be a part of something new and something different. To be like, you know, I'm White and I'm in a multicultural sorority and I'm proud of it.

When I interviewed her six years later as an alumna, she was able to better articulate how women in the sorority came together to serve a larger purpose that would extend beyond campus as she reflected,

I think the mission of the sorority is to bring together women who believe in a greater good...I think that every woman in this sorority believes that they have the power to change the world and to change how people view not only the Greek system but also women in general...But they take all of these major social issues and really go forward with them and want to make a change and believe that they can. I think that we have started to make changes, which is really cool...Some people are really interested in gay rights and they want to just really go forward with it. A lot of us are very interested in making sure that there, people are not racially prejudiced. But my personal vendetta is classism because of where I grew up, and sort of like my story.

So I think we all have our little personal thing, but we bring it together and it all falls under, you know, just like improving, changing the world. Making people see things in a different light, and helping us kind of move forward and make things better. I don't know, to get rid of the injustices, I guess...It was always something that was in the back of my mind, but it wasn't until I joined the sorority that I found an outlet for that...I think the sorority really gave me an outlet to be proactive in that way.

Another sister explained how she came to the realization that the sorority's mission serves a larger purpose and what it means to her, touching on how her understanding of multiculturalism changed:

I think, [the sorority mission] kind of, for me, just kind of embodies a utopia...it kind of embodies a world that I would want to be in. One day, maybe, it'll be that way. I think, I mean, it would be the perfect world, I think, if we just eliminated all ignorance, you know, just differences and everything, and were just ultimately accepting. Accepting of the fact that there are differences and just really understanding them. Just not being closed minded to the fact that people can be different – they will be....Understanding that there are different cultures. That's something that I didn't think about before. I was always like, oh maybe, er, I thought it was best to think of everyone just as, you know, no one's different. Everyone is equally the same and equally valuable, which they are, but I think that one thing that I really learned is that people *want* to be different. They *are* different....I mean, for us, multicultural is, it's not even just accepting that there are differences. It's finding

those differences and highlighting them, and then telling other people about it, you know, spreading it to other people. That's why we do the events we do.

Definition of multiculturalism. For some sisters in Theta Nu Xi, their definition of multiculturalism did not change much by being in the sorority, perhaps because of their life experiences up until that point. For other sisters they entered with a narrow definition of multiculturalism based on differences in race or ethnicity. The overarching message that emerged from these interviews is the very broad definition that now guides their interactions with others. Several women shared their views on multiculturalism prior to joining the sorority and how that perspective was changing by being in Theta Nu Xi. One sister acknowledged,

I think when I joined the sorority, I thought multicultural means oh, it's lucky that I'm half Cuban, half Caucasian because otherwise I couldn't join the sorority because I felt like it was a requirement for admission. But I think now multicultural has expanded for me to realize that like no matter what you are...you have your own culture.

Another sister shared,

I think I had a more narrow view of what multiculturalism was before I joined. I thought it was, "Oh, OK. So Caucasian, White, Asian, everyone can hang out together. OK, that's good." But I think now, for me, it's gotten to be a more broad idea because, um, what you would think that a typical person who is of this background would think, may not necessarily end up being what they actually believe

or think. So I think kind of getting out of that mindset that you pigeon-hole people in certain ways.

I had the opportunity to interview a sister in 2001 as a student and again in 2007 as an alumna and was able to witness the shift in her view of multiculturalism. During my first interview with her, she reflected,

It used to mean race and that was it...I'm starting to think of different issues in the same context. So when I think of culture now, it's not just tied to race...So right now I, I'm kind of like in that transition stage where I'm trying to define what ethnicity is and what culture is, and is it a social thing or is it very historically tied, and things like that. So it's not, um, it's not a clear-cut issue to me anymore. And it's definitely not just a racial issue...It's a work in progress in my mind right now.

Upon reinterviewing this same sister in 2007, the transformation to a broader definition of multiculturalism was complete. She commented,

Multicultural to me means...you're bringing together a lot of cultures, but culture means...culture carries so much weight. It's the food you eat and the music you listen to and the way that you respond to your elders or the way that you practice your religion...So, it's not the color of your skin but it's...it really is who you are, I think, as a person and how you interact with people in other cultures or even people in your own culture.

Several sisters shared their new definition of multiculturalism, ranging from a broad overview to providing specific details. The importance of not prejudging others comes out when one sister asserted,

Multicultural is just being aware and knowledgeable and wanting to learn more about the different cultures that are in the world...It's about that, wherever you go people have certain traditions and certain things that mark their life, and multicultural means embracing all of those and not putting moral label on things...And so I think with multiculturalism, it's devoid of any of those moral issues. It's the ability to want to learn more about what's going on around you without first saying that that's right or wrong.

Another sister emphasized the give and take necessary in a true multicultural interaction:

I think that's part of the mission of multiculturalism is realizing that despite your differences, there's a common thread between you all, if you can just search for it, and that's what creates tolerance and things like that...The important thing, I think, is that you just realize that multicultural can also – is not only a reflection on what culture you have, but also the understanding that you accept what other people consider their culture.

Several sisters provide more detailed examples of how broadly they now define multiculturalism. One sister remarked,

I think that it means diversity on all different levels, not just the apparent things like race and religion, but also your beliefs about certain things...like your feelings about a lot of different topics...I think it embraces every aspect of human beings, I guess, so just the whole diversity in every aspect of your life.

Another sister expanded on the definition:

Multicultural is just a variety of experiences, generally based on your geographic location, your ethnic background, and your religion. It's just like a conglomeration of the aspects that make people who they are, and multiculturalism would be just a collaboration of all of those things.

A third sister declared,

I think multiculturalism really encompasses everything....Everything, I mean, I think everyone's cultural background, which is not only about their race, it also has to do with the region in the country you're from, the lifestyle that their family is accustomed to, you know, the sort of travel that they've had, the, rural versus what is it urban, rural versus urban...I think there's just so many factors that go into it.

One of the sisters was just as insightful as an undergraduate student as she was as an alumna.

In 2001 she stated,

We've made such an emphasis to say multicultural does not just mean race...And I think it's kind of like making an effort to come together, to have these hard discussions, and usually they are tough, um, because people don't understand each other.

When I interviewed her again in 2007, she commented,

We have your stock answers about the mixture of different cultures, the issue of being less like a melting pot and more like a salad bowl, that's pretty common. But just having the different cultures present and respecting all of them, you know, not questioning, not dismissing, not having- trying not to bring all your prejudiced stereotypes about certain groups to the table and just say, hey, that's what, tell me

more, I want to know more. Just really open minded when it comes to different cultures and all aspects of that...Having room for everybody and every subset or, you know, there's really, there's no hierarchy basically. So they're all valued, there's no best or better or minority, majority. They're all there and all have equal time, equal work.

An example provided by a sister demonstrates how this broader definition has been put into action. Regarding a discussion she had with a sorority sister about religion, she explained,

So, to me it was hard to agree with everything that she said. But you have to understand I don't have to agree with everything she says. I just have to be willing to engage her in a dialogue and understand why she thinks the way she does. And so it educated me on Catholic issues and her background because I was willing to at least talk to her about it even if she knows that I don't agree with her. Like and because we were sisters, we were able to have that dialogue without screaming at each other.

Another sister seemed to summarize the importance of having and using a broader definition of multiculturalism when she said, "Multicultural means to me that it is a way to promote the end goal of diversity, that it's just a way for people to come together and explore those differences."

Desire to learn. Learning about differences includes having an openness to understand and explore both differences and similarities between oneself and others. Most of the women I interviewed joined Theta Nu Xi already having the desire to learn about differences, and many of them developed or enhanced that desire through their membership in the sorority. Coming into the sorority with the desire, one sister said, "It was very

important to me to just learn about other cultures and to be with people who are different from myself because that is interesting to me and exciting.” Another sister explained that her secondary schools consisted of primarily Black and White students and how she befriended a new student from India in high school, which sparked her interest in learning about different cultures. In discussing what she hoped to gain from being in Theta Nu Xi, she explained, “Another thing for me was the multiculturalism aspect, just learning about different people and their experiences and sort of seeing how they affect my view of the world and just sort of learning from other people.” Several women described their predisposition for learning about others and how that was augmented through Theta Nu Xi. A different sister had a similar experience to the one just described:

I think it started off as I wanted to know a little bit more about Asian culture, because I think my brother and I were like the only Asian people in our high school, so it was kind of just wanting to know about myself, but also it became more...I want to know about Asian culture but I also want to know about African American culture and I also want to know about Latina culture and I also want to know about people who are, you know, Catholic and who are of the Islamic faith. I kind of just want to know a little about everything. I think [the sorority] became this outlet to satisfy my curiosity.

Another sister stated,

I've always been really open to making all kinds of different friends and having people be more accepting....I guess I always knew more about race issues than anything else....I've become a lot more interested in different cultural groups ever

since I've been here. Theta Nu Xi helped make me really interested. I love learning about different things; I love different languages.

Challenges to their desire to learn about differences also existed for a few of the women interviewed. One woman described being caught up with doing what felt most comfortable, which for her was “doing the Asian thing,” despite having a diverse group of friends in high school. She went on to explain how she ended up joining Theta Nu Xi during her second semester at Monarch,

So when I came here, freshman year, first semester, I did get swept up into the whole comfort zone thing...I felt like I was secluding myself a little bit or I wasn't broadening my horizons and I, and I was missing out which is mainly the thing, I just felt like I was missing out a lot...So second semester I was really, I wanted to make a conscious effort, I guess, to make more friends in my classes instead of just like the people I'm already, well, that's it's easy for me to make friends with...[The sorority presented ideas that I was] not so much struggling with, just like thinking about on my own. [Some examples included] the whole idea of broadening your horizons and not secluding yourself to your own comfort zone. And interacting with people and learning a lot from people who are not the same as you, but I mean, and also just the whole idea of celebrating differences and really gaining everything that you can from just, like, this whole variety of people.

Another sister came to Monarch with “a willingness to learn about everything and everyone around me.” She struggled with stereotypes of Greek organizations and shared how she worked through that challenge:

I wouldn't have known so much about the Greek community, and I wouldn't have been so open to learning, to knowing the specific people of each Greek organization, I think, before joining Theta Nu Xi, because I did have those stereotypes about what it meant to be in a Greek organization...And so I guess my ability to not put people in boxes has been enhanced by Theta Nu Xi. Probably more so than anything else but I, of people in Greek organizations because there're just too many stereotypes associated with that label, and so my being in a Greek organization and incorporating that mission statement, I think, has made me more able and willing to want to talk to the person and know who the person is, and not just know what organization they're a part of and leave it at that...I think like I did see, and that people are so much more than that first label, and so that's carried over into the rest of my life – so not just Greek but anyone. Like I want to know about the person and not whatever label that they've been stereotypically given in whatever way, because a person's always more than that first label, and so it's helped me to be someone who can keep talking and find out about the person and not- and ignore the label.

Speaking of stereotypes, this alumna shared how her desire to learn about others has continued beyond college and how she processes such experiences:

I think that stereotyping in general is really hard *not* to do, I guess. And I think a lot of times what I end up doing is I might have an initial thought about someone based on just how they appear, but I like to stand back and say, OK, you've already kind of thought about it initially, but really you should give that person time to let them show you who they are. So, stereotypes aside, what is this person like?

Another student shared an awareness moment she had that prompted her to want to learn more:

And just, in general, just feeling like I can never know enough about other cultures, you know, and how much do I know. Like, when I was sitting in – I went to this [event on campus], and so I am sitting next to this guy I know...and he's wearing a suit, he's all dressed up. And I was like oh, you're not going to get something to eat?...And I usually call myself on stuff like that, like don't say anything if somebody is not eating, or whatever...and he was like, oh I'm fasting. It didn't hit me that he's Jewish and he's fasting. Like, to me myself, you know, saying like you need to learn more about the Jewish religious practices and that sort of thing so you don't run into that again. But I should have been aware that those things could have been going on at the time, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and that sort of thing, so I just, you know, so those are the types of things you have to like put yourself out there.

The openness and desire to learn about different people and cultures is not a surprising theme to find among women in a multicultural sorority, and this alumna summed it up when she said, "You're always kind of really interested in other cultures, and you want to learn, and you're open minded about it, and I think that, that fosters a lot of good dialogue."

Acceptance of others. Women in the sorority are also guided by the organization's mission with regard to respecting and accepting others who are different from themselves. Acceptance of others may not always come naturally, and the sorority's exploration of intense and sometimes difficult issues can also be challenging at times. One sister stated, "I think those five things cover pretty much what I– I want to accept women of all those, all

five of those points....Like, it's in the mission statement saying we accept you." Another sister described how she is learning to be more accepting:

We really try to respect everybody....But the thing is that I have to learn, you know what I mean, how to be more accepting. I mean, I feel like I'm not going to hate anybody for their views, but um...I know that I need to respect their ideas. And the thing is that that should really come naturally to me.

Delving into the process of being more accepting of difference, this sister explained the benefits she foresees emerging from such effort:

Sometimes you just dismiss what people's views are because you just say that they're inherently wrong. Um, and you're just like, well I just believe x, y, z and they're just ludicrous. But just sort of understanding why people believe the way that they do, it's, to me, it's fundamental in a multicultural conversation, and even if you don't agree because of the way, your background, you can still sort of understand and appreciate that person's willingness to share their ideas and their background with you. And I think that makes it easier for you to be able to make decisions and also lead, be a leader because you sort of understand how people work.

Referencing a program sponsored by Theta Nu Xi exploring religious diversity, another sister talked about how the sorority helps convey a similar sense of acceptance of others to the rest of campus through such programs. She commented,

Once you learn about the different- like where people are coming from in their religion and why they believe something, it's easier to accept their point of view even if you don't totally agree with it, because you can be like oh, well, they believe in this

because these are their doctrines or this is where they're personally coming from and stuff like that. So I think events like that are really helpful in promoting acceptance and just promoting education because people don't really want to go out of the way to go to all the different churches and find out all the differences.

Challenges around acceptance can arise through the learning process as the sisters' personal definitions of multiculturalism begin expanding as discussed earlier. A sister shared one such experience:

And when you're gonna talk about these hard questions, a lot of sisters their religions, you know, conflict when it comes to talk[ing] about marriage...having gay friends or that sort of thing. So they're, they kind of, you know, those things you would think that they don't, wouldn't work, like if my religion says no, you know, then how do I feel about it? And then can I, as a member of Theta Nu Xi, support the LGBT Coming Out Week? You know. And it came up; we talked about it.

Another challenging situation that occasionally emerges within the sorority involves a sister changing their mind about or expressing opposition to a core value of the sorority. For example a sister may become more deeply involved in their religion and one day say that she can no longer accept all religions and therefore cannot be affiliated with the sorority. The sister describing these challenges commented, "It hurts a lot of the sisters that knew them, and sometimes they could have been a really strong, active participant." Having worked with the sorority at the national level, she provided another example that can evoke strong emotions within the sisterhood:

Let's just say I don't agree with interracial relationships, and then we're always surprised. Like, you know, one of the founders clearly states she is biracial or, you know, people would be like, how could you join Theta Nu Xi and not accept interracial relationships?

She went on to describe huge discussions among sisters who expressed anger and disappointment that someone could slip through the intake process with opinions so counter to the sorority's mission. Looking for the educational or teachable moment, she articulated an insightful response very much aligned with the larger purpose of Theta Nu Xi: "But it's not really our place to question. It's more of a can we do anything about it, can we get them to understand or see why or why they feel that way, or maybe we're missing something."

Woman/Feminist

Identity as a woman would logically fit within the identity development section above, but given the feminist focus of the study, this concept was examined separately along with the perception of the women themselves or the sorority as an organization being feminist. Overall the sorority seems to encourage and develop a strong sense of self as a woman, and I would describe Theta Nu Xi as not intentionally but inherently feminist.

Woman. Exploring how the sorority impacted their identity as women elicited a range of responses. Several sisters felt empowered through their involvement in Theta Nu Xi, several women made connections between identity as a female and being in a sorority, and a few sisters could not determine if the sorority or college impacted their identity as a woman while a couple of sisters felt they joined the sorority already having a strong sense of identity as a woman. The experience of being in the sorority and having to take on

leadership roles because the chapter size is so small helped some women improve their self-esteem and self-confidence at the same time developing their leadership skills. As a senior about to graduate, this sister reflected on how her three years in Theta Nu Xi empowered her:

I think that me as a person, I've changed a lot. From the beginning, I felt like I didn't know much. I was a scared freshman on campus. I was really not very confident in myself in making decisions, you know, when I was given a task, I would always second-guess myself, and I'd be like I don't know how to do this and kind of freak out. And I've seen myself grow. I go now and I'm a lot more comfortable in classes, and I think a lot of it has to do with Theta Nu Xi. A lot of it, just – I've had so many responsibilities and I've taken them on and I've been able to successfully carry them out. Even if I don't do it successfully, I'm able to basically accept the consequences for my actions, you know, if I don't end up doing it the right way, and I learned. So, it's very different now. I was the one asking all the questions, and now I'm the one giving all the answers...I don't think that I had it, you know, I had the...I guess the confidence thinking that I could lead something, but now I feel like I do...In high school, I never would have taken a leadership position...and now I'm president for [another student organization]...I feel like I've become a lot stronger as a female.

Another sister shared how Theta Nu Xi significantly impacted her identity as a woman:

I think I've gained a much better sense of self in terms of feeling stronger about my capabilities and knowing that I have leadership skills that go beyond the chapter that I can use in everyday life. I think that being surrounded by a group of women who are amazing in all different aspects of their life really inspires you to do more. Seeing

sisters that have overcome so much academically or personally or any aspect with life makes you feel like you can do the same things. And so, they may not be the same challenges, but there are challenges nevertheless in your own life, and feeling like you can go beyond that and drawing strength from others...Being able to have a lot of different opinions and viewpoints to draw from, I think is really important. I think it really helps empower women – I think the sorority does, because we're all put into leadership positions, and we have to work through a lot of different personalities and be able to come up with different programming and events and new ideas, and so it makes you be innovative and a leader and a go-getter, so I think that it really helps to kind of cluster all the successful skills that you need in college and outside college and in your future...It really taught me how to be a leader with different groups of people, personalities, agendas, that kind of thing...I tell people that my discovery of the sorority was in some ways accidental, and that it's one of the best accidents in my life. I think that had I not known about the sorority or had I not joined the sorority, that I wouldn't be as open minded as I am, and I wouldn't be as strong of a leader or a woman or have as strong relationships as I do now. I think it really helped to open up my eyes to a lot of different things, and I think that it's a big part of my life. So I can't really imagine not having it. It definitely has played a big part in making me into the person that I am today.

When I first interviewed this sister in 2001, she did not think her awareness of herself as a female had changed all that much by being in the sorority. Upon interviewing her again in 2007 as an alumna, her perception had shifted. She commented,

We have a really strong group of women that are really ambitious...So I know now that there aren't any limitations except for the ones that you accept or except for the ones that you put on yourself. And being a woman, I think that women think they still face a lot of hardships when compared to men, in the workplace...I think that there are a lot more hardships or hurdles that women have to overcome before they might become CEO just like the males do. But I know that it's possible, and I know that the women in my sorority are doing amazing things every day. It kind of, you know, when you have a group of people that you know are doing awesome things and you're so proud of them and you know that they're supporting you and you're supporting them and you can all achieve whatever it is you want to achieve. It's pretty amazing. So I think that it's given me more confidence as a woman and also in a larger context because it's not just a group of Asian Americans that I am looking up to or that I am surrounded by, but it's everyone. It's a mix of people that, you know, might be really similar to me or might be really different from me. But I guess it breaks all those things down and makes them not even matter any more.

Two sisters expressed connecting a positive sense of self as a woman to their involvement in the sorority, overcoming the negative stereotypes they initially held about sororities. One woman explained,

I think that since I got in the sorority, I've become – I've got a lot more pride in being a female, being in the sorority because I think a lot of people look down on us, on sororities in general...I feel like we do a lot and as women, as a group. And I've been totally – my perception as a woman, I feel so much prouder. Like I have so much

pride in being a woman so I see these other amazing women...I think that I've got a lot more pride in being a woman since being in the sorority. And it's like, I've begun – I really understand the concept of the sisterhood, and what it means to have a unifying group of women together – how much power that has behind it.

The other sister stated,

It's made me realize that just because I'm in a sorority, that label doesn't have to connote what I used to think it means. I used to think I was kind of like copping out by being in a sorority because of all the labels that I associate with sororities. But I realize that, well, now I can define myself as making sorority mean something empowering for women as opposed to being something that's a negative stereotype. And so instead of being like, well yeah, I'm a part of a sorority and mumbling it under my breath, just saying that I'm a part of a sorority and then following that up with an explanation of how great Theta Nu Xi is and what that actually means. So I think that's changed. It's like, associating the female label with the word.

On the other hand, one sister's perception of herself as a woman decreased through her involvement with the sorority due to the Greek life culture on campus.

I think I feel like there is a hierarchy, certainly of females and males on this campus. And it's just, it's really interesting. And that means that as a female I am, I almost feel like lower on the hierarchy because sororities are such a huge part of that hierarchy – because we're non-existent, not because of what, like the value that Theta Nu Xi actually has, you know what I mean. But because people just don't perceive it to be, and so like my view of my status as a female has decreased probably as a

result...Because I'm in Theta Nu Xi my status as a female has decreased than if I weren't in a sorority...if I were in a core four, then the status would have increased in that instance.

She felt that the culturally defined hierarchy for women at Monarch University placed women in the four most prestigious sororities at the top while women not involved in a sorority were the next level down and finally at the bottom were women in other sororities, which would include Theta Nu Xi. A couple of women could not determine if the sorority impacted their identity as a woman or if college and life experiences had more bearing on the development of their gender identity. One sister remarked,

I think, my evolution as to what a female means for me or my idea of what the term female means for myself, has happened because of just my experiences in general. And I don't know if I can pinpoint how the sorority has impacted that necessarily because um, I think there's a lot of things that have gone into what I think, how I view myself as a female, and I don't know if I can pinpoint exactly what the sorority has done just in isolation. Just being a career female in a profession that's dominated by men, going to college and it just, there's just been so many things, I don't know if I can isolate the impact of the sorority.

Another sister explained,

It's hard for me to differentiate how I've changed since I've been in college with how I've changed since I've been in the sorority because, you know, I was only, I had only been – I was a freshman for one semester before I joined...And I feel like I have matured as a woman, and I can appreciate being a woman for the woman that I am,

rather than what I think a woman should be, because I'm not even going for that any more. I feel like I'm not even trying to find what a woman should be anymore, and I guess the sorority helped me out with that. I don't know. It's really just like I said, it's hard for me to differentiate the difference, like, between being in the sorority and being in college.

One sister did not feel like her perception of herself as a female had changed by being in

Theta Nu Xi:

So the fact that I do have leadership tendencies and I do speak my mind quite often, like as just a woman, didn't really change very much. I mean, it gave me new avenues just like how to speak more eloquently and make my point like make more clearly.

The connection between being empowered as a woman and concepts of feminism appeared in several comments. One sister shared how her awareness of gender inequalities emerged through involvement in the sorority:

I think before I joined the sorority, I never really thought so much about how females are kind of pushed back in a lot of ways. And when I joined the sorority, it really, through a lot of the educational things that we had done and talking to some of the sisters about their experiences, I learned that it's really unfortunate that women, just kind of the plight of women and just how we've been repressed for so long and how difficult it is, particularly in science, to be a woman. So I think those sorts of things kind of came a little more clear to me after I had joined the sorority just because of the educational opportunities we had and then sharing the experiences between

sisters. I don't know why it wasn't something that was very immediate to me beforehand. I mean, I think the South is a pretty misogynist place unfortunately, but it wasn't until I had gotten out and been part of the sorority and talked to people that it just became a little more clear to me. I think it's, it's always been kind of this status quo, and just turn around and be like wow this is really an injustice and it's really unfortunate, so. Yeah, I think the sorority definitely changed my, helped me recognize just the sort of things, like how, how women's place, it's very, I mean it's very unfortunate the way that women have been sort of second class for a such long time.

The importance of having positive role models in the development of one's gender identity was emphasized. Many of the women interviewed openly acknowledged how much they admired other women in Theta Nu Xi, both locally and nationally, describing them as "amazing women" doing "amazing things." One sister confided,

I used to not be as proud about being a woman. And it's kind of, everything in Theta Nu Xi makes you, everything you do kind of makes you feel like girl power, you know. It's true. You see very strong women all the time...They make you feel good about both being a part of something that's very important and will change the world one day. Also the fact that these are women, they're not – my family's very traditional, the woman stays at home. I'm the first woman in my family to go to a university, and I'll probably go to grad school.

Another sister remarked,

There are a number of women in Theta Nu Xi whom I admire. And I think they are so amazing...I feel as a woman, I just feel like these ladies don't ever tell me there's something I can't do, and then just having so many more role models and, you know, they're just amazing across the board...just seeing these women is impressive, and so seeing that I can be more and do more is like a push for just feminism in general, like you can be every woman and that sort of thing. But then being called to do programming for women is really important...I've thought about it and it's not that I think the organization does well for the like the purpose it has, like I mean, supporting women, creating a sisterhood – all of those things are really important...I've just been able to explore some of those women's issues more with the sorority.

Six years later this same sister continued to see how Theta Nu Xi connects to women's issues:

I think being a part of the sorority has been very helpful in a sort of a women's centered way about women's issues and just sort of caring about these topics...I think it's kept women's issues on the mind a lot more so than if I was just, you know, I do, I'm a social worker and I also care about social issues, just on my own anyway, but I can find myself really immersing myself in Habitat for Humanity or some housing issue or some child welfare issue or something and sort of lose the women's piece if I wasn't constantly with women and talking with other women and hearing their stories and hearing their concerns and...their latest issues.

One sister's remark sums it up: "I think it's special being just all women."

Feminist. Theta Nu Xi is not promoted as a feminist organization, and most of the women interviewed did not appear to have thought about whether that label would pertain to the sorority. Although many of the women could see aspects of feminism in the sorority, there were several who said that connection did not exist. At the root of all their varied responses seemed to be the many definitions of feminism and resistance to negative stereotypes associated with the word. Several comments also reflected an attempt to connect feminism with the sorority's external programmatic mission versus an internal philosophical approach to the sisterhood, and there appeared to be no correlation between a sister's personal identity as a feminist and their identification of the sorority as a feminist organization. In discussing this topic with these women, what became apparent was that Theta Nu Xi is not intentionally feminist but inherently feminist. An alumna who worked in the sorority's national office for a while reflected on what she knew of the women who founded the sorority in 1997 when asked if she would identify herself or the work of the sorority as feminist:

I think that, without a doubt, easily. I think there probably will still be some women in the group that may not think that they're feminists or whatever, but I think that as a whole, yes. And I think that the founders are particularly, if you meet them, you'll find that they're very moved in that direction. They're feminist people and very, I don't know how to describe them but, they're even more activist leaning and more, like, more feminist than some of the chapters I see now...But [the founders'] vision of what they wanted and where we are now – they could be a little disappointed. You

know, like why aren't these women more vocal and more activist and you know, because to meet them and know them, you'd see that, that they are.

Because there are multiple types of feminism, it was important to explore how these women were defining the term. The alumna just quoted primarily appears to be applying the definition to an internal philosophical approach to sisterhood interactions. She elaborated,

I guess I'm just using it probably broadly and loosely, just supporting and uplifting and raising women's issues to the forefront. Women being equal. Deserving every right the same as men, but just sort of, um, that women's issues are just the fact that there are differences, even historically, that we still need to work on...I think the women in our organization, in their daily lives are trying to uplift each other and other women who are coming in from behind. Also mentoring, all of these things. Just so that, I guess, we can all support and help each other as a whole and, you know, the, I guess, the gender as a whole. I think that there's no, I don't think you'll meet many women in Theta Nu Xi...who think that they're second class citizens. I don't think you would meet a woman in Theta Nu Xi who will say she deserves less or that her husband's place is higher or things like that. And I think it's just the type of woman who's attracted to the mission statement, who's attracted to the organization. They just wouldn't necessarily believe that or buy into that...I mean I know that that's not every single woman, it's like, but I want say it's the majority.

This sister identifies herself as feminist and, upon contemplation, would also identify the work of Theta Nu Xi as feminist. Her comments also reflect an internal application of feminism to sisterhood interactions. She said,

I mean, I haven't thought of it that way...but I think it would be because feminism for me has always been about a woman's right to choose. And so I think whatever we do and whatever we're learning, each woman is making their own choice about what they want to do. So I would, I would ascribe the label of feminist to it very easily because it is like giving women more options to make that choice because like, they're going out and learning more about the world and like, not just the specific generalization of cultures and what people are across the world but specifically, like these are what these women are doing when they leave Monarch or these are what some people have found is meaningful to them. And so like giving women more information to make choices is feminism to me, and so I would, I would ascribe it to Theta Nu Xi.

She goes on to elaborate on how she defines feminism:

I would [identify myself as feminist]. I mean like I often take feminism and I say, followed by "because it means women have a choice" because I feel like such a, it's very taken, not like the feminazi or anything like that. It's just that I want to make sure that if a woman has made the choice to stay home or be with her children or like, like. I don't want to describe like that's right or that's wrong against that, like I said it before, but. So that's why I define it that way. A woman can choose whatever she wants to do. If she's chosen it voluntarily and she's happy with her choice, then that means then I'm feminist because that's what I want every woman to have. Like I am not going to be that, like if she's not doing waged economic work then she's not being a woman. So I think it's important to me that I make that label just because

feminism is so striated, like that's just what the term is. It has so many different options and people within it. So that's my particular brand of feminism so I would describe myself as feminist. I just add a little bit tacked on so they know what I mean when I say it.

Another sister identifies herself as feminist but not the sorority because of where she places emphasis in defining feminism.

Hmm...I don't know. I'd have to say no. Um, I mean the work that I do is...I don't know what the ideal [definition] is or whatever, but you know in my mind, my feminist goal...would be, you know like, like education. I'm a big person for reproductive rights, and I feel like that is a feminist issue. I don't know if that's politically correct, but that's a big, that's something that's very close to my heart. And I understand equality in the workplace and being respected among your professional peers. I feel like that's moving along a lot better because there aren't a lot of set-backs to that...So I feel like the main barriers to that aspect of feminism, you know, are, are just, are going to be solved through time, like more time, more education, and people will see equality in academics and in the workplace and things will get better [because religion doesn't have as much of an influence]. But with reproductive rights I feel like religion does play a pretty important role, and seeing since that is a part of my idea of a feminist mission that is most important to me, um, and I don't feel like the sorority specifically agrees with that. Because there are members of the sorority who don't agree with that, who may be really like orthodox in their religion...So in my mind I try, I do try to keep the two separate because I feel,

I mean, I understand people can be orthodox in their religion and that's good, but I feel like a lot of, you know, some religions hold back that aspect of my version of the feminist mission...Yes [I identify as feminist], especially with regard to reproduction...And I don't really feel like, I don't feel discriminated in academics. I was talking to people and they feel like they are, and I mean, I guess I'm a minority in my field. I don't know. I mean I guess women aren't as numerous, but with reproductive rights I really feel like there are complete changes that need to be, need to be had...but these are not issues that I can use the sorority as a like tool for, if that makes sense. Like these issues are separate from the sorority.

One sister does not identify the work of the sorority as feminist and actually feels that her involvement with the sorority has weakened her own personal feminist identity. She attributes this shift to Theta Nu Xi's external programmatic focus on multicultural issues rather than gender issues and the fact that being in the sorority takes up so much of her time and energy, causing her feminist interests to fall on her priority list. She remarked,

My identity as a feminist is a lot less accessible than it used to be for some reason. And it's just hard. I mean, I don't know why that is, um, I don't know. So, I am activist minded and I wasn't necessarily an active feminist in any way certainly before that, it was just simply that the ideas of feminism were really important to me and they're absolutely no less important to me now. But they're less, you know, there are things that we're concerned about day to day, and you think about things socially and I guess that's just one thing that has become less concerning for me on a daily basis.

Several other women interviewed also do not believe the work of the sorority is feminist. Speaking about the multicultural emphasis rather than focusing on the gender aspect of the sorority, one sister commented,

I don't think so. I think that we really don't highlight the fact that we are women as much as we highlight the fact that we are multicultural...I feel like we focus more on the cultural aspects than we do on the fact that we are just women, which is different from a lot of other sororities, probably. Especially a lot of National Pan-Hellenic sororities, you know NPHC, traditionally Black. They focus a lot on the fact that they are strong women, and I feel like we don't do that as much....If we were to like just focus, you know, if we were to highlight the fact that we were just women, it kind of would go against our mission because we're supposed to be inclusive of everyone, and so if we downplayed the importance of that or downplayed the role of men in life, then it kind of contradicts what we're trying to do, in a sense.

Focusing more on the external programmatic aspect of the sorority, one sister acknowledged,

I don't know if I really like the label feminist, just because I understand what it means and that it's trying to empower women and stuff like that, but I think Theta Nu Xi is about empowering everybody, just especially about empowering people who are disenfranchised or disadvantaged, and that's not necessarily always women. It can be like little kids or minorities or like just anyone that doesn't really have a voice or feels misunderstood. So I wouldn't call it feminist. It could be a femini- it could be like feminist if someone in the sorority takes a mission and tries to empower women...but I don't think all of Theta Nu Xi can be labeled as a feminist agenda or whatever.

Two alumnae talked about not wanting to affiliate the negative stereotype associated with the word feminist to the sorority yet espoused feminist values demonstrated within the sorority. Although they demonstrated some questioning, I found it interesting given the sorority's emphasis on looking beyond stereotypes to better understand someone or something, and I would have expected sorority alumnae to be further along the developmental continuum regarding this concept. When asked if she identified the work of the sorority as feminist, one woman reflected,

Feminist has gotten such a derogatory sort of connotation over the last, I don't know, since I've been in college...Um, hmm, that's a hard one. I have like mixed feelings about that. I mean we definitely encourage the development of women, the professional development, the education of women, the sort of empowerment of women. However, the word feminist has just been misused so much, and I don't know if I want to tie that word to myself or my sorority because of the interpretation of feminist in our society I guess today. So I want to say that myself and I think my sorority believe in the empowerment and the growth of women and the, sort of the promotion of women in various industries and professional arenas.

Another declared,

No. Most definitely, I wouldn't say feminist. I don't really know why, I mean, I just, I think that, I don't know, I guess when I hear feminist, I think of negative connotations and I don't think that anything the sorority did was, at all, has done, does, is at all negative for women or it seemed to be, ah- I think, when I hear feminist, I think of close mindedness I guess. A little close minded like, kind of, women are so

much better than men rather than women are equal to men. I think the sorority's take is women are equal to men and it's about time we got our rights, you know. Rather than being like oh, women are so much better than men. You know, men bashing or whatever you want to call it. So I guess it's not taki- I'm probably taking the definition, and I'm just thinking about what I'm thinking in my head when I hear it rather than what the definition probably is.

A couple of alumnae recognized similarities in the values held by the sorority and found within feminism, leading them to believe that the sorority inherently rather than overtly may be a feminist organization. When asked about the work of the sorority being feminist, one woman explained,

Not in a very strong, in your face type of way, but I think that the work of the sorority is definitely promoting an empowering woman. And it's not in a way where it's pitting the sexes against each other. It's more of a, um, you're a woman, yes, and let's *not* say you can't do any- there's nothing you can't do. And so instead of, you know, I guess the older ideas of what feminism was, was that men and women are competitors and that only one can succeed, but I think more of the sorority is like, is *not* throwing any negatives on men but empowering women. And so that there can be some sort of balance, and that you can bring up women and empower them without having to really speak negatively or impact negatively on men. So I think in that way we could be, I guess, seen as feminist.

The other alumna observed,

Not overtly and not by design, but I think that we do um, I think that there are probably a lot of feminists in the group, and I think that we do sort of maybe show that, you know, all of the things that people who are feminists believe in, that women can do or women should be able to do, um, we kind of show that those things can happen and should happen just by what it is that we do. So we might not – you know, we do hold events and things like that geared toward women or the betterment of women and things like that, but I guess it's because we just assume that those things are true, that women are equal to men and that women should have the same rights as men.

The first thematic finding explored the concept of identity as a means of describing the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus. Individualized identity among the women interviewed became apparent through their expression of feeling accepted as an individual, struggling with their personal identities, and developing their own identity. Internalization of the sorority's mission was demonstrated by members having a sense of larger purpose with being in Theta Nu Xi, broadening their definition of multiculturalism, expressing a desire to learn about differences, and becoming more accepting of others who are different from themselves. Their perception of themselves as women and feminists was the last aspect of identity explored. The next thematic finding examined during this study was structure.

Structure

Structural issues affecting functionality of the organization include the decision to be a sorority rather than a student organization, the overarching Greek social structure at

Monarch University, size of the sorority and their governing council, and the creation of a safe space for open yet critical dialogue.

Sorority Versus Student Organization

The question is often asked why Theta Nu Xi is a sorority rather than a student organization – to the point where the national website includes an explanation from the founders about their decision to become a sorority. The main differences between being a sorority versus a student organization for this study’s participants involved relationships between members, commitment and accountability, and the educational or activity emphasis of each.

Relationships between members. There tends to be a lack of intentional effort on developing bonds between all members or participants of student organizations, whereas sisterhood is one of the tenets of Theta Nu Xi, making it central to their interactions. A business-like approach of student organizations provides an impersonal atmosphere where relationships may not be developed on a deep level among members. Experiences and perceptions among study participants presented a picture of greater bonding among sorority sisters than within student organizations due to the intake process, which also creates a greater connection to the mission and tenets of the sorority. One sister shared her concern about the lack of personal interaction among members of a student organization in which she was involved prior to joining Theta Nu Xi:

That’s pretty much the only time the [members] got together – the meetings or the events...It wasn’t an off-hours, pick-up-the-phone-and-call-her, you know...it was like, oh OK, let’s mobilize to put on this event...And so, it was an organization I

couldn't feel completely, like I couldn't immerse myself in it and like, you know, enjoy it 100%.

Another sister had a similar comment when she said, "I don't think for student organizations, socialization- social interaction is a priority." One sorority sister talked about the differences between several multicultural organizations on campus, including Theta Nu Xi:

I mean they live together, you know, they're the multicultural living group...They're the multicultural dance group, right. They're multicultural but they dance. There'd have to just be another defining characteristic for another student organization, another multicultural student organization to work, I feel...but I feel like for the sorority, sisterhood is that other defining characteristic.

Elaborating on the bonding process, a different sister said,

Intake is a huge part of your Theta Nu Xi experience and the bonding you undergo through that process...and really like kind of thinking about who you are as a person and why you really want to join this organization, I think are integral to forming the bonds that you need once you join Theta Nu Xi, making it a functional organization, and just like having [a] shared sense of community that you couldn't get through just joining a regular service organization or club.

Another sister commented, "I feel like in organizations you're measured by what you contribute as a member, but in Theta Nu Xi it's just, you know, you're just inherently of value as a sister...because you're a sister."

Commitment and accountability. Different levels of commitment and accountability can be found between student organizations and the sorority. While in college the level of commitment to a student organization may fluctuate, with a “come and go” mentality where someone can participate as much or as little as they want due to limited accountability. Members of Theta Nu Xi, however, maintain a high level of commitment and hold one another accountable, which can be attributed to the intensive intake process and the small size of the chapter along with activity requirements mandated by the national office. Commitment to student organizations also tends to be time limited in that there is very little involvement after graduation, whereas membership in Theta Nu Xi is presented as and perceived to be a lifetime commitment by the sisters I interviewed. One sister commented,

For student groups, it’s a lot easier for people to go and join and not really do much, kind of be there like a poster member. But with Theta Nu Xi, because it’s a sorority, we all lean on each other.

Another sister shared her thoughts about the different levels of commitment and how sisterhood bonds of the sorority influence commitment:

I feel that with student organizations, it’s a come and go as you like, not – it doesn’t necessarily foster those strong bonds and closeness of relationships. I think that as a sorority, you go beyond knowing that person in a business setting. You find out about these people on all different levels, and you want to know about them beyond the things that you’re currently doing, and they become a part of our life. And I think that it’s much more effective as a sorority than as a student organization because it’s a

more powerful and more cohesive group of women. And I think, especially Theta Nu Xi, it's a life-long relationship. It doesn't end after graduation.

This sister's remarks connected commitment and accountability within the sorority:

You just don't have the kind of commitment to a student organization, to a club, that you have to a, that I have to Theta Nu Xi. And yeah, and so I just feel like you're committed...It's like if you don't come through for somebody, it's not just like oh that sucks. It's like someone's going to be there and be like, why didn't you do that?...So the fact that we are all committed to each other really just secures the fact that things are going to get done and that you really are going to have do things...'Cause the thing is that if you don't come through, I don't know, I feel bad when I don't come through for myself, but if there's somebody else that's counting on me, then it's like, there's that added incentive to be like, OK, I'll stay for a few hours and do this.

Having graduated from college several years prior to this interview, one sister expanded the concept of commitment beyond her sorority chapter:

A sorority is something that has a national standing, and it's a group that, you know, you always have Theta Nu Xi. It's not like oh I was part of that student group, and I could give as little or as much as I, you know, sort of my effort and everyone kind of puts in as much effort as they want. Theta Nu Xi is a real commitment, and it's a life-you know, it's something that you have for life...And I think it's not just about what happens on the chapter level. It's about what happens between the chapters, at the national level, at the GAP [Graduate, Alumnae, and Professional] level. Like we're

all together. Like I don't, I used to hang out so much with the girls from [other regional chapters], and I just loved them, and they were awesome, and it just like helped me realize that the sorority is just this huge thing, and it was just amazing. Another sister observed, "The idea of being a club, which I've been part of a lot of clubs in my life...it's sort of time limited...you're affiliated with it for a certain moment in time."

Educational or activity emphasis. The educational or activity emphasis between Theta Nu Xi as a sorority versus student organizations is the third difference that emerged. Student organizations often have a limited focus on either internal education of members or on external education or activities for the broader campus. A living-learning community in the residence halls, for example, may focus inward on educating themselves through informal interactions without specific emphasis on developing deep personal bonds or external education of the larger campus community. Other student organizations may come together like a business to focus on coordinating a program for the campus community without spending time developing personal bonds and educating themselves through such informal interactions. Theta Nu Xi, however, takes a more comprehensive approach in an attempt to bring about social change through uniting students across differences both among members and in the larger campus community in addition to developing the deeper bonds of sisterhood. The emphasis is placed on both internal education of members and the external education of the campus, which will be elaborated upon in the next thematic finding section regarding sorority activities. One sorority sister who also happened to reside in the multicultural living-learning community shared her interpretation of the difference between the two:

While we do a few events here and there, it's because you're living together, that's what, unlike working, like living and seeing each other daily, it, that's how you change these people. And I feel it's almost concentrated more in the people who live here than on the Monarch community...Living here and being with people and having random things happen all the time is what changes you personally, and how you take that out to other organizations, like that's your choice. But with Theta Nu Xi, our goal is to bring respect of cultures and what, like, diversity to the entire campus and to teach other students and professors and whoever's here that this culture's different but it is just as important as yours...So I think our commitment to taking it outside of just our small sisterhood is what makes it really different.

Another sister went into more detail about how sorority members attempt to learn through internal and external behavior:

Just with a lot of the activities that we do, we try to learn. So I guess they [the national office] present opportunities for us to learn a lot, but it's not, they don't spoon feed it to us. We're kind of expected to take it and run with it ourselves. So um, which I think is good because we all, like all the different chapters go about it in a different way. And [it's] especially good for the chapters in [the Southeast] because we can attend [events by other regional chapters] and they can attend ours...When we see a movie together dealing with issues or if we read something, of course we'll all get something different out of it, and if I learned something that I didn't know about, that I hadn't talked with the other sisters about, I'll be sure to bring it up, and a lot of people will bring up different issues or different points of view from whatever

educational opportunity we've just had. So if we go to a forum [by a nearby chapter] and then we come back and it's like a starting point, I guess. So it fosters a lot of discussion on whatever issue we've just talked about...It presents a whole lot of different things we can discuss.

After discussing the benefits of Theta Nu Xi being part of the Greek system, however, one sister who graduated several years ago from Monarch concluded her thoughts about Theta Nu Xi being a sorority rather than a student organization by saying, "But in terms of what we did and what we stood for, I don't know that it would've changed much."

Greek Social Structure

Originally intending to examine external structure based on the Greek council in which Theta Nu Xi is administratively placed, I found the data expanding this concept to include the overarching Greek social structure at Monarch University. Visibility and recognition of Theta Nu Xi are derived from the very nature of a strong Greek culture on campus and the establishment of a new umbrella organization, or governing council, to house this sorority and any other Greek letter organizations (GLOs) on campus that are not affiliated with the three existing umbrella organizations. The relationships Theta Nu Xi has with the four councils and their member organizations are also important when looking at the functionality of Theta Nu Xi on campus.

Visibility and recognition. Monarch University has a strong Greek culture, which affects the visibility and recognition of Theta Nu Xi on campus. The founders of Theta Nu Xi decided to establish themselves as a sorority rather than a student organization in part because they recognized the central role Greek letter organizations play in social life on

many college campuses. As already discussed the social hierarchy at Monarch University revolves around GLOs, with about 37% of students being Greek affiliated, so the importance of Theta Nu Xi being a sorority on Monarch's campus carries even more significance: Theta Nu Xi provides another option beyond the traditional White and Black GLOs, and Theta Nu Xi has greater visibility and prominence on campus compared to a student organization. One sister revealed,

Being a sorority at Monarch, it really did give us kind of, I don't want to say more prominence, but when people thought Greek and they would research the Greek organizations at Monarch, we were one of them. Whereas a lot of the student organizations, there were many but I don't know that everyone would know about them, so it gave us a little bit more publicity because we were tied to the Greek system, and at Monarch it's such a big deal, the Greek system is pretty big.

Although there may be a feeling among members that Theta Nu Xi does not attract the type of person interested in traditional sororities, one sister who identified as Asian American described how their visibility within the Greek system provided an alternative option:

I didn't know that there was anything else out there other than White or Black [GLOs]...and then being at Monarch and seeing as a freshman how the social structure at Monarch was very Greek, was heavy in the Greek system, it was intriguing to me not only that I could have that social network but also that I could start something to create that social network for people to follow. That – for people that join that come to Monarch after me.

Given the sorority's rule about members not being allowed to drink alcohol when wearing their Greek letters, another sister expressed concern about Theta Nu Xi's potential lack of visibility within the strong Greek social scene of campus:

I think that everybody can, like, they can support social events with alcohol. I don't mean to keep coming back around to it, but let's face it, it's a big deal on campus.

And I'm not saying we should support that, but it's just one of those, like I can't go out and drink in my letters. I can't go out to a party and have my letters on.

Having a governing council in which Theta Nu Xi could participate played a large role contributing to the sorority's visibility, especially among other GLOs. During the chapter's first two years on campus, they did not belong to a governing council, so they were often excluded from brochures and meetings about Greek life, albeit unintentionally since the three existing councils were just starting to work together. Theta Nu Xi literally did not have a voice or a seat at the table. The sisters who most recognized the visibility provided by having a governing council were on campus during the chapter's early years. One sister expressed her frustration at the lack of initial visibility of Theta Nu Xi:

I've had people particularly, it's not always just a White male thing, but it happens to be that there were a lot of White males that had seen me wearing my letters and came up to me and said, what letters are those? I don't know any sorority with those letters. And I'd be like, I'm in the multicultural sorority, and they would be like, we don't have a multicultural sorority on campus, what are you talking about?

One of the sisters who helped establish the chapter at Monarch University explained,

When we first started the chapter...there was no umbrella organization or anything that would fit a multicultural sorority or fraternity actually. And for us to be able to do what we wanted to do, we knew that we had to create a multicultural umbrella organization that would allow us to not sacrifice any of our ideals. And so during the time I was there, we had started the movement to found the [MGC – the Multicultural Greek Council]...and I think that has really helped to put us in a place that is separate but distinct, but also integrated – that we're seen now as a Greek organization that is different from the other umbrella organizations but still have recognition within the larger Greek community.

During my interview with her, another sister came to the realization of the governing council's role in contributing to the sorority's visibility and commented,

Actually, you know, since when the MGC was created, Theta Nu Xi all of a sudden was known a lot more because, at least, in the Greek community even, a lot of people didn't know who Theta Nu Xi was until we were put under an umbrella organization, and then they knew. Oh, you're the one that's under the MGC along with these other groups that are also now under MGC. So having the umbrella organization has definitely put us on the map because before we were kind of floating out there.

Another sister connected visibility with their umbrella organization as well as Theta Nu Xi's interactions with other sororities and fraternities on campus:

And then we joined the MGC...then all the people that were Greek that were involved, like pretty heavily involved with the whole Greek system, they knew who Theta Nu Xi was after that. Because we were pretty solid, and we would always

come forward and always be putting ourselves out there. And I think that changed a lot of people's perceptions, and we became known. And then I think that the perception has been more like, you know, they're really small but they do a lot. I think there's a lot of respect for us now. I think it took a while to build it. I don't think it was there in the beginning, but I think we're definitely becoming a lot more respected in the community now....Like we're all over the place. And once you know who we are, I think it's very hard to miss us. But I think if you don't know who we are, then it's easy to just dismiss it and not realize what's going on.

Relationships with governing councils. When looking at the functionality of the sorority on campus, the overarching Greek social structure at Monarch University also includes the relationships Theta Nu Xi has with the four councils and their member organizations. These relationships are defined through interactions and challenges to those interactions. Before delving into the relationship dynamics, I will start by presenting the key differences and perceptions Theta Nu Xi members have of each governing council and their member organizations, particularly in light of the stereotypical beliefs many of these women held before joining Theta Nu Xi. Panhellenic is the governing council that houses the traditionally White sororities. One sister felt the need to explain, "I know that not everyone in a Panhellenic sorority is White, but that's kind of the face that you see when you see Panhellenic sororities." Comments included, "They do a variety of different things," and "They're more social." A very insightful sister remarked,

These are the sororities you hear the most about...They have a lot more members than we do, they have a lot of power to do a lot of things on campus. So although

they are social organizations, a lot of them have philanthropies that they're really closely associated with, and they are able to raise a lot of money for them.

She went on to say, "They have resources that I wish we could have...and they have more history than we do because we're relatively new." The Interfraternity Council (IFC) is the governing council that houses the traditionally White fraternities. One sister noted, "That's the face you see of fraternities on campus...They have their own housing...They're stereotyped as, you know, stupid frat guys or whatever, but a lot of them actually do believe in more than just partying." Elaborating on the importance of housing, another sister stated,

They have housing. I think all but like one has housing, or something like that...They're big and they have housing. And they spend...an obscene amount of money on alcohol every year, and so that really limits our interaction with them. They don't do a whole lot of non-social stuff...they're a lot bigger, and they have probably the biggest campus presence, just because they have housing. They have hou- I mean, it's said, I mean, you can be like, OK, so they have housing, move on. Well no, it's really a big deal. They have the place and they can have parties. They have the place where, you know, just essential meeting place and you know you're going to bump into your brothers there and stuff.

The National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) governs the nine largest historically Black sororities and fraternities. One sister elaborated on this description: "Otherwise termed the Divine Nine because in totality they can only ever be nine. There are no more. That is it." Another sister commented, "They have specific events that they promote themselves at, you know, they have step shows and they have long traditions on this campus of things that they

do, so they're pretty well known." A sister on campus during the early years of Theta Nu Xi being at Monarch University acknowledged the role NPHC played when there were just three governing councils:

I think that they kind of were picking up some sort of programming ideas towards the multicultural slant, like bringing people together from um, not just from their fraternity and sorority but all over campus...And they definitely were kind of the outsiders from the inside.

A more recent member of the sorority stated,

I think we would align ourselves more with them, although we would say that it's very important to realize that we're not, we're not NPHC, we're our own entity. We, I'd say we're the most similar to them in their intake process and that it's a longer process and just the way they structure it.

The fourth governing council created after Theta Nu Xi founded a chapter at Monarch University is being called the Multicultural Greek Council (MGC). As discussed earlier the MGC is a broader council for sororities and fraternities that do not belong to one of the three national umbrella organizations. These Greek letter organizations, therefore, may have greater similarities and differences than member organizations of the other three councils. They may have certain aspects in common such as a cultural focus and smaller membership numbers, but they have the potential of their procedures and activities not being as aligned, especially as new groups attempt to colonize on campus. The commonalities were demonstrated through this sister's remarks:

They're the council that I would say is most aligned with our mission and our intake process, although the intake processes vary among organizations, there is that constant that it's a little bit longer and you learn about the organization.

Another sister noted, "We definitely have the most in common with the chapters and all our people [in MGC]. Most of us are like, um, are values-based – that's what they call it, called values-based." Yet she went on to acknowledge the potential differences when discussing one of the newest organizations in the MGC:

They're definitely more social. I feel like their values are a lot more in line with Panhellenic, but Panhellenic wouldn't accept them because, you know, they have a national governing body, and Panhellenic wouldn't accept them so now they, you know, we're like, the etcetera group...we're like the everything else council, I guess. Which is mostly cultural Greek orgs, which is what we do.

The interactions Theta Nu Xi has with these different Greek governing councils and their member organizations help define their relationships and how they are able to function on campus. Certain relationships are better than others, but the sorority attempts to reach out and relate to them all on some level, looking for a common connection. This dynamic is summarized in the following sister's comment:

So, I think the biggest thing that Theta Nu Xi's relationship is with other Greek Councils is the fact that there aren't any antagonistic bonds. Like we don't have, like there're not problems we have with any particular group or organization. We really want everyone to work with us and everyone to work together. So I think that's, like really lends us, like I guess some credit because we don't, like we're not pushing

anyone away. We are not saying we don't want to work with these people...because we want to work with everyone.

Panhellenic and the Interfraternity Council are where members feel the most work could be done to improve relationships but also where two of the challenges exist in building positive relationships. One sister noted about Panhellenic,

We haven't done a lot with them in the past...It's just, they usually have only a few set events that they like to do every year beyond like parties, and that's not what we do really in the long term, especially because we can't have any alcohol at any events that Theta Nu Xi's name is on, like if it has Theta Nu Xi on it, it's a dry party.

There's no alcohol.

With regard to the Interfraternity Council, she went on to say,

Just again, they're set in their ways. They do these certain parties every year. That's what they do, and to get them to take that extra step forward is a little bit hard because they're like why do we need to do that, we already do this.

Another sister sees the potential that exists when she commented, "We've tried to work with [the Interfraternity Council] on a couple of things, like a couple of service things, and they've been supportive, so I think it's a group that we could maybe interact more with in the future."

The most positive interactions occur with NPHC and MGC. One sister explained,

We have a lot of members in Theta Nu Xi that are really close with some members in NPHC, like they're even roommates with them, so it'd be an easier council to do collaborations with, and we always go to their step shows, and so we probably attend more events with NPHC than any other council.

The interactions of Theta Nu Xi with the Multicultural Greek Council was described as follows:

We have very tight bonds with all of them...and I think like we know everybody there because the groups are traditionally small. So it's like you know those groups. You know who are in those groups. You've worked with them because we do our main collaborative efforts within MGC...And because we're a smaller council, we really know everyone.

Another sister remarked, "We try to go to as many MGC events as possible." Why Theta Nu Xi values so strongly their interactions with other Greek letter organizations, however, is best summarized in this sister's statement:

And it wasn't until the MGC got formed that it became clear that we needed to have better relations between all the fraternities and sororities on campus. So I think before we had maybe tried to go to one of, one sorority in Panhellenic's community service event. And maybe we would go to one community service event that one of the fraternities from IFC did. But this time it was really kind of center focus that we needed to be, we needed to be ambassadors regardless of how we thought that these sororities dealt them-, you know, themselves, these sororities or fraternities conducted themselves. We needed to champion the effort for all of the Greek system, because if we don't all band together then the Greek system's pretty much going to be flushed away because there's a lot of problems with, particular IFC and Panhellenic I would say for the most part. They're just social organizations now. They're not based off of what they were founded on. They were founded on a lot of principles that, like Theta

Nu Xi is, you know, principles and integrity and service to the community, and it's really not that any more. It's a social, it's a social organization so I think when we joined the MGC, we really wanted to be a part of the Greek community and serve as an example of what we think being Greek is all about, and to also help these fraternities and sororities kind of find their roots and get back to basics and so whenever they had any activity that was not a social activity, we would try to be there and be a part of it.

Theta Nu Xi faces several challenges in working with any of the four Greek Councils. As already alluded to and demonstrated in quotes above, the fact that Theta Nu Xi cannot support or participate in any events with alcohol limits the types of programs in which they can collaborate with any other fraternity or sorority on campus. Community service and educational programs were recurring themes in their collaborations. Given the strong social nature revolving around alcohol of organizations in Panhellenic and the Interfraternity Council as well as those organizations being "set in their ways," Theta Nu Xi continuously struggles to engage with these groups. Another challenge is the tendency of Greek letter organizations to segregate racially, as noted by one sister:

I guess, um, there's nothing written. There's nothing that's like set in stone or that, that's a policy or anything, but there's I feel like there is a huge racial divide within the Greek system – within Panhellenic sororities then NPHC sororities and then IFC fraternities and NPHC fraternities. And I feel like the Panhellenic sororities and the IFC fraternities don't really know all that much about the NPHC sororities and fraternities.

An additional challenge is that Theta Nu Xi's interactions with certain groups can fluctuate based on personal friendships that do or do not exist. One sister commented,

I think our relationship with them, it changes a lot with the membership, actually.

Because right now we have a couple of girls who have a lot of friends in some of the sororities and fraternities within the NPHC organizations, so it's a lot easier for us to say, hey, let's do something together. Let's do this event.

Beyond the specific efforts Theta Nu Xi makes to interact with the various governing councils, an effort by administrators working with Greek letter organizations seems to be helpful in improving relationships among the many sororities and fraternities on campus.

Networking between organizations became an important tool for one sister:

When I had my chapter president's retreat, and you go with like everyone, it was really great to talk to the heads of different organizations and get those connections.

So like in the future if we wanted to do something, they know who I am and I know who they are, and it makes it a little bit easier.

Size

The size of both the sorority and their governing council affect the functionality of Theta Nu Xi. The Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) is relatively new on campus and includes just a handful of sororities and fraternities, whose average chapter size is eight. As with all governing councils, individuals in their member organizations hold leadership positions on the executive board of the governing council. Given the limited number of member organizations, sisters in Theta Nu Xi are likely to hold leadership positions in both the MGC and Theta Nu Xi. As mentioned above in the sorority overview, the average

undergraduate Theta Nu Xi chapter size is 10 members with no chapter expected to have more than 30 members, which would be defined as small compared to predominantly White Greek letter organizations at Monarch University. The small chapter size provides distinct advantages and disadvantages to the sorority, yet many of the sisters interweave them and recognize how one situation has both positives and negatives with regard to its impact on the functioning of the sorority. There is also a nuance discussed by the sisters depending on where along the continuum of ideally small membership the numbers fall. The smallest membership the chapter ever had was four, so many sisters see that as the absolute lowest boundary of the continuum. Although the national office caps membership at 30, the ideal membership size preference ranged from 10 to 15 members, and there was a sense that the disadvantages started overtaking the advantages if the size approached 20 members. One sister summed it up by saying, “I think the size is one of the most positive and negative aspects of Theta Nu Xi.”

Advantages of the small chapter size included getting to know their sisters extremely well and spending more time together so as to learn from one another. Given the emphasis on sisterhood in the sorority’s mission statement, these advantages were highly valued. Increased involvement in sorority activities and being forced into leadership roles was viewed as an advantage and a disadvantage. Other disadvantages included being spread too thin, difficulty meeting the national sorority requirements, and not being able to accomplish as much as they would like, which also affects the impact Theta Nu Xi is able to make on campus.

Regarding how chapter size shapes the ability of sisters to know one another well and its importance, one sister commented,

I heard someone talking from a Panhellenic sorority and they were joking about how they didn't even know the name, like, they ran into this girl who they didn't even know was in their own sorority. And that just totally shocked me, because I was like that would, I mean, I just can't understand how you can *not* know someone that's your sister, like much less their name, like how can you not know about their background or their family or what they care about. So that's why I think the size is really important, to keep it small.

Two sisters insightfully connected effectiveness with the size of the chapter. One member stated,

I think that if we were much bigger, we wouldn't have the connection that we do...Some of the Panhellenic groups, they're just so big and they only have five people really doing the job. I think the reason we're so effective is because we're so close.

Another sister similarly remarked, "Being bigger would be better, but at the same time when I look at other big organizations and see how large they are, they aren't nearly as efficient per member as we are."

Interweaving the advantages and disadvantages of chapter size often associated knowing one another well with involvement and leadership activities as well as what the sorority is able to accomplish. One sister noted, "Because we're smaller, it is a little bit harder to do some things because we're all really busy...But at the same time, because we're

really small, we communicate very well and we understand each other very well.” Another sister articulated the dilemma she felt:

I think on a personal level for the sisters, it’s great because being a smaller organization means that we spend a lot more time with all of the sisters and we can learn from each other. We can learn from the things that we do. But it is taxing because being the small membership means that each sister has to do a lot more work and put a lot more time into it. And even when we have, we want to represent Theta Nu Xi at different events, if certain sisters are busy then, you know, even if one sister goes abroad then it takes a pretty large toll on the organization because that’s one less body that can do work or represent us at an event or speak on a panel or something like that.

Two sisters also verbalized a correlation between small chapter size and limited visibility of the sorority on campus. Struggling with how she sees size impacting the sorority, one sister observed,

You learn about everyone very closely, but then the size can always be a negative thing because, I mean, the more people you have to do something, potentially the greater it can be, but I think the size, like it ultimately becomes the good thing because – the fact that it’s small – because when you have a smaller size, everyone has to take a leadership role and you have to be invested, and because you work so hard to get into Theta Nu Xi, you like want to make it great. So if I was in an organization with like 40 people in it, I would be much more willing to sit in the back and let somebody else take the leadership role, but now I realize, like hey, I can’t do

that. I have to be involved. And so that's why I think Theta Nu Xi ultimately ends up doing so many great things, although I wish, like, I think, um like if we had more people, we'd be able to attract more people to events because we would be able to do more publicity and we'd have more connections.

Another sister commented,

I do think it probably negatively affects it because...of the perception that others have that we are like insular and not outward looking just because we just know a limited number of people. I mean, there aren't that many of us so, um, that affects the number of people that can come to our programming and that probably is the bigger effect...people just don't know necessarily because the best advertisement is word of mouth and so we're limited in that.

Along similar lines, a third sister saw the potential for having greater visibility and making a larger impact on campus through collaborations:

Having small chapter sizes, it is a lot harder to do big events without the help of other organizations because you're just, there's just maybe four of you or maybe there's 10 of you or maybe there're 12, whereas if you have a Panhellenic organization, I know they have so many women, I don't even know what the numbers are but a lot more. So I think that that is somewhat limiting, but I guess the other side of that is you can really seek out other organizations for collaboration and then other organizations can sort of meet the sisters and know who they are and know what they're about and say like, oh, Theta Nu Xi, I had a great experience working with them, um, we should really lend a hand to them or we should really pub who they are or let other people

know this is a great sorority. And I think you can build connections if you have to collaborate with other people because you just, you're just so small.

Theta Nu Xi prides itself on its intentionally small chapter size, which enhances the sisterhood relationships but also allows for many leadership opportunities. At an election I observed, there were six non-graduating members to fill 14 leadership positions within the chapter. One sister shared how she feels her leadership skills developed:

It's really helped me grow as a leader. I was president of Theta Nu Xi for two years, and it made me realize like what do I need to do to lead an organization to success, like I have to oversee all these different areas but then also how do I balance me being kind of a quiet person but needing to speak up and especially if I see someone disrespecting part of our organization or one of our members.

An alumna reflected on how she was able to put her leadership skills to use beyond college:

It has helped me be more confident and more of a leader...where else would I have been, had an opportunity to be a member of a national board at 20-something, you know 25, 24 or however old I was at the time. And because, again, we're so young and because you can give as much as you want to this organization, you can take things in new directions. You can start new initiatives. You can be the leader of something and not just at your chapter.

Another sister asserted, "I'm a stronger person, more of a leader, definitely. It's made me definitely learn how to work with people." As already mentioned, leadership positions must be filled within the sorority and in their governing council. Recognizing the small chapter size presents challenges by requiring members to fill multiple leadership roles, one sister

stated, “I just feel like you’re kind of forced up into those leadership positions because there aren’t that many people to take them.” The challenges these women also face as college students is reflected in this sister’s remarks about the size of the sorority:

I’ve seen it be really small, and I’ve seen it be bigger. So, I think when we were very small – just four of us – everybody was taking on roles, more than one leadership role. Though I think it sometimes, it could be a little bit taxing having to juggle the organization and other aspects of your life in college.

Members of Theta Nu Xi also recognized the disadvantage of their small chapter size regarding the pressure to meet activity requirements imposed by the national office.

Referencing the national office’s concern over a chapter size of only three or four members, one sister remarked,

They just feel like that that’s too small and that every year you’re so concerned about recruitment. You know, you can’t even breathe, you’re holding like three or four offices. You’re the president, treasurer, community service chair, education chair all at the same time...you can’t breathe when you’re that small...Because when you’re small, like real small, you feel stressed and, and just overwhelmed because there are these national standards you’re trying to achieve. Service hours, philanthropy dollars raised, education, diversity hours, you know, so you’re trying to meet these national standards but also have a presence on campus. Trying to recruit new members. So, you know, it’s time consuming.

Another sister also acknowledged the difficulty in meeting all of the obligations of the sorority when the chapter is small by commenting about recruitment, “It’s such a major part

of the year, you know...and if you work so hard on intake, then you neglect the other parts. But you know, without intake we wouldn't have an organization, so, just, it's hard.”

Nuanced discussions about the size of the sorority chapter emerged along a continuum of what they considered small, ranging from 4 to 20 members. The challenges faced by and stress of sorority members increased on the lower end of the continuum. At the upper end of the continuum and beyond, a different set of challenges emerged. One sister points out what she feels would be needed for a larger chapter size to be successful:

I think the sorority, the size is purposefully small...if it gets too big then it's hard to, it's hard to organize a lot of things because there's so many people. It's easy for people to kind of fall between the cracks...I think the high, we had like 15 people at once, and that was kind of, you know, on the larger side, but everything worked really well. I think we had more people to be at events and stuff. I think when it's smaller, you definitely cater – everyone's doing everything instead of like being able to go to some of the events, you have to be at all the events because you're the only people there in the chapter. And that kind of fosters a really unique bond. But at the same time with it being a little larger, I think that you still can, you know, meet the mission...I think, um, the reason that this sorority is smaller is because there, it's a lot of work and I don't think everyone's ready for it. And if maybe if there were 30 people that were ready to be a part of it, we could do it, but everyone has to know everybody else and be able to work together as a cohesive unit. I think once you get large numbers, you're unable to do that. And I think to be able to reach the mission, you do have to be able to work as a group together. Everyone has to have a job.

Everyone has to be going to all these events and doing this and doing that. I think it's very difficult when you've got a lot of people. I don't think it could be impossible, but I think it gets more difficult the larger you get.

Another sister integrates the key aspect of sisterhood into the discussion of a larger chapter size along the continuum as a beneficial means of sisters supporting sisters:

I think once it became bigger – I think, the biggest it was when I was there was about 14 members – and at that time, I think we were able to have sisters be as involved or less involved, depending on what their current, I guess, status is. If they were taking a very heavy class load, they can say, you know, this semester's really bad for me and I'd prefer not to be the vice president this semester. And that was easy to do when you have more members. And so I think with the bigger chapter size, we were able to kind of, um, if you have more time, you can give more time, and if you don't someone else will pick up the areas that you are not able to do. So I think it's nice to have that, knowing that this semester is bad for her but that I have more time so I can help her do certain things and vice versa.

One sister spoke from her experience of being active in the campus chapter with only four members and also in a GAP (Graduate, Alumnae, and Professional) chapter after graduation with 20 members:

So when you have 20 [members], people don't even have to hold offices. You're like, I'm just a member. And you revel and relax in that, and you're just like I'm hanging out and being a member, and I'm coming to stuff and supporting you guys, but I don't have to be the treasurer. I don't have to be the president.

In talking about approaching 20 members, she elaborated on the challenges that begin to emerge as the size increases:

It doesn't mean that you don't know the sisters, but you might not know her as well, like intimately, kind of like how she thinks...So, I guess, we don't know every member the same way and it's not this, you know, she's having a bad day and I can see the signs and things like that. It might be a little, you know, I know some really well, so it's sort of been through the thick and thin with me, but then some I'm getting to know. And it's just an ongoing process. Um, and it just, it just takes a little more work. You might need to e-mail that sister and sort of talk to her more, get to know her more, pull her aside and try to get, you know, pair up and do things together with her. But yeah, at 18 or 20, I think the challenge has been there is still a level of frustration because there tend to be with almost any group setting, women who do more than others.

Safe Space

Essential to the mission of Theta Nu Xi and their ability to function as a culturally diverse sisterhood is the creation of a safe space for open yet critical dialogue. The sorority's small chapter size, emphasis on sisterhood, and focus on multiculturalism provide an ideal combination to allow for the creation of this type of safe space. Critical dialogues among sisters demonstrate that differences of opinion can be shared in an attempt to understand a different position or experience without giving up one's own identity or fear of causing offense. The following quotes show how such safe space was established and provide specific examples of conversations around racial or ethnic identity, religion, and money.

This sister's comments reveal how the unexpected sisterhood within the sorority gave rise to a safe space for deeper discussion:

When I first joined, I was thinking more of a, um, activism kind of role. I thought, you know, we'd be able to do a lot of great programs, and get speakers and do funding, and a lot of service and things like that. But, the biggest part of the sorority for me now is the sisterhood that I find and the friendships that I've made, and I really – even though I told myself that, oh yeah, you know, this will be great or whatever, I still kept thinking well you know I have my own group of friends, and so that was still my safety net. And I didn't really think that I would get all that close to these girls just because I was thinking of it more as like a club or an organization. But it really has become a sisterhood, just from late night talks and like sisterhood retreats and things that we do together and then approaching subjects that I would never talk about with other people...well, I might, you know, it might be in a different context and might be uncomfortable and it might be more like a scientific or research kind of class or it might be some kind of a sociology class or something like that. But where you really sit down and you talk about things that bother you, about racial issues or cultural issues or questions that you have, and you can talk about your religions and things like that. So I feel like we've all really opened up to one another a lot, and through little, I guess we've never argued, but little differences that we've had to come across and things like that, we've learned a great deal about each other. So I would say that the primary thing with the sorority that touches my life the most is the sisterhood.

Another sister elaborated on the limitations of classroom dynamics as well as friends outside the sorority as compared to the environment established by Theta Nu Xi for critical dialogue when she remarked,

Well, we do talk about it a lot in my class...but then it's always in this academic setting and so it's not really like I'm talking to friends who I know who, um, I know feel the same way that I do about certain issues or don't feel the same way that I do about other issues, and so it's very important to me [to be able to go back to my sorority sisters and talk about it] because I know that, as far as my other group of friends, they're pretty homogenous...I don't feel like I'd be able to talk to my other friends as well about it without having to explain why I feel so strongly about certain issues or give a lot of background information and explain a lot of things that I know my sorority sisters already know that my other friends might not.

In order to have authentic or meaningful conversations, one sister stated the need for "complete open mindedness." Commenting on how the safe space is created, this sister noted,

So I think that when you go through things with someone, you become closer to that person and also because, not because we went through a whole lot of things together but because we felt like we were at the same place so we joined the sorority for the same reasons, or we could have discussions and not have barriers between us and we would have random get-togethers or sisterhood retreats and that kind of thing where we could just talk and laugh and cry and do all of those things together. So it really did become a sisterhood.

Another sister described what such a safe space looks like within the sorority:

I think we can talk a little bit more real about [sensitive topics like racial tensions]. I think that we all know and we approach all with a good amount of respect for everything and everything that's different. And being able to talk about things and ask questions and say, oh, so in this religion, what does it mean when you say this? Or why do you believe this and where does it come about? And you can ask those types of questions without feeling stupid or feeling ignorant or feeling like that these are just tacky questions to ask.

Transitioning from how the safe space is established to how their conversations occur, an alumna sister, who had several years to reflect, pinpointed the essence of critical dialogue within the sorority:

Any situation where you have people coming from different backgrounds, you'll have um, you may have long- you may have discussions about issues and not everyone's going to agree because of their different backgrounds. However, the difference I think in our sorority and maybe other situations where maybe people can't overcome those differences is that we understand that we have to and we have to respect other people's opinions because of where they, because that's what we're about. That's part of who we are. That's sort of why we exist and we try to encourage other people to sort of understand other people's backgrounds and be able to still collaborate.

A current sorority sister still experiencing such critical dialogues makes a similar observation from an in the moment perspective about the dynamics of such conversations when she stated,

I think it was a meaningful conversation because it like got a- like for whatever reason, we were willing to get a little heated about it, but we're, like even though we're so passionate about our particular side, like it was still constructive, and in the sense that like, I wasn't totally shut off from what she was saying and she wasn't totally shut off from what I was saying...and so I was trying to understand...I thought it was a really good talk. Even though [my sorority sister] and I are very different. It was a good talk.

Specific examples of critical dialogue among sorority sisters provide context for how and why such conversations can get “heated” along with the ability to hear one another’s perspectives and learn from each other. Some conversations may involve observations within the larger campus community while some may pertain to personal values and beliefs. Functioning as a multicultural sorority within a Greek system viewed as having a large racial divide can elicit discussions about identity. One sister shared,

Like, there's an Asian...in the Latino fraternity...then like the Black sisters that are in Panhellenic sororities and how they feel and do they feel like they chose. And there's a lot of that choosing issue – do they feel, and if you're biracial which one do you choose, 'cause you feel like you're split between the two. I guess we talk about a lot of identity issues and where, what do you self identify with and who do you feel most comfortable with and why do you think that is. So nothing that we have concrete answers to by any means, but things that we find interesting and of importance and that we wish more people would take notice to, I guess.

Learning about different religions is an aspect of diversity that resonated throughout sorority activities and conversations. Debating about specific views from a religious perspective can become volatile very quickly, but this young woman's remarks provide an excellent example of how sisters engage in critical dialogue around difficult subject matters:

[My sorority sister] is a really devout Catholic and...like I said I've gone to Catholic school for many years so I have certain problems with the Catholic religion that just don't make sense to me....We talk about kind of like the hot topics of abortion and the Catholic stance on premarital sex and stuff like that, and I would tell her about things that I just didn't understand about the Catholic church, and she would try to explain it to me....So, to me it was hard to agree with everything that she said. But you have to understand I don't have to agree with everything she says. I just have to be willing to engage her in a dialogue and understand why she thinks the way she does. And so it educated me on Catholic issues and her background because I was willing to at least talk to her about it even if she knows that I don't agree with her. Like and because we were sisters, we were able to have that dialogue without screaming at each other [and] being like, Oh I don't want to talk to this girl.

One of the most difficult conversations sorority sisters engaged in revolved around money and class issues. In talking with many students over the years, these topics were rarely discussed on campus, so there is significant value in the fact that the sorority was able to create a safe space to dialogue about it. The conversations, however, did not always come easily. A sister commented,

I think one issue that is really difficult to talk about is on money. Like we have people in our sorority from completely different socioeconomic backgrounds...and so there can always be conversations about money, like if we're doing something with money or if we're, um, that requires money like going bowling or something like that....I think that we definitely have had a couple [of conversations], especially like if someone brings up a topic and we'd be like, you know, I really thought that was kind of selfish when you said let's go off campus and I didn't want to say anything at the time, but I didn't have money. Or like I brought it up one time when someone was like, wow, I can't believe people like those rich kids that have money to pay for all their tuition, man, like they must be like so spoiled, and then [my sorority sister] and I just kind of sat there like...and so we brought it up in that instance, and that was kind of like when we were relatively new to the sorority, and so I was kind of surprised that we brought it up, but I was glad that we did because some people could talk- we could talk about it. And we talked about the relationship between our family and what they've told us about money and stuff like that. So I think even if it's kind of uncomfortable, they ended up being really productive conversations.

The second thematic finding explored the concept of structure. Surveying the structure of the organization provided a systematic perspective of how the sorority functions organizationally and how this influences the nature of the roles played by Theta Nu Xi. Structural decisions such as being a sorority rather than a student organization, the overarching Greek social structure at Monarch University, size of the sorority and governing council, and the creation of a safe space for open yet critical dialogue have implications on

the functionality of the sorority. The third and final thematic finding explored during this study was activities.

Activities

The sorority's activities provided supporting evidence of how the sorority spends its time promoting multiculturalism among members and to the larger campus community. Themes emerged regarding formal activities conducted by the sorority for non-members, informal interactions with people and groups outside of the sorority, activities planned internally for the sorority members, and informal interactions among the sisters of Theta Nu Xi. All of these activities contribute to the increased knowledge about multicultural issues by the sisters. This alumna's reflection provides an overview:

We did a lot of programming aimed at sort of hot topics...structured programming, making sure that you are putting on events that expose people to these different issues, multicultural issues...I think as a member you get more internal connections and you learn just by being around different people and sharing, and I think for non-members it's more of sort of programming as well as reaching out to different types of people and different organizations and saying like we see what you're doing and supporting them. So I think it's more structured for non-members than internally.

The sorority's activities also connect to all five tenets of Theta Nu Xi, which are scholarship, service, leadership, sisterhood, and multiculturalism.

Formal Activities

Formal activities that are planned by the sorority and include people not in Theta Nu Xi are guided by the sorority's mission statement to promote leadership, multiculturalism,

and self-improvement. Delving into the types of activities conducted and with whom they collaborate provides supporting evidence of how the sorority goes about attaining its mission, specifically around promoting multiculturalism. The sisters' insight as to how their activities and collaborators connect to the mission of the sorority is also presented.

Types of activities. Most of the sorority's formal activities are programmatic events planned for the larger campus community. Many are "educational events" that attempt to "bring about awareness" and "educate others about different cultures." These events included movie nights, forums and panels, food events, and dances. Showing such films as *Real Women Have Curves*, *A Day Without a Mexican*, *Crash*, *Killing Us Softly III*, and *But I'm a Cheerleader* present different perspectives on various multicultural and social issues that promote dialogue. Sometimes the sorority would have a faculty member attend to facilitate the discussion, and sometimes the sisters would do it. Sharing how she learned from the educational programs, one sister commented,

We had several movies that we showed – it was a really neat film series. I think we had one movie that was dealing with Indian culture, and it was bringing up some things about Indian culture that I had never really been aware of.

Regarding the movie events, another sister remarked, "We have really good conversations, like cultural discussions...with people that we don't normally profess to have these conversations with."

Forums and panels also cover a range of topics that raise awareness and promote dialogue about differences. The Gender Feud program described through a vignette in Chapter Four is one example. Religious diversity panels coordinated by the sorority

presented leaders from different faiths. This sister shared how she benefited from such a program:

Just like to hear the differences between all the different religions and the commonalities and I think it's something that people in the audience, we had a very good turnout, that they really appreciated because um I don't know. It is just like once you help- once you learn about the different- like where people are coming from in their religion and why they believe something, it's easier to accept their point of view even if you don't totally agree with it, because you can be like oh, well, they believe in this because these are their doctrines or this is where they're personally coming from.

The Stomping on Stereotypes program specifically worked to dispel myths used to judge others based on broad generalizations, which can be so deeply ingrained in our consciousness that we assume them to be true. Participants wrote down stereotypes that they had felt, experienced, or heard about and wanted to explore with the group, and the slips of paper were placed in a hat or bowl. As the hat was passed around, each participant would pull out a slip of paper and read the stereotype, which the group then discussed based on their own knowledge and experiences. This program provides an opportunity where “people can sit around and share what they have heard as a stereotype and then have somebody else to...say like well that's not necessarily the case.” One sister described an event she organized after reading an article in the school newspaper about whether multiculturalism is crucial or cliché. She explained,

I was inspired by this one article I read...that argued that multiculturalism is not an end in and of itself, and that it's actually a problematic term, that it should not be used indiscriminately to basically silence dialogue among people of different races, arguing that it is possible that, you know, just calling something multicultural means that it is just a PC term used to say, that effectively silences any useful exchange among people, you know, that together are termed multicultural.

Theta Nu Xi also worked on a panel discussion for first year undergraduate women to help them understand the sorority options available on campus under the different umbrella organizations – Panhellenic, NPHC, and MGC. This type of program is a great way to increase visibility for a newer sorority like Theta Nu Xi and promote an alternative to the traditional sorority, as demonstrated by this sister's comment, "To even have that discussion at all was kind of, I think was eye opening for a lot of freshman because for me, I didn't have, I didn't ever have that."

Multicultural food events introduce students to different ethnic foods and allow for sisters to share information about the cultures surrounding the food. The sorority takes advantage of tabling at larger events where they provide food samples or recipe books. As people stop by the table, the sisters can talk a little about it, answer questions, and convey information about the food's background. Multicultural potluck dinners provide a more focused event with a larger selection of foods from one particular culture or several cultures. The multicultural dinner event that I attended included Polish sausage and potatoes, a traditional Latin American dish called Picadillo, fried chicken, and Russian Borscht. One sister described how the learning occurs via a multicultural dinner:

We'll put up posters and have pamphlets and play music from all these different places around the world and people don't even realize that they are learning random things about countries they might have never heard of because it's just like part of the food that they're eating and we're chatting with them and it's just like, we're making it not an effort on their part. But they're learning more and it's like okay, I'm having food and learning more.

Another sister talked about how students are often drawn to programs that provide free food, and a third sister remarked, "If you can put a face to what you're doing and make it tasty, then people are more willing to learn about it." This kind of program presents an interesting opportunity to introduce people to food they might not have eaten before while also learning about a different culture.

Multicultural dance events are another type of activity that integrates fun with learning. Collaborating with various cultural GLOs and student organizations for these dances and even parties – albeit without alcohol – offers informal learning about different cultures through music and dance steps. An example might be a Salsa Night where the Latina/o culture is highlighted. One sister explained, "You learn how to dance, you learn different dances, but then you spark up these conversations with people who think they're multicultural, and they suddenly like get influenced to talk about these major issues."

Strolling is a more recent phenomenon among GLOs on campuses. Strolling is not to be confused with stepping known within historically Black GLOs, which could be described as synchronized movement by members of one organization, often involving stomping, clapping, and the use of canes. Conversely, strolling appears to be more like dancing set to

music and often has forward movement. Theta Nu Xi participated in a Stroll Show at Monarch University where they were partnered with two sororities from Panhellenic. Several sisters from each sorority worked together to create the dance routine, and they competed with other teams that partnered sororities from the different umbrella organizations. The fraternities also partnered across governing councils and competed against each other. Strolling is not considered an alternative to stepping and is more open to non-Black GLOs participating. This sister explained the difference:

Party strolling or party walking is, OK, it's kind of line dancing but not. You do it in parties to hip hop songs primarily – the intricacies often vary. But it's like the line of sisters will be doing it, or brothers because fraternities do it as well, and it's a coordinated set of movements to the beat of a song...[It's] not really an alternative to stepping because stepping is even more intricate than strolling and you're doing it more like in one place. Like while there is movement in different formats that are in that stepping, but the point of strolling is to move through a, you're supposed to have forward progressive motion throughout the stroll. So that's kind of the biggest difference I think for- between the two....But see strolling, because it is, well it's not usually viewed in the same like very-strict-it-only-belongs-to-NPHC light. It- what makes it so great, it's something that everybody can do.

The strolling competition was organized by the MGC, the umbrella organization to which Theta Nu Xi belongs. This event provided a wonderful opportunity to bring together members of various sororities and fraternities from different umbrella organizations in a very

collaborative way that certainly helps meet Theta Nu Xi's objective to bridge the gap between different organizations.

Theta Nu Xi implemented a variety of other programs and activities to educate the campus community. A few examples of these events include an overnight retreat for Girl Scouts, a career seminar, and workshops on financial literacy and leadership. More passive approaches also are taken: "We put up flyers just randomly sometimes about, you know, probing questions, um, what is being multicultural mean?" Each chapter of Theta Nu Xi has to raise money for a scholarship award given to a non-member woman who demonstrates the sorority's tenets of scholarship, service, leadership, and multiculturalism. This small monetary award strives to support women in the campus community and is presented as part of a ceremony typically held during a Founder's Week program. It can also serve to help raise awareness about Theta Nu Xi on campus. The sorority sponsored a multicultural fashion show in collaboration with other student organizations where different ethnic clothing was presented. This sister described her thoughts about the event:

Some people are kind of worried that that's been some sort of a pageant or something, but it totally wasn't like that. I mean, it came out really well, like better than I had imagined, like um, by letting people wear different clothing from different cultures and then the modern day derivatives, which I thought was nice. But, um, and it didn't matter. I mean I didn't have to be Asian to wear the Asian, you know, Southeast Asian or Asian outfit that I had on.

All of these educational activities attempt to get students on campus as well as members of the sorority thinking about multicultural issues on a deeper level. A few of the events might

be considered superficial, but each one “kinda really just embraces different avenues that you can go about embracing cultural diversity” and raising awareness. Some of the events described were coordinated by the women interviewed in 2001 and other events by those interviewed in 2007. One sister commented, “The organization does not define you, you define the organization. And so the events that we do are really, are strongly defined or based on who’s in the organization and what they feel like is important.”

With whom they collaborate. Collaboration efforts are guided by Theta Nu Xi’s mission to promote multiculturalism and their objective to bridge gaps between GLOs as well as ease of access. The sorority co-sponsors many events with GLOs and cultural student organizations. As discussed previously in greater detail under the thematic finding regarding structure, the relationship Theta Nu Xi has with each governing council varies. The most challenging collaborations are with Panhellenic and their member sororities and with IFC and their member fraternities due to the more social nature of programming by those groups, which often involves alcohol. Although the relationships are not antagonistic, one sister admitted,

We want to get Panhellenic involved in that because, like women’s issues are all women’s issues, not just Theta Nu Xi’s...Just again, they’re set in their ways. They do these certain parties every year. That’s what they do, and to get them to take that extra step forward is a little bit hard because they’re like why do we need to do that, we already do this.

Theta Nu Xi has been able to work occasionally with those organizations on philanthropic or service-related activities and continues to reach out to them, and the annual retreat organized

by the Greek Life office for all chapter presidents also helps build those relationships.

Regarding the retreat, one sister asserted,

It was really great to talk to the heads of different organizations and get those connections. So like in the future if we wanted to do something, they know who I am and I know who they are, and it makes it a little bit easier.

The Stroll Show and panel for first year women are great examples of collaborations across the different umbrella organizations. The majority of Greek collaborations, however, primarily happen with members of their own umbrella organization, MGC, and secondarily with NPHC organizations. Student organizations with whom Theta Nu Xi often collaborates usually consist of groups focused on specific cultures such as the Latino Student Association, Asian Student Association, and Native American Student Association. The sorority also collaborates with residential living groups focusing on gender or diversity, and regular collaborations occur with a student organization concentrating on improving race relations. Programs are often co-sponsored with multiple organizations, some Greek and others not, bringing groups of people together that might not normally overlap. One sister noted, “I think we’re open to working with all different groups who want to be involved.” Another sister elaborated, “We really want everyone to work with us and everyone to work together. So I think that’s, like really lends us, like I guess some credit because we don’t, like we’re not pushing anyone away.” Theta Nu Xi also has to actively work not to be stereotyped based on their collaborations. An alumna reflected,

One of the biggest issues [is]...making sure you’re affiliated with a lot of different types of groups because sometimes if you peg yourself into one type of affiliation,

then you're deemed that type of sorority... So then it's sort of like, OK, we have the support of the NPHC sororities and fraternities, now how do we get support from other groups? What other types of programming can we do that's in line with what they're doing?

Allies on campus shift and change as friendships develop and evolve. Collaborations can depend on sisters' personal relationships with members of other organizations, which can change from year to year as new members join and other sisters graduate.

How formal activities connect to the mission. The specific focus on educating the campus community through multicultural-focused programming is a key component of Theta Nu Xi's mission. Regarding the sorority's educational activities, one sister declared, "that really helps to advance multicultural issues." An alumna maintained,

One of our missions is to bridge that gap between the different groups, and I think with some of the programs we've done and just personal connections helped to kind of bridge the gap. Inviting different groups that normally don't work together to work in a group or sponsor an event I think helped to kind of facilitate more interactions and relationships.

Collaborations help break down stereotypes people may have about others such as realizing through a service project that "stupid frat guys... actually do believe in more than just partying." Another alumna discussed how the programming and collaborations connected to the sorority's mission of being living examples across differences: "I think on campus [we were] a little bit more active in trying to be those things and be those sisters and embody

those ideals. Just the nature of the programs that we ran.” At the same time Theta Nu Xi attempted to make the learning fun and inviting as explained by this sister:

You make it something so accessible to people where it’s not like, they get to fit it into their everyday life and not feel like they are doing something that’s weird...it goes back to making it fun – you’re making it fun and you’re making it easy. And you’re showing people that it’s not, it doesn’t have to be hard. It doesn’t have to be something scary. It doesn’t have to be something that you don’t understand or it’s something you know that’s like abstract, an idea that you don’t really want to deal with. It’s like you make it every day, you make it something that people realize it’s not hard, it’s not strange. It’s like all these people are around you, they do all these different things. Let’s talk about it. Let’s experience it. Let’s participate.

In the sorority’s efforts to educate the larger campus community, they often share their own knowledge and personal experiences during the programs they implement. A sister remarked, “I think the sisters really contribute a lot of personal experiences, and talking in the different education activities that we do in the community kind of bring[s] up different issues.” The sisters also learn from their own programming and continue to expand their knowledge base, as indicated by this comment about the Stomping on Stereotypes program:

“There were a lot of things answered for me that I wanted to be answered, so it was a good perspective.” Another sister indicated that “it was eye opening...stereotypes that people had against other people that I didn’t even know was an issue.” The examples of formal activities and the multiple Greek and non-Greek collaborations for these events clearly

provide supporting evidence of how the sorority goes about attaining its mission to promote leadership, multiculturalism, and self-improvement.

Interactions with Others

Activities are not just based on planned, collaborative programming. Going much deeper than that, activities of this multicultural sorority include informal interactions that are rooted in expanding their knowledge about others through getting to know people, their friendships and activities external to the sorority, showing support for other organizations, and serving as living examples in their daily lives. Being in Theta Nu Xi can open doors for more cultural interactions and dialogue with others and empowers sisters to be active bystanders. One sister connected formal and informal activities to the sorority's mission statement when she said,

You can promote acceptance through educational events or just being an example in your own life or maybe not even just doing anything that active from an educational sense, but just like by living your life according to accepting people with different beliefs and different backgrounds and different lifestyles. So, to me it is something you can take with you once you leave Monarch.

The aspect of informal activities with others outlined here increases the potential for positive interactions on individual and group levels by Theta Nu Xi and its members.

Getting to know people. Members of Theta Nu Xi develop a variety of personal and professional relationships with other students across campus who are not in the sorority. The reasons for developing such relationships can be internally or externally imposed, but their receptiveness to the learning process of getting to know people is a core component of the

experiences. An internally imposed desire to get to know people developed during high school for this particular sister, who began appreciating differences between herself and others:

Taking classes with these people and just getting to know them on an individual level and just realizing that I'm so much like some of them and I'm so different from some of them and it has nothing to do with what color your skin is.

Guided by the sorority's mission statement that bonds the sisters together, another sister commented,

We want to work with everyone. And we think working with everyone, there's always something there that we could be working together on, that we could be helping each other like, bring as an important issue to Monarch's campus.

Sometimes getting to know people can be externally imposed through mandated activities or by the very nature of being in a leadership role within the sorority. For one sister the annual leadership retreat organized by the Greek Life office for executive officers in sororities and fraternities provided an unexpected opportunity to build relationships with members of other Greek letter organizations (GLOs) and help break down stereotypes:

One place that I didn't think I would necessarily have authentic or meaningful conversations but I ended up having them was at a Greek retreat – Greek leaders retreat...I thought that it was actually very productive, like I got to know people in IFC and Panhellenic that I wouldn't have otherwise, and we did have, I think, helpful conversations on these different types associated with each council and how we can work to break those down...Like it helped me realize that not everybody in

Panhellenic is like a ditzzy whatever, and not everybody in IFC is like some frat boy that likes to drink beer all the time. And so on some level you always know that, but it's much easier to see – it's much better to see validation of that. And like see people that are like, oh wow, we should get together and do this service project together when we get back to campus.

As a leader within the Greek system, another sister shared the benefit she gained from being required to work with members of other GLOs:

I think I learned some valuable lessons being in [the Greek Life] office and working with those people from other groups because I didn't like those people, like I wouldn't have hung out with them, you know, they're not like my kind of people, but we had to work together. And I think that I learned a lot by having to work with those people because they weren't my kind of people. I did not get along with them. But yet, you know, we could all work together as a team, and that – I learned some valuable lessons from that experience, so. It was very helpful.

Friendships and showing support. Members of Theta Nu Xi have friends and are involved in activities outside of the sorority. Some sisters have just a few close friends while others are actively involved with multiple organizations across campus. The women interviewed participated in organizations such as the school newspaper, music-related groups, a diversity-themed selective living group, and a service club that provides a supportive social group for adolescent girls in the community. Because sorority members socialize with their sisters and their various groups of friends, education, awareness, and support flow freely among the different individuals. One sister remarked,

While we hung out together a lot, we also all had our own separate groups of friends that we were able to then meet through each other but were not in the sorority. So you know, even starting with, so what does it mean to be a multicultural sorority? Like what do you do that is different um, to what is this event that you're holding or questions that they would ask.

Another sister noted, "I think the beauty of our sorority is that we *can* have friends outside the sorority and also, like, connect those two." An alumna maintained,

I think what's good about the sorority is that you can actually be in the sorority and still do other things that are meaningful to you and also get the support of sisters in the sorority...If I have a busy week, my sisters are like, oh can I help you with anything, sort of thing. So it's not like all about the sorority or like scary sisters and you have to be with us all the time, but you definitely have time to sort of make those choices...and that's something that I really admire about our sorority is that we really try to encourage people to do other things and then we can help them with whatever they need.

This sister explained how the sisterhood has helped her connect and make new friends with others outside the sorority across campus:

So in Theta Nu Xi, I found sisters and each of those sisters would be doing different things. And so I would be having connections to all these different organizations on campus and all these different chances to make myself like a more well rounded person and a person who's willing to stretch my boundaries because I have more

knowledge of what's available on Monarch's campus and really take advantage of that.

Friendships outside of their sorority can help bridge the gaps between different organizations, too. One sister noted, "Since a lot of our members are close friends with women in NPHC, like whether they're roommates or they're just friends with them, it's easier to collaborate with NPHC, particularly NPHC sororities."

Theta Nu Xi feels strongly about showing support for other organizations through participation in programs aligned with the sorority's mission and values. This may include attendance at the step shows and cultural events by non-Greek groups. This sister's remarks demonstrate how the sorority has shown support and led by example:

So just showing up there and we always wear our letters, and so letting people know that even if we're not Asian or Black or whatever, we still support and we still want to learn about these things. And so like one of the things that I think is one of the best things that we did is that we attended an NPHC, I think it was Delta, the Delta's ball, like they have a formal, and so we got invited and just like all the Greek organizations get invited, but we're like, you know, we should actually go. So we showed up and it was a weird feeling for some of us because everyone was Black except for us and our table, but like, you know, it made a statement. It made a statement that we're not afraid to like, we want to support our friends in NPHC, and we're not afraid just because we're White girls to show up to this thing. And you know we ended up having a really good time. We're friends with a lot of the Deltas anyway and so we showed up, and we supported their philanthropy and they had like dances and good

food and so we had a fun time. And so sometimes – and they told me after that like people were talking about it for like three weeks that we showed up, that these girls that have no ties to NPHC were at this thing. And so I think that’s the best way that you can show that you’re supportive of issues is actually doing something yourself. Concerned about the direction the Greek system is headed, another sister talked about how they showed support for the traditionally White sororities and fraternities by participating in their non-social activities such educational forums and community service in an attempt to help those organizations get back to the principles on which they were founded. She commented, “So it would be like we really support you guys, and this is going in the right direction.”

Activism. Given Theta Nu Xi’s belief in affecting change beyond the sorority itself through the promotion of multiculturalism, their activities naturally embody an inherent aspect of activism. Such activism may emerge through “taking a stand on the issues that are going on [on] campus” or through being a living example in their daily lives. One sister explained that by having friends who are involved in other types of activities on campus, she feels they are “broaden[ing] their horizons” just by seeing and hearing about the activities in which she is involved. This alumna shared how members of the sorority can raise awareness and make a difference just by being themselves:

There are ways in which that happens actively and passively so even when we are in DC somewhere or all hanging out together and having dinner or having some charity event, somebody else walks into the room and sees all of us together there or we’re

all taking a picture or something, and I think it is striking to a lot of people, oh those are your sorority sisters? Everyone's different.

Just by their involvement in Theta Nu Xi, students found the members approachable. This same alumna reflected,

They would know that it would be OK to talk to us about those things or they could come to us and we're pretty open about what we do and what we believe in. Um, but also just seeing us on campus and a lot of things that we were doing, things that there were, um, groups out there that were, whose mission it was to be more inclusive and to learn and to embody the ideas that we said that we did.

Another sister asserted how she witnessed the sorority's efforts being noticed and acknowledged on campus:

We got an invitation, a personal invitation from the Coming Out Week Committee saying that they wanted us, or that they were inviting us to the Coming Out Week dinner and that we were the only fraternity or sorority on Monarch's campus that was invited. And that said a whole lot to me because it just meant that they know us enough to know that we are accepting.

Two sisters who were on campus at different times made similar observations about being able to make a difference "by being involved in the campus and by being who we are" and being "a little bit more active in trying to, trying to be those things and be those sisters and embody those ideals." This sister revealed how she goes about trying to influence students on campus through her interactions with others:

I've been able to be that living example of what you can be on Monarch's campus and what those options are. So the fact, it's made me more aware, I think, of how I hold myself or what I tell others or how I speak just because these issues that are Theta Nu Xi's issues are just as important to me, and so when I go around talking to people and I talk about the fact that I love multiculturalism...when you bring the other ideas to other people just through like the basic conversation and saying, hi, I'm Stephanie. Let's talk...So when I bring that to everyone around me, then that's the epitome of I think of me being a Theta Nu Xi sister.

Opening doors. Being in Theta Nu Xi opened doors for greater cultural interactions and dialogue with and by sisters. One sister compared her involvement in the sorority with a SAFE sign on her door, which serves as an indicator that someone is sensitive to and supportive of LGBT individuals. Membership in Theta Nu Xi, alternatively, serves as an indicator to openness about a broader range of multicultural issues so "people feel like they can talk to us, you know, because we're that group...It kind of gives people the freedom to talk about whatever they want with us."

An alumna described how a conversation proceeded to open the door wider for greater communication:

I met a girl who was in AKA [an historically Black sorority], and then when she started realizing that I knew what that meant and what an AKA was and how it wasn't just another sorority and how it had all this historical significance, she was a lot more comfortable sharing, you know, stories about her sorority and her sisters and when she joined and the chapter she was in and that kind of thing with me, and then was

very interested to find out about my organization. And so we were able to kind of have that discussion because initially when she said oh, you're in a sorority. I didn't ask her but I pretty much assumed that she thought oh, it's that, you know, it's a Panhellenic sorority or it's just any other sorority. Um, but then when I, I think when she realized that I knew more about her organization than she would assume that I did, she began to wonder oh, well, then what kind of sorority are you in? And you know, how is it like mine and how is it different from mine.

This same alumna shared how these types of conversations did not remain isolated from the sisterhood but was a part of the overall learning process for them as well:

I feel like I've had really good conversations with non-sorority sisters all the time...and I know...that other sisters have also, on their own time with their own group of friends or with other people, have had meaningful, good meaningful discussions. Because sometimes we'll come back and you know, talk to each other about it. And oh, I talked to so and so about this today, and it was really interesting and these are the kinds of questions that he or she asked.

Sisters also learned from such conversations, as demonstrated by this sister's remarks:

When I came to Monarch and joined Theta Nu Xi, it exposed me to a whole different like realm of- aspect of multiculturalism. Like I had no idea about a lot of issues that affect – that I've talked to my Black or African American friends, like a lot of issues that I never thought would affect them, just like how they feel like, well, some of them feel like they can't divorce themselves from their race, like Black is like a really – like it's just part of their identity...I can separate myself from that if it's most

convenient to me, and but it's not the same for them...And then like Asian culture...[having] a shoe closet outside because it's part of Korean culture not to wear your shoes inside the house... And so like just interactions with people that teach you about different cultures, and I wouldn't have gotten that if I hadn't met [my sorority sisters], and I wouldn't have gotten that if I hadn't come to Monarch and joined Theta Nu Xi.

Active bystander. Several sisters described what I would call becoming an active bystander, which means speaking up about inappropriate behavior or comments. The safe space of the sorority may provide opportunities to practice having those conversations or involvement in the sorority may strengthen sisters' convictions to respecting differences. One sister gave an example of how a situation played out among the chapter, starting as a superficial conversation but ultimately going deeper:

We were thinking of doing a mixer...with a specific fraternity on campus. And one of the girls sent me an e-mail asking me oh, what kind of guys are these? Are they like nerdy guys, are they party guys? And I was just like, please tell me you didn't just ask me what these guys' stereotypes are...There were a few e-mails sent back and forth, like this is not important. Like it doesn't matter what their fraternity might be viewed as on Monarch's campus. It's our willingness to get to know the people in it who are actually representative of that organization that really matters.

An alumna talked about having "some educational moments" with a sister who made assumptions about race and class. One assumption the sister made was that individuals from the same racial background might get along better, and the alumna explained that she was

“fine with getting to know all of them equally,” referencing a group of people with whom the two of them were going to meet. The national listserv for sorority members allows for posting ideas and information as well as the space to question and challenge what was posted. One such discussion pertained to Nike’s development of Native American shoes with one perspective being that it was “cool and a good thing” while the other view was “that’s wrong and this is why.” One sister described training offered by NCCJ, the sorority’s national philanthropy at the time. She shared,

They put on certain educational events like how to approach people when someone says stuff like a racist remark within your earshot. And sometimes you want to sit back and not say anything and just pretend like you didn’t hear it. But then they give you certain tactics of like how to approach the person without like maybe embarrassing them in front of a lot of people because obviously if they get embarrassed they’re not going to want to engage you in conversation about it.

One sister testified as to how another sister confronted the chaplain of her campus ministry group after a comment was made during a meeting:

[The sister] said at her [campus ministry group] meeting they were saying somebody, it’s kind of like um, it was kind of addressed that somebody was experiencing certain feelings about who they loved and that sort of thing, but um, and the minister or the guy who oversees it was like we’re gonna go talk to him to see if we can like turn things around. And she actually went up to the guy later and she’s like what did you mean when you said like turn things around? And so it’s kind of like calling people on it, and, in a personal sense and not just on a, at a sorority sense.

The comments by this alumna indicate the approach she takes when being an active bystander:

It's just something that if you have the knowledge, I feel like it's almost an obligation to share it with people. And I wouldn't have it had I not been in a sorority. And it just crosses so many different areas, just religious issues, ethnic identity issues, sort of celebrations and religious obligation...I always try to say things in a way where I'm sort of teaching and it's like a knowledge thing and not like not like I know this and you're stupid and you're wrong. I'm like, well have you ever thought about this and maybe this could be the reason why someone feels that way or do you know that in this culture that blah, blah, blah generally means this, and sort of like are you aware instead of like this is the right answer or this is the reason for why this is going on. And I think people are more receptive to that.

These informal interactions with others help expand the sisters' knowledge about multiculturalism as well as help raise awareness and educate members of the campus and larger community.

Internal Planned Activities

Sisterhood interactions consist of planned activities involving only the sorority members (internal formal) and more social interactions that allow them to learn from one another (internal informal). Activities involving only the sorority members provide opportunities to enhance most of the principles that guide how Theta Nu Xi accomplishes its mission. All of the sorority's activities revolve around their five tenets of scholarship, multiculturalism, service, leadership, and sisterhood. Internal planned activities include

diversity training, the intake process, service, business meetings and conventions, and retreats and sisterhood events.

Diversity training. Members of the sorority are required to have a certain number of diversity training hours per semester, which expands their knowledge about multiculturalism. Sisters may participate in training to become formal allies for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, where they learn how to be supportive and affirming of LGBT individuals. One sister commented, “Sometimes we count as going to panels as getting diversity training, so when we learn about different religious groups or different cultural groups.” Attending trainings by their national philanthropy at the time, the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ), provided sisters skills on how to be facilitators themselves and lead discussions around multiculturalism and respecting differences. Another sister explained that an NCCJ training taught her how to be an active bystander:

They put on certain educational events like how to approach people when someone says stuff like a racist remark within your earshot. And sometimes you want to sit back and not say anything and just pretend like you didn’t hear it. But then they give you certain tactics of like how to approach the person without maybe embarrassing them in front of a lot of people because obviously if they get embarrassed they’re not going to want to engage you in conversation about it.

An alumna described an activity another sorority sister facilitated via teleconference as an LGBT awareness exercise and then again in person at the sorority’s national convention:

It was called the Coming Out Star...We cut out a star...and then she reads these sentences...If your employer doesn't accept your sexuality or something, you rip off or tear the points of the star, and so then you're left to really think of what it might feel like if you had come out and things like that. We all did it by phone, and we were all kind of upset because it was just really a hard-hitting exercise.

Intake process. The intake process for joining the sorority introduces potential new members to multiculturalism and starts developing the ideal of sisterhood and cultivating them as leaders. While there are aspects of intake that are secret, the standard intake process is provided on Theta Nu Xi's website and discussed to the extent possible. The process starts with general interest meetings, described in the previous chapter, where potential applicants learn more about the sorority. Following these meetings, interested women are asked to attend at least two events during ONE Week, where different informal events are held as an opportunity for interested women to interact with each other and members of the sorority. One sister explained that during these interest weeks, they try to connect an activity for each of the five tenets "so hopefully sisters will take an opportunity during that time to also educate themselves and the broader community and also the interested women on multicultural issues." I participated in two programs – a multicultural dinner and a leadership workshop – during a similar week of events around the five tenets in celebration of the sorority chapter's founding. The aspirants may then be invited to a formal interest meeting, have to submit an extensive application, and are interviewed by current members. Passing all of these stages, prospective members are notified that they have been selected to continue in the intensive intake process that can be as short as a few weeks but no longer than

a semester. This flexible process is intended to be selective rather than competitive, and Theta Nu Xi has a strict no-hazing policy. The importance of the intake process surfaced in many of the interviews. Alluding to the potential for leadership development, one sister asserted,

I think the important part is that it's a process that makes you reflect on who you are as a person, what you think of these, like how do these, like, this mission statement that we say and we all know by heart, like what does it actually mean. And what does it mean in practice and what does it mean to you personally... You learn about the sorority and it's mission and it's history, and so you know about the background and you learn about how you can create its future.

Learning about multicultural issues also plays a part of the intake process. When interviewed in 2001, this sister explained,

We read the book *Divided Sisters* and we have to talk about it... The whole process is really getting to know your sisters. Getting to know the founders and that, in itself, is just a really – programs you to get better multiculturalism because there are so many things you learn about your sisters and about the founders, that are just completely just different and you really get to know that.

Regarding the development of sisterhood, one woman remarked,

I was skeptical at first because I always thought that just because you joined a sorority didn't mean that you were gonna necessarily become close to everybody in that sorority. But I think it really did become the case because of the nature of our intake process.

Developing the ability to work together during stressful times also came out, a benefit in maintaining the sisterhood relationships while managing the business functions of the sorority. One sister shared,

But when we pledged together, it wasn't like we liked each other the whole time. I mean we didn't hate each other, but we had these moments where I'd be like, can you *please* stop whistling with the radio, it just gets on my nerves – because we were around each other *so* much, for such a short amount of time.

Once the intensive intake process is complete, the newest members of the sorority are officially introduced at a public ceremony called an emergence. There is a celebratory aspect to this ceremony, which may consist of a combination of poetry, performance, singing, reciting the Greek alphabet, and calling out to other Greek letter organizations on campus. Sorority sisters from other area chapters of Theta Nu Xi will often attend, creating a sense of reunion for the existing members. One sister reflected on why the emergence ceremony is one of her favorite sorority experiences:

It's like a special time, and so everyone will come and then it's special for the girls because it's like just pride, and it's special for you because you've worked so hard to get them to that point that like, it's just, I don't know. I've never felt such a sense, like of such a bond between people that are not related to me.

Touching on the potential risk associated with any intake process, this sister observed,

I like crossing ceremonies much better than the intake process. I don't really like the intake process, just in general. For me, it's, I just, because of things like hazing and what not, I just have a concern that it could be the place where people will go

wrong...I don't like that power dynamic or what not, but um, crossing ceremonies, when you have these sisters who are just about to join – those are like really beautiful happy times with the rituals and the song and just, people are so happy, and it's just a, like graduation... Everybody's just so happy and there's tears and there's emotion and there's reliving and thinking about when you crossed...When you see the women, their eyes light up the first time they get to wear their letters.

Despite the intensity and potential challenges of the intake process, it also unites sisters of Theta Nu Xi across the country. One sister commented, “You know that another girl, even though she's from Utah, she's been through the same thing that you have and you guys have this common bond. And it's automatically like whoa, you're in Theta Nu Xi! I am too!”

Service. Theta Nu Xi also believes in service to the campus and community. Although service projects can be done individually, spending time together in small groups or as a chapter in order to meet their service requirement enhances the sisterhood relationships as well as their personal commitment to service. When asked how being in Theta Nu Xi has changed her life, one sister gave several examples, including the following:

It's made me realize the importance of getting active in your community. I could have very easily gone through Monarch and done my studying stuff and maybe done like some community service stuff here and there, but realizing how important it is to be active because you really do affect peoples' lives and like, I guess, sometimes even if you don't want to do it and you force yourself to do it, that's like, I realize that sometimes I really don't want to do community service or a certain activity, but I force myself to do it and then I realize that once I do that, that it really is nicely

rewarding. So just realizing, I hope that I take with me once I leave Monarch, that like doing something that, it's very cliché, but takes you out of your comfort zone can really be immensely rewarding. And so you shouldn't stop and not do something just because you feel afraid or you feel like you're going to be uncomfortable and not know what to say to somebody that you're working with.

Volunteering with and raising funds for their national philanthropy also contributes to the tenet of service. Speaking of one such recent walk-a-thon event, a sister noted, "It was an example of our goal basically to, that different people can work together, different people from different backgrounds and everything can work together and understand their differences and celebrate them."

Business meetings and convention. Participating in regular business operations of the sorority and attending the national convention are key ways that members develop their leadership skills. Keeping in mind that Theta Nu Xi was founded in 1997, the women I interviewed who were involved in the sorority at the time of my first round of interviews in 2001 were pioneers in helping establish the sorority that exists today. One alumna described the sorority's growth she witnessed between the 2000 and 2001 conventions:

I love conventions – and two in particular sort of stick out. The one I went to in 2000 and the one in 2001...because it was like going from nothing to something...[In 2000] we are in this shabby, shabby hotel with the like rusted pipes, you know, it was just so sad. It was a motel and it was like we met on [a chapter's] campus and we were in some little room...And then in 2001 it was in DC and it was so much better. It was so like, like a real convention. And it was at a hotel and we had the block of

rooms and we did all the meetings at official tables and, you know, it just was, microphones and the head panel and just it had been, every convention since then has been better and like that, but it was such a drastic change...Going from 4 or 5 chapters to like 8 or 9 the next year and in a better facility and saying this is what it could be.

Another alumna affirmed the leadership skills she observed at a recent national convention and how that contributes to the success of Theta Nu Xi:

We had meetings where there was some legislation on the table, and um, but I mean, we have time limits, so a couple of people can speak and you have your, the format and it's very professional. It's surprisingly professional. I'm thinking like we have all of these college students and they're like 20 and I'm 27 so I'm old now, and they're very professional. There's time, there's seconds, second the motion, whatever, so I think because we have structure, we're able to sort of achieve what we set out to do.

At the chapter level the sorority has to function as an organization. I was allowed to attend a few of the sorority meetings as part of this study. I can confirm the professionalism with which these meetings functioned – a typed agenda was distributed, items for discussion were allotted time limits, and the time was monitored. If someone's topic was going over their allotted time, they asked for an extension and someone else could give up a minute or two of their assigned time. This structure provided the sorority a means by which they could cover many business items in a realistic amount of time. One alumna described how members are selected to hold leadership positions within the sorority, touching on a challenge of

maintaining the business functionality of the sorority amid sisterhood that resonated in an election process I later observed. She explained,

We have a formal nomination process and a formal acceptance. We can accept or decline nominations and then there's a formal vote...But elections are always generally somewhat contentious because everyone that really, that's sort of running really wants to do it, and sometimes you have a, you just have people that stand up to sort of support a candidate and they say things like, oh they give me great hugs. And then some people are like, well that's not really appropriate for the role that this person is going to play.

Another sister noted,

All my best friends are in Theta Nu Xi. It's important because there's like, sometimes it can be an odd dynamic working with people that are so close to you as friends, and so you have to sometimes be a business person and sometimes be a sister. So that's an interesting – something interesting to play with, but when it comes down to it, everyone always supports each other. And I know I've created some lifelong friendships.

Appreciating the business meetings for how they help develop sisterhood, this sister observed, “There is a lot of business that we have to go through and just focusing on the business even, like you learn a lot about each other and how one another works.” Weekly sorority meetings easily last 1.5 to 2 hours, and after the initial ice-breaker/check-in activity, the agenda is full of business-related items. Officers give updates on their areas, upcoming programming events are discussed, and tasks are assigned. Sorority legislation is reviewed,

announcements are made, and logistical questions are asked. Because the weekly meetings are chock-full of business and the sorority does not live together, the women realize the need to plan social events that allow them time to more deeply develop the sense of sisterhood on a personal level. An alumna reflected, “We had to kind of make sure that we had fun with each other and didn’t just work all the time.”

Retreats and sisterhood events. Planned social events primarily consist of semester retreats, monthly sisterhood events, and weekly sisterhood dinners. Such events serve as a transition between formal planned events and informal interactions between sisters, and therefore, aspects of each will appear in both sections. Regarding the business value of retreats, one alumna remarked,

I also enjoy the group retreats that we’ve had. The retreats are really helpful for the chapter I think on the whole because part of that time we do business-related things where we get kind of a goal, a plan for the upcoming semester so everyone’s on the same page, and everyone contributes to what we think we should be doing this semester. So it helps to kind of lay the groundwork for the upcoming months. This sister alluded to the valuable informal interactions during retreats, which will be elaborated upon in the next section as ways they learn from each other. She shared,

We have sisterhood retreats in the fall and in the spring, and we do business and stuff like that. We have to actually do legislation, and that’s when we plan out our calendar of all the events that we’re going to do for the year. But then we also try to make time for fun stuff, so we have like a sleep-over, which is fun for me because I was never allowed to sleep over when I was younger, and so I feel like I’m regressing

to my childhood and getting to stay up and talk to my best friends. And you know, we'll watch a movie or have dinner together and order pizza and stuff like that. So those are always fun.

In addition to the business discussions and free time spent “hanging out” together, retreats may also incorporate games that intentionally facilitate meaningful multicultural conversations and greater intimacy between sisters. These interactions can be emotionally charged because they often involve very personal feelings and experiences. One sister explained,

We just had my alumni chapter retreat and we went away to the beach for the weekend. We played this game where one sister would say a phrase such as I think that marriage should only be between women and men. And then there were three areas in the room where you could stand. If you agree, you were far right. If you don't agree you are far left and then there's the middle and then you could kind of stand on this line. And it was really interesting to me to see what my sisters thought about different issues...just sort of understanding why people believe the way that they do...And even if you don't agree because of the way, your background, you can still sort of understand and appreciate that person's willingness to share their ideas and their background with you. And I think that makes it easier for you to be able to make decisions and also lead, be a leader because you sort of understand how people work. And, but anyway, I just learned a lot about – because after the game, we sat down and talked about the issues and how we felt the way that we did on the different

phrases that were announced. I thought that was just a good experience because we're so diverse in a lot of different ways.

Her comment also connected such activities to the leadership tenet and the acceptance of others concept discussed earlier as it relates to identity. Regularly scheduled dinners and events developed over time as the initial members of the chapter became aware that the sisterhood tenet was not being realized as deeply as it could. Sharing why these planned informal events arose, a founding sister of the chapter acknowledged,

When we first came on campus...I still thought of it as Theta Nu Xi, this organization that I'm a part of, and I really liked the girls, they're a lot of fun, but I wasn't, um, I wouldn't call them and talk to them about my problems or anything like that...I feel like we started realizing this at some point at the end of the semester and started talking about, you know, we really only see each other at chapter meetings...and we really should do things just for fun, just to hang out with each other and get to talk and things like that. So we started trying to do weekly dinners and things where we would just be able to get together and talk. So I think that helped a lot...When you see them at a sleep over or something where everybody's just goofing off and we're having fun, but yet we can sit there and talk about [things] that are important to all of us and things like that, it really makes you feel a lot closer. So I think that had a lot to do with it. It was, it definitely was a conscious effort, though, because we were so busy, and especially just being so few of us, we tried a lot harder to become friends more than we were just part of an organization. And then that carried on when we had more girls enter the sorority.

Indeed these planned social events have carried on. Two sisters I interviewed in 2007 described the events and what they meant to them. One commented,

We have sisterhood dinners...we're supposed to have them every week...I really like that. Like that's, I'm a real stickler for that...I really like it because it forces us all to come together, and we're always like, OK, all right, we have to eat dinner, I have to eat anyhow, let's just like talk about our week, hang out, you know. So, I really, I really like that. That's one of my favorite events...Oh, we have monthly sisterhood events, too. So like every month somebody will plan something...We have sisterhood events and we just kind of hang out.

The other sister explained, "We'll have sisterhood events every month...Each sister will have a sisterhood event to plan, and then she does, she basically plans it for whatever she wants to do and we all do that activity together." Regarding these dinners and events, she said, "It's great to be able to know that there are people who like my company and who I enjoy being around." Examples shared about monthly sisterhood event activities included dressing up for Halloween and going out together, and another month they got together and ate cookies. An alumna provided a different example of how her GAP (Graduate, Alumnae, and Professional) chapter connects such social events back to the larger purpose of the sorority:

When we do sisterhood things, we might put in a multicultural twist to it, too. We've been doing these things for [my GAP chapter] lately called World Tour Dinner. And it just means we go to a restaurant of different ethnicities or with the food from different countries, but then we also ask speakers to come and sort of teach us about it. And whether or not it's a person who's from there or a person who's read up or

traveled there and brings their photos and things like that. We've done four of those, five of those this past year as a grad chapter. It wasn't open to the public, but it was us educating each other.

This sister summarized why such planned informal activities are so meaningful to her when she said, "You just get sucked up into the business...[and these events support] those sisterhood bonds and making sure that we're still liking as well as loving each other."

Internal Informal Interactions

Ultimately the sorority sisters learned the most through their informal interactions with one another. An array of examples convey such interactions, and deeper conversations seemed to occur in several key locations. The dynamics of sisterhood relationships are described and what these women feel they have gained from such informal interactions with one another are presented. One sister remarked, "You've got the formal outlets, then you've got the informal outlets, which I think are often the most useful of just like interacting with people from different cultures."

Examples. Although the women did not live together in sorority housing and at times felt the need to plan chapter-wide informal interactions, their social activities together were enhanced as their friendships developed or in an attempt to develop them. One sister explained, "Whenever we see each other, we try to make the most of our time together because we know that there's hardly any time that we're together that it's not dealing with business." Their commitment "to make more of a personal effort to call one another and to have sleepovers" seemed to work. They try to stay in touch via e-mail or by calling one another. If they saw each other around campus, they would intentionally stop and chat for a

few minutes. Smaller groups and even pairs of sisters got together for lunch or dinner outside of the regularly scheduled sisterhood dinners. Two sisters started going to church together, and sometimes they would go to breakfast afterwards. Sisters described going shopping together, enjoying sporting events, going to the state fair, and going to parties. A sister may be planning to do something and will send out an e-mail inviting others along. A recurring response as to how they informally interacted with sisters included sleepovers, watching movies, and appreciating “down time together.” One sister remarked,

We had a sisterhood retreat this past Saturday. Were we doing anything? Not really. We cooked lunch and we watched bad TV, and it was so much fun because we were laughing at the TV and chatting with each other and just like, you’re just being there and having fun and reconnecting with how you’re more than just a business – more than just the events that you put on. So I think those are really, like they’re really important to me.

They attended a sister’s wedding and visited sisters at their homes. If they didn’t know a sister as well as they liked, they would mix up roommates when they went to convention so they could intentionally “hang out.” Another sister described how she viewed such interactions:

One of my favorite activities was our first retreat away from campus. We went over, like drove to one of our sister’s parents’ house and stayed there for a weekend, and it was really nice to get away from campus. And we stayed up all night like giggling and being silly, and we got to see a little glimpse into her culture because her mom made ethnic food for us, and [we] met her brother...And then we just went out into

the city and had lunch, and it was like my first out-on-my-own-with-my-sisters sort of trip.

The sisters really seemed to value and appreciate the social aspect to their interactions. Several examples included sisters having classes together or being in the same major, interacting through their academics. They studied together and sometimes “would pull all-nighters the day before an exam.” One sister shared, “And even though I was a freshman and she was a junior, she came and sat by me. And we sat by each other in class every day, and that meant so much to me.”

As members of the sorority, they were conscious about attending other events on campus to show the sorority’s support. The event might be a cultural group’s dance performance, a step show featuring historically Black Greek letter organizations, a program by the LGBT organization, or a race relations discussion. An alumna asserted,

And I feel like the national organization doesn’t even have to say you should do this. I think the members just do it anyway, you know. They’re just so motivated and this is the sort of thing they want to do to get out there. And we would all send e-mails around, oh, this is going on, you know, do you want to come? Do you guys want to go together? We should totally go and show up to this event, I think it’ll be really great.

Informal interactions also occurred with other chapters of Theta Nu Xi, an advantage of being in an area with multiple chapters within a reasonable distance from one another. One sister said that “chapters support other chapters” because they are so small, which she saw as a benefit of their small chapter size. Sisters might attend intake events such as the emergence

ceremony, participate in workshops or forums being facilitated on another campus, or even just socialize with them. A White sister shared, “I went to a step show after-party at [another chapter’s campus] and had a great time, and I think that really gets you in to see different cultures. Be more educated about them.” The Theta Nu Xi sisterhood provided her the access and support to attend this event, which otherwise might not have happened.

These social interactions help the sisters get to know one another and feel comfortable with one another in a way that allowed them to engage in meaningful multicultural conversations. Sisters may see a movie with related content, read an interesting article, learn a fact in class, or attend their own or another group’s educational program, and these activities act as a starting point to deeper conversations about the issues they presented. One sister gave an example of attending a forum by another chapter at a nearby campus:

It fosters a lot of discussion on whatever issue we’ve just talked about. And then we’ll usually find ways that it ties in with other things that we’ve discussed and how it affects our personal lives and our academic lives and things like that... Yeah, it’s more like a jumping off point, I think.

Multiculturalism tends to permeate all of the sisters’ conversations, and even what starts out as a superficial conversation often turns into a richer one. “It just ends up being a more in-depth conversation just because, I guess, we can’t leave well enough alone. We just have to keep delving into it.” Many of the sisters emphasized the importance of sharing their personal and day-to-day experiences with one another in contributing to their development as a multicultural organization. The sisterhood relationships evolved to a point where such conversations could happen without barriers between them. One sister commented,

I feel like our personal education about each other, just getting to know each other, is the way that improves conversations because we've been able to break down the barriers. We are more comfortable together. We know a lot about each other. We know a lot about each other's cultures and different components of an individual, and it makes conversation flow a lot easier.

Another sister remarked, "It was just us sharing our experiences with no judgment on either side." The sorority presented the opportunity and safe space to discuss personal struggles on a level not found in a classroom – even one focused on diversity – or with more casual friends. One sister reflected,

I think a lot of the learning doesn't happen in a formal setting. It happens when we're just hanging out and talking....We often have really eye-opening discussions and just talking about one sister's day and what she had to go through because of the special circumstances that she may be in or the color of her skin or how somebody reacted to her and being able to support one another but also learn from one another.

Meaningful conversations among the sisters covered a range of topics. They shared a great deal with one another about their own families and cultures. They discussed interracial relationships, religion, racism, and the campus racial dynamics. They also talked about money and class issues, stereotypes, what it means to be a woman, and a range of other subjects such as affirmative action, sexual orientation, and multicultural-related current events. Sharing personal backgrounds about cultural practices and family dynamics provides a topic of conversation to which each sister can contribute, and given the diversity within the sorority, the experiences vary greatly. One sister noted, "A lot of it is learning how similar

our families are and how similar we are and talking about how different we are...It's kind of like a culture exchange." Another sister asserted why she feels the women spend so much time getting to know one another on a personal level when she said, "It's like a constant desire to learn more." Cultural backgrounds can often be interwoven with religion, another topic of a very personal nature that was often discussed at great length. National sorority demographics present a religiously diverse sisterhood, but even within the sisterhood circle of the women I interviewed, identified religions included United Methodist, Jehovah's Witness, Catholic, Buddhist, Presbyterian, Jewish, and "not at all religious." Religious topics of discussion included premarital sex, abortion, sexual orientation, and how holidays are or are not celebrated. One sister acknowledged,

We've definitely talked about religion a lot just because a lot of us have, just have varied ideas and beliefs about spirituality and what that means, and what we've grown up with may not necessarily be what we believe now...and kind of our own search and finding what is best for us...And also just all the different things around the world that are religiously motivated really prompts people to think about things like that.

While some sisters were firmly rooted in their religious beliefs, other sisters personally struggled with the religious values with which they were raised. Examples might include accepting people of different religious backgrounds or sexual orientations. A sister explained,

If my religion says no, you know, then how do I feel about it? And then can I, as a member of Theta Nu Xi, support the LGBT Coming Out Week? You know. And it

came up – we talked about it...I think they are personally working on how to find a balance between their religion and their take on certain things. So I mean, it comes up because they're sort of like, my church says this but I don't feel this, you know.

So it's something they are wrestling with.

Religion can be a difficult topic to discuss, especially when there are differing opinions and strongly held views. Discomfort may be part of those conversations, but the respectful sharing of their values was a key component to having a meaningful multicultural discussion. Regarding a conversation with a sister about their differing religious views, one woman shared,

We were willing to get a little heated about it, but we're, like even though we're so passionate about our particular side, it was still constructive, and in the sense that like, I wasn't totally shut off from what she was saying and she wasn't totally shut off from what I was saying.

Referencing a different conversation about religion, another sister maintained, "I know that while I'm not throwing my views out the window, I'm still being open to hers and I feel that she's doing the same." Another woman enjoyed learning about her sisters' different religions and asked to accompany many of them to their various places of worship for services.

Interracial relationships, racism, and the campus racial dynamics were often discussed. A significant topic of conversation for the women involved in the chapter at the time of the 2001 interviews was interracial dating relationships. Interestingly, this did not seem to be a topic of much discussion for the women involved in the sorority chapter in 2007. One of the latter sisters remarked, "We're so used to seeing biracial relationships in

our sorority that it's um, we don't really talk about it anymore, it's kind of just like it's the norm." The women in the former group, however, talked at length about the complications of interracial relationships. One sister testified,

I think a lot of us...have talked about how [interracial relationships] can be problematic, I guess, in some families versus others...battling through those kinds of challenges and everything. So, I guess trying to negotiate within the relationship and outside of the relationship because you will also have people looking in from the outside, making their assumptions or judgments.

Talking about race and racism revolved around campus dynamics as well as the larger society. Discussions about race relations on campus included the lack of diversity in other sororities and fraternities, how the Asian community works, and Black culture. Emphasizing the importance of being able to converse about White as a culture, one sister stated, "If you say Black culture, what about White culture? It's OK to talk about White culture. You're not being racist when you talk about White culture. If you can talk about Black culture, you can talk about anybody else's." They talked about receiving questions as to why a White woman is in a multicultural sorority and how people perceived a biracial woman who is in Theta Nu Xi rather than an historically Black sorority. Another sister noted, "Wanting to stay away from self-segregation was probably a good reason or one of many factors that played into different women wanting to join Theta Nu Xi." I elaborate on this subject later. Conversations have included how "society views biracial people" and how people of the same generation or even the same household "might have widely different beliefs in terms of racism." Cultural stereotypes and expectations were also explored. An alumna asserted the

importance of continuing to raise such issues with her sisters and “helping them to see where you’re coming from and how you feel that way” as a means of supporting the sorority’s mission.

Locations. As previously discussed, planned activities such as retreats provided opportunities for the sisters to have a significant block of time together where they can engage in meaningful dialogue. Such overnight retreats might be at a sister’s apartment, or they may all visit a sister’s parents’ house in order to get away from the campus environment. Another key location where deeper conversations occurred was in the car. Long road trips where sisters ride together provided time to talk. One sister explained,

I think we have some of our best conversations in car rides to various places...this is time where, I mean, it’s very intimate. It’s not like 8 people trying to get a say or a piece of the conversation...and so you turn down or turn off the music and it’s just, it just happens...We’re just there and we can’t go anywhere.

Another sister shared her thoughts about conversations that occur in the car: “Being forced to verbalize your own thoughts and listen to somebody else’s just is really good.” Sometimes in-depth conversations can occur when two sisters have a meal together with the intention of getting to know one another better.

Sisterhood relationships. Theta Nu Xi’s interpretation of sisterhood means developing life-long friendships. Developing such strong bonds takes time and finding common interests, but it also means negotiating through difficult situations. The women I interviewed really seemed to pinpoint the essence of their sisters and what each one means to them. I was impressed with how easily they identified admirable qualities and strengths in

each sister, appreciating the many aspects of their sisters' personalities and also the contradictions within each. Many sisters seemed to assume personas or roles in their relationships with one another such as mother, child, mediator, organizer, or counselor. They are very supportive, look out for one another, and encourage their sisters to be all that they can be.

Although these women are from very different backgrounds, they come together around a common mission and a core set of values. The strong bond of sisterhood is not immediate but develops over time, through business-related activities and social interactions. One sister asserted, "The sorority encourages a lot of personal, you know, tell me all about your sister and who she is as a whole, a complete being, that involves everything." Another sister revealed how the strong sense of sisterhood contributed to her wanting to join the sorority when she remarked, "I liked their relationship with each other. I liked how close they were, and not on such a superficial level...It was just really appealing how they could joke around with each other so well, and, like really, really close." Intentionally working to develop those bonds is important, too. One woman talked about how she took opportunities to get to know sisters better. "I think that if you don't know a sister well enough, you get to know them, you know." As it relates to multiculturalism, a sister commented,

I think we come to the table with kind of a baseline level of understanding about the different racial and ethnic mix that makes up our sorority and the society in which we live...I guess the opposite would be that sometimes I feel like when I'm having to explain something to somebody that has no idea or who might have more of a hostile, not hostile, but a little bit more of an ignorant view of things, it's a little bit more

sensitive because I feel like I have to start from scratch and I have to erase misconceptions at the same time as I'm maybe sharing new information.

Another sister acknowledged how important it was to her for the sorority to develop strong bonds as sisters when she explained,

I've even talked to the girls about phony sisterhood...I was saying, I don't want us to be a phony sisterhood where we do have superficial conversations and there's no, like, meat or like, um, like if I can't cry with you, if I can't laugh with you, things like that, you know.

Although the business aspect of the sorority is essential to the sorority's survival, developing life-long friendships is critical. "The longer we've been in Theta Nu Xi, the more I see them as just my friends." Developing such strong relationships creates a level of acceptance "about every facet of your life, not just part of it."

Despite the smaller size of Theta Nu Xi chapters, not all sisters can be best friends. They definitely have different personalities, some of which might not naturally get along. Regardless of how different the women in Theta Nu Xi seem to be from one another, however, they work hard to find some common aspect in each relationship on which to build their sisterhood. One sister affirms, "I think that's part of the mission of multiculturalism is realizing that despite your differences, there's a common thread between you all, if you can just search for it, and that's what creates tolerance and things like that." Such common interests may be around going shopping, enjoying sports, attending church, or having similar academic interests. They learn who can lift up their mood, who likes to go out to parties, who seems to be the person always looking out for them, and who to call if they are in the

mood to watch a romantic comedy or an action movie. They really seem to value the differences each woman contributes to the sisterhood. Regarding one of her sisters, this woman reflected,

I probably wouldn't have become friends with her because we wouldn't run in the same social circles, but now I'm really glad that we did because it just shows even though people are different than you, they have really redeeming qualities and can be a positive influence on your life.

Whether you connect with a sister on a social, intellectual, or emotional level, "you find a niche for everybody....Even if you don't think you're gonna have a connection with that person, you end up finding a spot where you really connect with them.... It's interesting. It's very different with each of them."

With any relationship, there are moments when it is not easy. There can be difficult conversations and outright conflicts, but the sisterhood relationships they developed helped them work through such situations. As discussed earlier, talking about money can be challenging because there are sisters in the sorority from completely different socioeconomic backgrounds. One sister confessed,

It's class issues. And I hate to talk about that. And I don't know if I hate to talk about it, I just hate for that to be what divides us...I try so hard to like, make that not a barrier.

Sometimes conflict can arise through lack of communication or different expectations for a certain event. The sisters shared stories of learning to speak up when they were unhappy with a decision and telling the group how they felt. They learned the hard way that if

feelings are not shared in the moment, they likely will come up later. Becoming skilled at how to manage conflict and prevent such problems from happening again will serve these women well long after college. One alumna reflected,

I think when you have so many different women who are from such a diverse background, there generally tends to come up where people are kind of butting heads about what's best to do or their ideas of what's the best course of action, I guess, or different viewpoints. And I think in some ways it's like, yes, we have a lot of diversity and it's good. Sometimes we also have a lot of disagreement. But I think that's part of being a multicultural sorority, that no one's ever going to agree all the time, and that's a good thing. And 'cause I think we wouldn't want us all to be cookie-cutter versions of ourselves, you know...And it's OK to disagree and argue and voice your opinion, and no one's really trying to change your mind. It's just getting it – it's just an avenue to voice different ideas and to understand other people. But that it's not a place where you feel like you have to defend yourself or feel like you're being attacked for your own opinions. That it's there and it's fine, and you may or may not agree, and it's OK but I'm glad we're talking about it.

Difficult conversations can occur when someone takes on more responsibilities than others feel are manageable. A sister does not want to hurt that person's feelings but at the same time needs to ensure that the sorority continues functioning. Sisters will also challenge one another to think differently about an issue, albeit in a supportive and nonconfrontational way. Another alumna shared,

It's not particularly easy when you say something and someone else says, you know, maybe you're wrong about that. And that happened a lot. Like we would always be asking each other are you sure you're right about this. And I think those situations, we grew out of that. And you know, you could see things a lot more clearly when someone disagrees with you about stuff. We didn't always agree about everything, and so I think our disagreements were really helpful. But they were always very honest and we always helped each other get to the heart of the matter. Yeah, I think, that's pretty much, I think the hardest conversations were about, you know, when someone would stand up and be like I don't know that I agree with this or have you thought about it in this way. And it's hard to reassess your point of view and then to change it, based on new information...It was always difficult to hear someone say, you know, I don't know that I agree with that, I mean, maybe you should rethink the situation.

Such authentic multicultural conversations require "complete open mindedness." One sister talked about how the sisterhood relationships are different from friends who are not in the sorority. She feels like she can fight with her sorority sisters in a way similar to fighting with her biological sisters in that they both will "get over it" and move on with their relationship. With one of her best friends outside of the sorority, however, she knows that "there are more limitations to our relationship than with my sorority sisters." Regarding her biological and sorority sisters, she commented, "I feel like there are very few things that I could do that would be unforgivable." An alumna insightfully remarked,

The difference I think in our sorority and maybe other situations where maybe people can't overcome those differences is that we understand that we have to and we have to respect other people's opinions because of where they, because that's what we're about. That's part of who we are. That's sort of why we exist and we try to encourage other people to sort of understand other people's backgrounds and be able to still collaborate.

The relationships they have established through their sisterhood allows them to have difficult conversations, including about controversial issues where strong and differing opinions are held, in a respectful way where they can hear each other's perspectives, which may or may not change their minds about the issue being discussed.

Benefits. Being in Theta Nu Xi provided these women many extraordinary benefits. They gained a safe space for authentic conversations, expanded their comfort zones and grew as individuals, and increased their desire to learn and share that knowledge with one another. Previous examples were given about the types of authentic and meaningful multicultural conversations in which the sisters engaged, but the sisterhood relationship provided the safe space for very personal discussions. One sister confided, “[We] approach[ed] subjects that I would never talk about with other people.” Being able to find the space where “you don’t really have to worry about being politically correct” when discussing emotionally charged issues, particularly within a diverse group of people at such a deep level, is rare. Another sister explained,

We can sit around and talk about [sensitive topics] and not – I think we can talk a little bit more real about it. I think that we all knew and we approached all with a

good amount of respect for everything and everything that was different. And being able to talk about things and ask questions and say, oh, so in this religion, what does it mean when you say this? or why do you believe this and where does it come about? And you can ask these types of questions without feeling stupid or feeling ignorant or feeling like these are just tacky questions to ask.

The closeness they developed helped expand their comfort zones. One sister said that she was introduced to “a lot of great food” that she otherwise would not have tried because she didn’t know what it was. She went on to say, “I think friends from different cultures can kind of push you in the direction to try new things, and that’s really useful.” Personal growth helped them individually as well as in their interactions with others. One sister observed,

I get to have all these different perspectives of people that are incredibly different than me, and so it’s really helped me grow as a person, realizing that there’s different perspectives and that people, even though they realize that I’m totally different, they still respect and love me for my differences.

An alumna reflected,

I think it has made me be able to look outside of the traditional Asian stereotypes and re-identify myself beyond the restrictions...Being able to talk about those things and realize that they’re societal or parental or cultural things that are placed upon you that may not necessarily be your strengths and your interests, and that it’s OK to go beyond that and really explore what your true passion is.

One woman commented,

Being in a multicultural organization let's you realize, like it makes you more competent every time you talk about race or multicultural issues and so like, as a leader, I would hope a leader in those issues, you realize that whatever you say can affect someone else.

Many of the women were drawn to Theta Nu Xi because of their interest in the multicultural aspect of the sorority, which may be indicative to their preexisting openness to learning about differences. One sister reflected on the general sense of learning that occurs through their meaningful conversations:

We're all, I feel like, always learning...Even if you don't learn something new, but ah, I guess just like recognizing differences and appreciating diversity and things like that are all, I mean, when you start realizing that not everything is the way you see it and from your point of view, I feel like that's meaningful.

Another sister explores how Theta Nu Xi encourages deeper learning:

I think we instill into our members a yearning to learn more. Like one of the little, that first step is never just enough. It's like the first step. There's always something new to find out about something or someone or some place. So I think Theta Nu Xi pushes people to say, well you might be uncomfortable with this. Why are you uncomfortable? Let's go learn more about it and see if that makes it more, like helps you understand better and makes it, takes away some of that sense of strangeness that might make it an uncomfortable subject for you.

The sorority allows for learning in individual areas of interest as well as providing opportunities to learn together. The learning is individualized in the sense that everyone is

encouraged to pursue their area of interest regarding social change and multiculturalism, which might include exploring different cultures, homelessness and class issues, sexual orientation, and tutoring children. Sisters then bring those experiences or the knowledge gained through exploring these areas of interest back to other women in the sorority. One sister explained,

We push each other to be the best of what we could be and learn the most that we can and so it's like whether it's in a subject that you're already interested in and we push you to learn even more about it, or if it's something that you've never heard of but sounds really cool, and we're like OK, well go learn more and teach us about it because we want to know, too...So it's like we're there to say, like bounce ideas off us or talk to us about what you've learned. So it's not just something that like it's not such an individualized experience. It's something that you share with all of us, and then we help you understand and you take different ideas from it, and so, it's about pushing you to learn more just by being there with these women. And who are willing to help you in whatever capacity you need as you go out and learn more.

Each woman in the sorority contributes to the education of their sisters about external issues of interest as well as their personal background. The educational relationship is reciprocal rather than unilateral, contributing to universal learning of everyone in the sorority. One sister observed,

I don't think about educating the other sisters because I know that they already want to learn. I guess it's more of just I know that if I'm myself and having the experiences that I've had that I'm already teaching them a lot that they wouldn't

know otherwise, and the same thing goes for them – them being very different from me, of different backgrounds, religions, races, that we all just by default kind of learn a lot from each other.

One could argue that many of these gains could be obtained through normal aspects of college or other means without joining a multicultural sorority, which may be true. The benefits of being involved in such an organization revolve around the intensity with which all of these elements come together within the sorority, most importantly, the safe space for meaningful multicultural conversations that provide universal rather than unilateral learning.

The third thematic finding explored the sorority's formal and informal activities. Examining formal activities conducted by the sorority for non-members, informal interactions with people and groups outside of the sorority, activities planned internally for the sorority members, and informal interactions among the sisters of Theta Nu Xi provided supporting evidence of how the sorority spends its time promoting multiculturalism among members and to the larger campus community. In addition to the three distinct areas explored during this study, two additional themes emerged that will now be examined.

Identified Themes – Open Coding

Two identified themes emerged through open coding of my research data: circles of influence and self-segregation. Please keep in mind as you read on that Theta Nu Xi's mission statement is “to promote leadership, multiculturalism, and self-improvement through academic excellence, involvement in and service to the campus and community, as well as being living examples of sisterhood across different races, cultures, religions, backgrounds, and lifestyles.” The first identified theme, circles of influence, touches on the intended focus

of Theta Nu Xi to educate members of the sorority and the larger campus community about issues of multiculturalism as well as working to bridge the divides within the Greek system. This identified theme goes further, however, to explore the influences members of this multicultural sorority have on their other friends in the campus community, by being living examples on campus, and through opportunities to educate people beyond the campus community. The second identified theme to emerge from the data was self-segregation. The racial divides on campus go beyond what was described within the Greek system to affect the larger campus culture; members of groups often marginalized by mainstream society exert efforts to maintain that divisive status quo on campus. Given Theta Nu Xi's mission and the sisters' desire to make a difference on their campus, only time will tell if they can impact this dynamic within the campus culture.

Circles of Influence

Theta Nu Xi seeks women to join the sisterhood who believe in and exemplify multiculturalism through a variety of identifiers such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, class, and nationality. The sorority intentionally works to educate the campus and larger communities about issues of diversity beyond just race. The thematic findings just discussed provide a myriad of examples through formal and informal ways the sorority accomplishes these goals. But what difference has the sorority made? Have the sisters impacted others and encouraged a change in behavior? These are much bigger questions for future research, but my findings indicate the possibility. We all have a circle within which we can influence thought and behavior in others. Some circles are bigger than others, and I believe as we grow and move on in life, our circles continue to expand.

As these young women join the sorority, their initial circle of influence as it pertains to multiculturalism centers around their sorority sisters through getting to know one another. The goals of the sorority demand that efforts be made to influence the Greek system and the larger campus through educational programs. One alumna reflected on the sorority's ability and limitation to impact the lives around them:

Theta Nu Xi really prides itself on quality as opposed to quantity and so it's sort of like, well if you can reach one and touch one and affect one, that's enough, you know, because it's sort of like the quality of our sisterhood and how do you feel about being sisters and are we really sisters or is it just in name only...Like, you really want a deep, hardy, healthy sisterhood, and it doesn't matter if it's five people...But then again, if I, after what 7 years at Monarch and we've only had, hmm, I don't know, have we even hit 30 [chapter members], you know what I mean? So then it's sort of like, well, if we really affected those women and their lives, but have we really affected a campus? I mean, for everybody who considers going Greek and they see that there's another option, I think we've at least made them think a little. Like, OK, there *are* other possibilities even if I don't want to go down that road...I really have no complaints about what, the way we were able to be established and sort of incorporated into the actual Greek system by the forming of the [Multicultural Greek Council]...Like, I mean, you put on some programs but, just I, I don't know if we're doing everything we could be doing. We could be probably knocking on doors harder, you know. So I think that there's always more work to be done. I know that

with the small numbers it's really hard to be visible...I know that it's hard to sort of make a dent.

Friends in the Campus Community

Where the sisters' circle of influence started becoming clearer is in the relationships with their friends during college. These women intentionally spent focused social time with their sorority sisters, but they also maintained separate groups of friends outside the sorority. One sister described how her non-sorority friends were impacted by her involvement in Theta Nu Xi because they knew it was important to her:

Even starting with [asking], so what does it mean to be a multicultural sorority? Like what do you do that is different, to what is this event that you're holding or questions that they would ask. So I think that we were able to influence people in that way because then they would know that it would be OK to talk to us about those things or they could come to us and we're pretty open about what we do and what we believe in.

Another sister postulated about how the diversity within the sorority meant that the sisters' interests outside the sorority were also different, which inferred that their outreach through friends and other people they knew was very different, too. She went on to elaborate how the dynamics of the sorority and the sisters' connection to a bigger purpose had a larger affect on their friends:

We're just really hard workers and we believe in a better cause and getting rid of all the prejudice that occurs on every level. And just, you know, striving for, to change things and to make the world a better place...I think that not only within our own

sisterhood but then the friends of the sisters really became part of it, too, even though they weren't sisters...And it's really great, and it's always incorporating new people even if they're not sisters.

This sister succinctly summed up how their friendships outside the sorority connect to Theta Nu Xi's mission when she said, "You know, just being that living example. Having friends that are multiracial, multicultural, from everywhere. Introducing those friends to your other friends."

Living Examples on Campus

The presence of a multicultural sorority and its members on campus in and of itself should not be underestimated. As indicated by an earlier quote, providing an alternative option for women who are investigating the possibility of joining a sorority can make a difference and raise awareness. One sister commented, "You can argue whether or not existing is enough...but I mean I feel like existing brings attention to the fact that we feel like it's important." Other ways the sorority members informally raise awareness on campus is through their daily lives and interactions, being living examples of the diverse sisterhood for which the sorority strives such as visual presence and self-composure. Seeing the visual diversity of the sisterhood enticed many women I interviewed to learn more about the sorority and eventually join Theta Nu Xi. Having a visual presence on campus can be powerful. With regard to educating others about multicultural issues, one sister remarked,

We also do it in a more social setting...When we go out as a group of women, we definitely get questions all the time. How does somebody who's biracial, Asian, and African American and Korean, and Latino all hang out together and look like they're

the closest group of people, you know. I think just being a visual presence on campus helps people to get thinking about those issues.

An alumna involved in the early years of the chapter at Monarch University reflected,

I think, especially in undergrad, no one really knew who we were, and they were just amazed to see a diverse group of individuals socializing and sort of being happy, and you just don't see a lot of that on campus, um, well back when I was there. And I think just by showing people that people from different background and lifestyles and races, etcetera, can have social interaction was just a big step in itself on campus.

Seeing these women on campus compose themselves in a way that embodies the purpose of the sorority and the ideas of multiculturalism raises awareness and models respect for diversity. The way they present themselves and interact with others demonstrates their commitment. One sister explained,

I think I've been able to make more of an impact on [Monarch's] campus than some of the women who go here through Theta Nu Xi because I've been able to be that living example of what you can be on [Monarch's] campus and what those options are. So the fact, it's made me more aware, I think, of how I hold myself or what I tell others or how I speak just because these issues that are Theta Nu Xi's issues are just as important to me, and so when I go around talking to people and I talk about the fact that I love multiculturalism...that ability to take what Theta Nu Xi's taught me to be...then I think it's done a great thing...Our mission statement is to change the campus for the better – to get people talking about these issues of multiculturalism and diversity. So when I bring that to everyone around me, then that's the epitome

of, I think, of me being a Theta Nu Xi sister. Because not only do I have these bonds and not only am I doing all these things within my sorority organization, I'm doing it beyond that. And that's, I think, our main goal.

Explaining what it means to her to be living examples of sisterhood across differences, an alumna noted, "Showing that you're committed to those core values by the way that you live and not being racist or discriminatory against someone for their religious practices, or supporting other events sponsored by someone with a different religious affiliation."

Another sister observed,

When you do an event, you only reach a certain number of people. We've really come to figure out that to really make a difference, you have to have that one-on-one interaction. I mean, that's really how you change people, I feel. I mean, that's how we've been the most affective, so if I had to say the way that we do that the best is by the way we live. You know, just being that living example.

Affirming the importance of Theta Nu Xi having an external focus, one sister stated, "I think our commitment to taking [multiculturalism] outside of just our small sisterhood is what makes it really different."

As noted in the thematic findings under structure, the small size of the sorority does present limitations around visibility and, therefore, their circle of influence on campus. One sister remarked, "I think that we're not really well known on campus, unfortunately...I mean, they don't really know us very well, and if they do, they don't understand us." She went on to share that students might recognize them as the "ONE" sorority, referencing the appearance of their name in Greek letters. She also told me that sorority sisters often have to

explain that you do not need to be multiracial, just interested in multiculturalism, in order to join the sorority. Another sister's comments connect a circle of influence to the internal policy of not allowing members to drink alcohol while wearing their Greek letters or anything identifying them as Theta Nu Xi and the structural limitations around visibility.

She explained,

Sometimes they have these huge parties, which a bunch of cultural organizations will host them, and I feel like that was a good, non-specific way to encourage diversity.

And because we cannot participate in events where there is alcohol, our name gets excluded. And that prevents us from doing social events, which I feel like should not be underestimated.

She also discussed the value and importance of the sorority's educational events but felt like they often were "preaching to the choir" with such activities.

Beyond Campus

All five alumnae members interviewed were able to provide insight as to how their membership in Theta Nu Xi influenced others beyond campus in the larger community and through family friends after college. Intentional programming outside the campus community for college chapters is one way to influence others. The chapter I interviewed coordinated an overnight retreat for Girl Scouts in the surrounding region. One alumna reflected,

We would have different activities, and all the sisters would come and it was just really awesome. And the girls were just really into it and just, you know, because they're Girl Scouts, they're so leadership driven... We'd have a leadership training,

like a golden dreams workshop. We would have sisters come and talk about different places they'd been and talk about the cultures there and bring some, you know, something from that culture to share...It's the first time that we had gone outside of the campus in any of the activities that I had done – that we had gone outside the campus and felt like we were making a difference within the community itself...I think it was just so neat to see these young women really excited about things that we were talking about, which are the goals of our sorority and what our sorority stands for.

Another alumna explained how this activity potentially influenced the young women participating in the retreat and served as role models for the next generation:

One of my favorite memories from the projects that we've done was we did a retreat for Girl Scouts...but it was great because, my favorite memory from that was we were all, all of our sorority sisters were kind of sitting up in the front for a Q&A session, so the Girl Scouts were going to ask us questions. You know, they ranged from do you have a boyfriend to how many kids do you want to questions about what we wanted to be in the future and what we're doing now, what we're studying. And I think a lot of the young girls were able to see that there are women that are just like you or might be different from you but really are just like you and are achieving these great things and so can you, and there's nothing that should ever hold you back. And I think that they could, they felt that they could relate to us because they were Girl Scouts, and they were in a group with girls their own age and doing a lot of things together and learning about leadership and teamwork and things like that. And as a

sorority, we were doing all those things but kind of in a different place and at a different level. So it was cute, but it was also really refreshing and enjoyable to spend our time there and to feel that they were learning something from it and learning something from us, and they can look at us and see that we were all friends yet we all looked really different. We all got along and we were all very strong independent women that were doing a lot of cool things.

A third alumna mentioned a similar retreat organized by one of the GAP (Graduate, Alumnae, and Professional) chapters: “They do a real strong event with the Girl Scouts on diversity issues, but it usually turns into sort of like somewhat of a camp or a one or two day thing, where they’re educating this younger generation.” Another alumna related how she’s been able to continue being a living example of diverse sisterhood beyond college when she shared,

I think a lot of times when people that first meet me are surprised that I have groups of friends from all different backgrounds. They’re kind of amazed that I know a lot more about different cultures and backgrounds than I guess they would expect someone who’s Asian American to know. And if you ever see any of my pictures of my friends or my sorority sisters, it’s this double-take of like, wow, that’s a lot of different types of people all together! Different shades, different sizes, different religions, everything. So I think for some people it’s surprising because a lot of people tend to, I guess, choose what’s comfortable, what’s similar to what they are. So I get some eyebrow raises.

Sharing the knowledge and appreciation for diversity gained from being in the sorority is a key component of the sisters' circles of influence, whether it is through displaying photographs of their diverse friendships or actively conveying such information. One alumna gave the example that she grew up where it was common to call Asian people "Oriental" in her hometown. Upon arriving at college she was educated as to the offensiveness of the term through interactions with her sorority sisters, some who are Asian American, and learning about different cultures. She explained how she shares that knowledge with others:

And that's something that I take back home. Like if I hear anyone say [Oriental], I'm like please don't ever say that. And I understand the reasoning and I can just share my experiences that I gained through my sisterhood with other people that I know...family, friends, whoever I come in contact with. I mean it could be anyone...It could be a co-worker, like I'm very much about sort of sharing my knowledge that I gain through my relationships with my sisters with other people, and I guess sometimes people just don't know, like I didn't know that it wasn't OK to use that phrase.

Another alumna told me about a sorority sister's wedding she attended a few months earlier. The ceremony itself was a mixture of customs associated with the groom's African American heritage and the bride's Jewish heritage such as jumping the broom and breaking the glass. She remarked, "I guess sometimes it's just in being who you are. You're bringing all that together, but it's, sometimes it's in the sharing...The ceremony itself had these elements, and

in the program they explained it.” When asked if she’d noticed any changes in behavior with her family and friends upon sharing her knowledge, an alumna responded,

Oh, definitely my mom...I think from my experiences, and she’s seen me involved with different types of people...[Now] she has a multicultural group of friends, which I would never expect from my mother...I just don’t know if she would have been as open as she is to different people from different backgrounds and lifestyles if I had not sort of imposed my experiences on her like hey, mom, this weekend I’m doing this or I’m going to be involved in this multicultural thing, oh I had, you know, like I went to this, [the Asian Student Association’s] Lunar New Year. Do you know what that is? Let me tell you about that. Or um you know, my sisters like we did this cool thing. And sort of like shared those experiences with her. I don’t know if she would be as open as she is now. It’s amazing. Yeah, I definitely think you can have an impact on other people with your knowledge.

Self-segregation

Self-segregation surfaced in multiple interviews to become the second identified theme. I should acknowledge my own perception of this dynamic on campus, having had conversations with students not affiliated with Theta Nu Xi about this very issue during my employment at Monarch University. I, however, did not prompt the subject initially, but took the opportunity to explore the matter if the topic was raised during any of the interviews. First reviewing the racial divide with the Greek system, I then share how the larger campus culture perpetuates such dynamics and maintains the status quo. How this issue evolves is yet to be seen.

As discussed earlier, members of traditional Greek letter organizations (GLOs) are either predominantly White or historically Black. Several of the women I interviewed at Monarch University perceived these organizations as a form of racial isolation, dividing and excluding certain groups of students. One sister commented,

I had friends who were Caucasian and didn't want to choose or didn't want to feel like if I chose a sorority that was historically Caucasian that that meant that my friends can only be Caucasian or that the friends I already have who weren't Caucasian didn't – wouldn't feel that connected, or lose those friendships because they didn't want to be part of that.

Elaborating on the division between traditional GLOs, another sister alluded to the privilege that comes with being in the dominant or mainstream group and being able to choose not to know about individuals or groups who are different:

I feel like there is a huge racial divide within the Greek system – within Panhellenic sororities then NPHC sororities and then IFC fraternities and NPHC fraternities. And I feel like the Panhellenic sororities and the IFC fraternities don't really know all that much about the NPHC sororities and fraternities. They just know that they're there. And then the NPHC fraternities and sororities know more about – I guess it's more common knowledge about the IFC fraternities and Panhellenic sororities, you don't have to really do much research or anything to know what they're all about because you probably know somebody on campus that's in an organization.

General Campus Culture

Such racial isolation, however, was not limited to just GLOs. Students learn very quickly upon arriving at Monarch University that the diverse interactions they expected are not so easily found. One sister noted, “We’re supposed to be meshed together with these total strangers, but then we form these dorm cliques or racial groups. That’s what’s so huge about the self-segregation at Monarch. It’s everywhere and it usually starts with the freshman year.” Another sister explained,

I knew I wanted to get involved on campus outside of academics, and I think within the first couple of weeks of being a freshman, I noticed that there was a lot self-segregation within groups on campus, racially or like interest-wise or that kind of thing. So there were already segregations I kind of noticed, and I didn’t really think that was the best way for me just because I have friends from all different backgrounds, and I didn’t want to select one group versus another. I tried different organizations out, but I think it didn’t all feel right at some point. We had [the Asian Student Association], and I’d gone to general body meetings and participated in some events and that kind of thing, but I thought that I didn’t want to just be within one group. I felt like you don’t really learn that much from always sticking to people that you are comfortable with or know a lot about already.

This sister shared how she originally succumbed to the self-segregation dynamics on campus but made an intentional decision to step out of that restrictive behavioral pattern:

Second semester my freshman year I had come to school thinking I’m not gonna do the Asian thing. By that I mean I’m not gonna just make friends with Asians because

it's so easy and you find yourself, um – it's really comfortable sometimes and it's just a lot easier to get along with fellow Asians... When I came here, freshman year, first semester, I did get swept up into the whole comfort zone thing... I felt like I was secluding myself a little bit or I wasn't broadening my horizons and I was missing out which is mainly the thing, I just felt like I was missing out a lot. So second semester rolled around and I – over Christmas break I, you know, it was just a lot of reflection on the past semester... So second semester I was really, I wanted to make a conscious effort, I guess, to make more friends in my classes instead of just like the people I'm already, well, that's it's easy for me to make friends with.

She went on to elaborate about her expectations regarding opportunities to interact with a diverse student body and how she felt upon discovering the reality of the campus culture:

And when I came to [Monach], I was so excited because I was like, wow, look at all the diversity, it's great, you know, I'm just gonna like have all these great, wonderful experiences and all these different kinds of friends. But I found out pretty quickly that there were just little clumps of people, like um, clumps of people that I didn't even know would clump together, and there was a huge Indian population here and a huge Asian population. African Americans tended to click off and then Caucasians did and then even Jewish kids tended to be friends with more Jewish kids, and so that was kind of disappointing... [to] come to a place like Monarch where there's so much diversity yet it's all sectioned off.

The sentiments were still there when I interviewed this same sorority sister six years later as an alumna. She reflected, "It wasn't until I entered Monarch as an Asian American and I was

overwhelmed by the numbers of other Asian Americans there, and the self-segregation that happened on campus was kind of amazing to me.” When another sister was asked what it meant to her to be in the sorority, she responded,

It gives me the chance to connect other women to the different groups and different options that they have as a [Monarch University] student. Because I think that when you come to Monarch, you can get so wrapped up in specific little cultural groups and it’s like, oh, I’m Latina, oh I’m Black, and it’s like you get too wrapped up into identifying yourself as just one thing and not embracing the fact that one of the beauties of Monarch’s campus is...we’re getting students from all over the world.

Maintaining the Status Quo

The concept of needing and wanting “comfort zones” by groups often marginalized within our society is not hard to understand. What emerged from the data are student behaviors that went beyond establishing comfort zones in order to maintain self-segregation within their racial group. One woman described a conversation among sisters related to this topic:

I mean, we’ll talk about Black culture, or Black culture at Monarch, or women culture, like those are conversations that sometimes happen just because they’ll be like, someone will feel that they’re being rejected because they’re not doing certain things, they’re not going to certain parties, they’re not doing certain, filling certain roles that some people might feel that they have.

Another sister elaborated on a different aspect of this dynamic within the Black culture at Monarch University based on a conversation she had with a couple of sisters:

They feel like they have to live up to a standard of Blackness. That's what they say, that they have to live up to a standard of being Black, and they feel like a lot of times they're not Black enough. And so we were talking about this, and we were like, why is it that the Black community holds this standard for, you know, why is it a competition who's, you know, as to who can be more authentically African American? And so they feel like they're kind of rejected by their African American group. And that's what we talked about the other day, and how they find it really just exhausting, just so, feel like they always have to act more Black. And so I found that interesting because, yes it's kind of similar in the Latino community or Hispanic, you know, which you're proud of your culture or whatever and you want to express it. But it's not necessarily like a competition, it's like if you're Latina then you fit. If you [are] not, then it's just, then you're not in the group. But there's no like oh this person's more Latina, so they're more important in the group or they're more valuable.

She had a similar conversation in her psychology class and stated, "African American students in the class were saying how they didn't understand why they had to be more Black in front of their Black friends." She also shared that one of her sisters included in her emergence speech, given when new members of the sorority are formally introduced to campus, a statement around this dynamic about "Am I Black enough for you?" Another sister talked about conversations that she, as a White woman, has had with a couple of her Black friends who are not in the sorority. She said that one of her friends told her, "I feel like people, they look at me and you're my best friend and you're White, and they're like well,

you need to hang out with the Black people more.” She was not sure if the group came out and directly said such comments or if “it’s just like a known thing, like well, where were you? Why didn’t you come and do this?” The sister with whom I spoke felt that this friend was more disassociated from the pressure to conform to the Black community dynamics compared to another one of her friends:

My other friend...she says you know, I couldn’t rush your sorority ‘cause it would be looked down upon in the Black community, and I have to, you know, I want to do things with you, I want to go out and do things but I have my other friends and they’re all Black. All her other friends are Black. And we talk about that. And we, you know, she just talks about how that’s just the way it is, and that’s the way that she’s fallen into this group.

The behavioral reactions of people within one’s own racial group can help maintain the status quo and reinforce self-segregation on campus. This sister provided an interesting perspective of insider/outsider status in relation to the Asian community on campus:

I guess I noticed after joining the sorority was how other Asians viewed me. Because I was no longer just an Asian with Asian friends, but I was one of those Asians that didn’t only have Asian friends because I feel like there are distinctions within the Asian population. There are Asians who are very involved in [the Asian Student Association] and are very cliquish – they have friends who are Asian. And they get along – they have acquaintances and classmates that are not Asian, of course, but most of their, you know, all their close friends will be Asian. And then there are Asians who aren’t friends with many Asians at all and are friends with more Black

people or White people or what have you. And so there's definitely that distinction, and then I feel like they view each other from totally different perspectives. And so I'm here kind of straddling the fence and have a lot of Asian friends but have a lot of non-Asian friends at the same time. So, it's been interesting seeing their reaction to my involvement in the sorority. And some people are very interested in what I learn and what we do and how we interact and how the relationships are between us. And then some people who, um, when I'm with them won't even, I guess maybe not even think about that side of my life and just kind of see me as just another one of their friends... Sometimes I feel like if people would open their eyes a little bit more and just be more open to things that aren't within their comfort levels, um because I feel like if I had stayed on the same track that I was on first semester freshman year, I would probably be surrounded with a lot of Asians and not much else. And I wouldn't have had all the experiences, the conversations, and learning experiences that I've had over the years, and I kind of feel like they're missing out but that they don't know that they're missing out.

Emerging

Despite, or perhaps because of, the campus culture that was described here, a small group of women through their hard efforts as members of a multicultural sorority feel that they can make a difference. Reflecting on her first meeting of Theta Nu Xi sisters at the sorority's semi-formal dance on a nearby campus, this alumna summarized what led her to help establish a chapter of Theta Nu Xi at Monarch University. She shared,

I'm at [another chapter's] campus, totally new campus to me... We're at a party, and it was a semi-formal, so women were dressed up and they had their dates and things like that, [and the student I went with] said to me, this is what a party should look like. This woman from Monarch was saying to me, another fellow Monarch student, this is what we're missing out. This is what's wrong on our campus. Like, don't you feel it? Look around, you know. And I wasn't even that aware. I don't know where my head was but I just felt like, you're right. You know, this isn't what you typically see. The parties are different. They're not racially mixed [at Monarch]... this is different.

More visionary insight is needed in order for Monarch University to transcend into an intercultural campus. Another sorority sister affirmed,

I think a big one that we talk about is just that, like we don't use the term self-segregation because that term's just, like it's not, it doesn't really work well or it's not conducive to any real conversation. But realizing that assumptions made by people in specific, in like whatever respective communities you might be a part of, whether you're Black and in [the Black Student Association] and whether you're Hispanic and you're in [the Latino/Hispanic Student Association], it's like people are always going to find reasons that you're not doing things the right way. So I think when we discuss multiculturalism, it's like helping each other and supporting each other through the fact that when we want to learn more about other people and other cultures, we're not denying our own heritage. We just want to know more and we

want to be accepting of everything. And we believe it makes us better people and I believe it makes us better people to know more about what's going on around you. As yet Theta Nu Xi has not taken on the challenge to actively pursue addressing the issue of self-segregation at Monarch University. They may choose to continue providing an alternative option by serving as "living examples" on campus or confront it through their circles of influence. Regardless of what the future actually holds, hope is heard in these women's voices and seen through their actions – hope for a better, more equitable society.

Summary

Studying one chapter of Theta Nu Xi because of the intentional use of "multicultural" in the organization's name and the emphasis in the organization's mission statement to promote multiculturalism presented significant data in support of the one overarching question that guided this research: what describes the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus? By exploring identity, structure, and activities, these three areas presented a detailed picture of how the sorority works to accomplish its mission. Examining the personal and group identity as well as identification with the core mission of the sorority gave insight into the level of significance these identities played in the members' lives. Surveying the structure of the organization provided a systematic perspective of how the sorority functions organizationally and how this influences the nature of the roles played by Theta Nu Xi. The sorority's activities provided supporting evidence of how the sorority spends its time promoting multiculturalism among members and to the larger campus community. Two identified themes also emerged through open coding of my research data: circles of influence and self-segregation. Circles of influence touched on the intended focus

of Theta Nu Xi to educate members of the sorority and the larger campus community about issues of multiculturalism as well as working to bridge the divides within the Greek system. Self-segregation pertained to the racial divides on campus that go beyond what was described within the Greek system to affect the larger campus culture. The next chapter will discuss these findings in greater analytical detail.

CHAPTER SIX – DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It's not even just accepting that there are differences. It's finding those differences and highlighting them, and then telling other people about it.

- Theta Nu Xi Sister

This chapter seeks to discuss the findings in relation to relevant literature and the research question guiding this study. One overarching question guided this research: what describes the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus? Three areas were explored – identity, structure, and activities – to support this overarching research question. Five key statements of findings emerged from the data. Within the thematic area of Identity, the first finding about the lack of sororal intentions by the women who joined Theta Nu Xi and the second finding regarding their deep feeling of acceptance are presented. The third key finding discussed, situated within the thematic area of Structure, is the idea that this sorority is intentionally multicultural but inherently feminist. Within the thematic area of Activities, the fourth finding describes how the purpose and activities of Theta Nu Xi differ from traditional Greek letter organizations (GLOs), and the fifth finding explores the concept of universal learning rather than unilateral learning. An overview discussion of the findings presents Theta Nu Xi as a model for change. Finally, implications and recommendations for future research are presented.

Discussion of Identity Findings

Examining the personal and group identity as well as identification with the core mission of the sorority gave insight into the level of significance these identities played in the

members' lives. What emerged as the key findings with regard to identity were the lack of sororal intentions by the women who joined Theta Nu Xi and their deep feeling of acceptance they felt within the sisterhood. I use invitational theory to explore this sense of acceptance, discussing my findings within the theory's four basic assumptions respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality.

Finding #1 – Lack of Sororal Intentions

The first finding in this study is the overwhelming acknowledgement that most members of Theta Nu Xi were not looking to join a sorority. Of the 10 women interviewed, 7 strongly asserted that they never thought they would join a sorority before learning about Theta Nu Xi, 1 indicated that Theta Nu Xi was the only option for her because her older sister was a member, and 2 women indicated that they were looking for the sisterhood but did not like the options presented within the predominantly White and historically Black sororities due to negative stereotypes of partying and hazing. The key factors that drew these women in to learn more about the sorority and eventually join were the visual diversity of Theta Nu Xi's membership, the mission and values of the sorority, and the authentic and accepting relationships. I was unable to locate any research indicating an initial similar lack of sororal intention among members of other sororities. Information was available, however, for why women chose to join predominantly White, historically Black, and cultural sororities.

Women who join predominantly White sororities typically are looking for “a good social life” and “instant friends of both sexes” within a larger university environment where they arrive knowing very few people (Risman, 1982, p. 235). In their study comparing

White and Black sororities, Berkowitz and Padavic (1999) concluded, “White sorority women in this sample regarded sorority membership as a way to lead a productive social life that they hoped would enable them to get a man” (p. 550). In her research analyzing sororities as a gender strategy in which she studied one nationally-recognized predominantly White sorority, Handler (1995) concluded, “Joining a sorority is a strategy for negotiating friendships among women and romantic relationships between women and men” (p. 252). The reasons the women I interviewed in Theta Nu Xi gave for why they joined Theta Nu Xi did not center around such social and dating relationship opportunities.

Women appear to join historically Black sororities primarily to have a supportive extended family, to participate in community service, and for career enhancement. Rather than feeling they are joining an organization for a limited time only during their college years as is more often the case with predominantly White sororities, women who join historically Black sororities become part of an extended family where the concept of sisterhood takes on a deeper meaning. This is partially due to the lifelong commitment they make to the sorority upon joining and their continued engagement well beyond college (Phillips, 2005). In contrast to why White women join sororities, Berkowitz and Padavic (1999) found the following:

About half of the African American women cited community service as one of the main reasons for joining, while none of the white women reported it as a motivation. The African American women saw their sorority membership as a means to “give back to the community,” a way of “uplifting” themselves and their black brothers and sisters. (p. 546)

Gasman, Louison, and Barnes (2008) and Hernandez (2008) also found that commitment to service and strong sisterhood bonds were strong motivations for women choosing to join historically Black sororities. The Berkowitz and Padavic study also indicated that women who joined historically Black sororities anticipated benefits beyond college that would enhance their careers, primarily through networking opportunities. Although not a reason for joining Theta Nu Xi, many of the women interviewed indicated discovering similar feelings of family and life-long relationships within the sorority. Community service was not listed as a specific reason the women I interviewed joined Theta Nu Xi. As one of the five tenets of the sorority, however, there was peripheral interest. One sister did say that she felt most connected to the tenet of service because it has been such a huge part of her life, and two other sisters expressed gaining a greater appreciation for doing community service. Community service is also the main way in which Theta Nu Xi is able to interact and collaborate with predominantly White sororities and fraternities. Discovering a larger network of sorority alumnae was an expected nice surprise for many women interviewed, but Theta Nu Xi is not at a point yet due to the young age of the organization to provide the level of career enhancement expected within historically Black GLOs.

With regard to the establishment of historically Black and cultural GLOs, the importance of the discriminatory and oppressive history and current culture in the U.S. must be acknowledged. Cultural GLOs often serve the role of providing a safe and supportive space for different minority groups on predominantly White campuses, allowing these students to enhance their cultural pride and identity. Similar to historically Black GLOs, cultural GLOs can serve as a substitute family, providing cultural familiarity and assisting in

student retention to graduation. These organizations often help educate the campus community about their culture (Torbenson & Parks, 2009). An author's personal reflection at the end of a book chapter on the history and future of Latina/o GLOs shared similarities to the first finding of this study regarding Theta Nu Xi members' lack of sororal intentions. Initially dismissing an invitation to attend a sorority information meeting, Susana Muñoz shared, "Joining a Latina sorority was a foreign concept for me....There was no way anyone would consider me 'sorority material'....I was pleasantly shocked that the room was filled with Latinas" (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009, p. 123). Her comment may be a partial reflection on the newness of cultural and multicultural GLOs. I would also argue that many of the women interviewed gained a stronger sense of cultural pride and identity through their involvement with Theta Nu Xi because they were accepted for who they were and found a similar safe space to explore their personal identities.

Finding #2 – Acceptance

The second major finding in this study is around acceptance. Several sisters described the acceptance they felt upon first meeting members of Theta Nu Xi while others later came to embrace the acceptance they felt within the sisterhood. I am now terming this sense of acceptance as intentionally inviting based on a concept called invitational theory.

Started in the 1970s and still evolving through research and practice, invitational theory is a model of communication patterns based on human interactions that send positive or negative signals. The continuum of four communication patterns that can affect human potential and development include intentionally disinviting, unintentionally disinviting, unintentionally inviting, and intentionally inviting. Four basic assumptions of invitational

theory that provide a framework to guide action include respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality. The most prominent practice of this theory is known as Invitational Education, an approach focusing on teaching and learning processes within primary and secondary schools to enhance both school and student success. Invitational theory has also been applied to other settings including college, business, counseling, and health-related fields ("International Alliance for Invitational Education homepage"; Purkey & Novak, 2008; Stanley, 1992; Stanley et al., 2004).

Respect

As a theory of practice, action is based on the four assumptions just mentioned. According to Purkey and Novak (2008), respect is the concept that “people are valuable, able, and responsible and should be treated accordingly” (p. 12). Beginning at sorority interest meetings, initial interactions with sisters relay a sense of respect. Remarks by one sister who felt as if she did not fit in at Monarch University during her first semester demonstrate this concept:

I mean they just looked at me, and they were like, you know, we’re so interested in you. What do you have to share? And everything after that was just like, wow, we’re so excited, we think you have such a perspective.

Another sister commented, “Accepting of the fact that there are differences and just really understanding them. Just not being closed minded to the fact that people can be different...Everyone is equally the same and equally valuable.” One sister reflected how this concept affected her personally, “Even though they realize that I’m totally different, they still respect and love me for my differences.” Explaining how she can meet women in other

chapters of Theta Nu Xi for the first time and have the sense of being unconditionally embraced, another sister shared, “They’re still strangers but they won’t give you a hard time...you don’t have to pass any sort of test to be good enough.” Theta Nu Xi’s mission statement guides the sorority to appreciate and value everyone, as one sister noted, “There is the phrase, lifestyles. It’s clearly written in there and it’s about LGBT sisters. Um accepting all races, religions, backgrounds, lifestyles. They took into account class....It’s a very comprehensive set of words that, that still appeal to me.” Respect is the essential building block necessary to be intentionally inviting as well as a potential member of a multicultural sorority like Theta Nu Xi.

Trust

Stanley, Juhnke, and Purkey (2004) define trust as the following premise: “Healthy living is a cooperative, collaborative activity in which process is as important as product” (p. 304). Trustworthiness can be established through interactions that demonstrate genuineness, reliability, competence, and truthfulness (Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2008). The sorority’s intensive intake process in conjunction with strong anti-hazing values is designed to build supportive relationships among the sisters. The women spend a great deal of time together, laying the foundation for a trusting sisterhood. Elaborating on the bonding process, a sister said,

Intake is a huge part of your Theta Nu Xi experience and the bonding you undergo through that process...and really thinking about who you are as a person and why you really want to join this organization, I think are integral to forming the bonds that you

need once you join Theta Nu Xi, making it a functional organization, and just like having [a] shared sense of community.

Members of Theta Nu Xi maintain a high level of commitment and hold one another accountable. This sister's remarks connected commitment and accountability within the sorority:

I just feel like you're committed...It's like if you don't come through for somebody, it's not just like oh that sucks. It's like someone's going to be there and be like, why didn't you do that?...So the fact that we are all committed to each other really just secures the fact that things are going to get done and that you really are going to have to do things.

Although some collaborations come easier than others, Theta Nu Xi is guided by the stated objective to promote unity among Greek organizations. Theta Nu Xi works to build those cooperative relationships with various organizations across campus through building connections with members, extending invitations to co-sponsor events, and attending programs aligned with the sorority's mission. Theta Nu Xi intentionally reaches out to a variety of organizations on campus, as one sister maintained, in order to avoid being "pigeon-holed into...the group that only works with this group or that group." An example of establishing trust in the first couple of years Theta Nu Xi was on Monarch's campus can be found in this quote:

[It] was huge for us because we got an invitation, a personal invitation from the Coming Out Week Committee saying that they wanted us, or that they were inviting us to the Coming Out Week dinner and that we were the only fraternity or sorority on

Monarch's campus that was invited. And that said a whole lot to me because it just meant that they know us enough to know that we are accepting.

Building trust by developing cooperative, collaborative relationships through interactions both internal and external to the sorority also presents an inviting stance.

Optimism

The third basic assumption is optimism. According to Purkey and Novak (1996), "Invitational education presents a positive vision of human existence: that individuals are valuable, able, and capable of self-direction and should be treated accordingly" (p. 53). In contrast to being pessimistic, having optimism means believing in and appreciating everyone's "untapped potential" (Purkey & Novak, 2008, p. 14). This sister's assertion reflects such an attitude:

And we're the wave, we're the next group that's coming in, we're pioneers in a way...In that aspect I really wanted to be a part of that, um, to be a part of something new and something different. To be like, you know, I'm White and I'm in a multicultural sorority and I'm proud of it.

Along similar lines, this sister declared,

I think that every woman in this sorority believes that they have the power to change the world...they take all of these major social issues and really go forward with them and want to make a change and believe that they can.

Theta Nu Xi demonstrates the belief that members are capable of self-direction with regard to how members are encouraged to learn about multiculturalism. One sister shared,

Just with a lot of the activities that we do, we try to learn. So I guess they [the national office] present opportunities for us to learn a lot, but it's not, they don't spoon feed it to us. We're kind of expected to take it and run with it ourselves.

Another sister provided more detail about this process:

We push each other to be the best of what we could be and learn the most that we can...and we're like OK, well go learn more and teach us about it because we want to know, too...So it's like we're there to say, like bounce ideas off us or talk to us about what you've learned...It's something that you share with all of us, and then we help you understand and you take different ideas from it, and so, it's about pushing you to learn more just by being there with these women. And who are willing to help you in whatever capacity you need as you go out and learn more.

This comment encompasses the full definition of optimism:

We like to say during intake is that the organization does not define you, you define the organization. And so, like, the events that we do are really, are strongly defined or based on who's in the organization and what they feel like is important.

Maintaining optimism is important, especially when faced with challenging individuals and situations, and unfortunately such challenges still exist when promoting respect for diversity and multiculturalism.

Intentionality

The fourth and final assumption needed to portray an inviting stance is intentionality. “Human potential can be realized best by places, policies, processes, and programs specifically designed to invite development and by people who are personally and

professionally inviting with themselves and others” (Purkey & Novak, 2008, p. 15). This premise relates to being purposeful in one’s actions. With regard to Theta Nu Xi, the importance of not prejudging others and being open to human potential comes out when one sister asserted,

Multicultural is just being aware and knowledgeable and wanting to learn more about the different cultures that are in the world...And so I think with multiculturalism, it’s devoid of any of those moral issues. It’s the ability to want to learn more about what’s going on around you without first saying that that’s right or wrong.

The desire to learn connects with intentionality as demonstrated by this sister’s explanation of a conversation with another sister regarding religion: “You have to understand I don’t have to agree with everything she says. I just have to be willing to engage her in a dialogue and understand why she thinks the way she does. And so it educated me.”

The emphasis is placed on both internal education of members and the external education of the campus:

With Theta Nu Xi, our goal is to bring respect of cultures and what, like, diversity to the entire campus and to teach other students and professors and whoever’s here that this culture’s different but it is just as important as yours...So I think our commitment to taking it outside of just our small sisterhood is what makes it really different.

Through policies such as anti-hazing, objectives such as promoting unity among Greek organizations, membership intake procedures, and programs promoting multicultural education and respect, Theta Nu Xi appears to maintain intentionality as well as the other three basic assumptions of invitational theory and practice.

Intentionally Inviting

Invitational theory and practice uses a language of transformation that is inviting rather than disinviting. Disinviting language can be intentionally cruel and humiliating or unintentionally hurtful and discriminatory. Examples of intentionally disinviting language or behavior are not hard to imagine. When someone is unintentionally disinviting, such behavior often can be due to a lack of information or understanding. An example of being unintentionally disinviting was given by one of the women interviewed: “As she was introducing me to her mom, she said, oh this is Susan and she’s different. Meaning like, for some reason I wasn’t clicking with that group. You know, and I was just like, OK.” Moving along the continuum, being unintentionally inviting generally happens when someone is helpful or engaging but doesn’t incorporate deliberate commitment into their ongoing language and behavior, and they tend to regress to disinviting levels of functionality when faced with challenges. Individuals who are intentionally inviting exhibit purposeful use of skills and knowledge that promotes positive growth and development in others. Everyone will periodically send messages at each point along this continuum, however, the usual level of functioning determines the overall tone of the environment (Purkey & Novak, 2008; Stanley et al., 2004). Part of what Theta Nu Xi provides its members is the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills in order to more fully function at the intentionally inviting level. This sister described how she is learning to be more accepting and wants to internalize an intentionally inviting stance:

We really try to respect everybody....But the thing is that I have to learn, you know what I mean, how to be more accepting. I mean, I feel like I’m not going to hate

anybody for their views, but um...I know that I need to respect their ideas. And the thing is that that should really come naturally to me.

The highest level of functioning, what Purkey and Novak (2008) call the “Plus Factor,” is when being intentionally inviting is internalized. One sister declared, “Theta Nu Xi is a way of life,” indicating such internalization as an ultimate goal of the sorority. Enveloping intentionally inviting communication with the four basic assumptions of respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality, human interactions can be positively developmental according to invitational theory and practice.

Discussion of Structural Findings

Finding #3 – Intentionally Multicultural but Inherently Feminist

The third finding of this study is that Theta Nu Xi is intentionally multicultural, but I would describe the organization as inherently feminist. I start by using an aspect of the invitational theory used to examine the previous finding regarding acceptance. Schmidt (2004, 2007) believes that this model embraces diversity, and he encouraged additional research and application of invitational theory concepts to diverse populations. The sorority is then appraised using Cox’s (1994) six characteristics of a multicultural organization and viewed through a feminist lens.

Elements of Diversity

Although this study was not conducted with invitational theory in mind, this particular finding around acceptance seems compatible. Feeling that there was potential for applying invitational theory to diverse populations yet seeing a lack of research in this area, Schmidt (2007) proposes six specific elements of diversity with which to examine

individuals or organizations from an invitational perspective: equity, expectation, enlistment, empowerment, encouragement, and enjoyment. Examining policies, processes, programs, and behaviors can indicate the presence of these diversity elements. Having already applied invitational theory to my research with Theta Nu Xi, this multicultural sorority also adds the contextual aspect of diversity.

Equity. The first element of diversity from an invitational perspective is equity. According to Schmidt (2007), “Equitable practices...ensure access for everyone to participate in the programs, fair treatment across places, policies, and processes designed and implemented by the organization, and just action when a person or persons require assistance or discipline” (p. 17). Equity and fairness, however, does not mean treating everyone the same. “People and organizations that strive for equity take pride in celebrating unique differences that individuals and groups possess and through which they enrich the greater community” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 17). An example can be found in the fact that members of Theta Nu Xi would often do something special to celebrate each other’s birthdays. A woman interviewed shared that one of her sisters, however, did not celebrate birthdays due to her religious beliefs. She went on to describe a conversation where she was helping another sister understand the importance of treating each person as they wish to be treated rather than expecting everyone to attend a birthday celebration when such an activity is contrary to someone’s religious views. Regarding how conversations like this one provide learning opportunities for members of the sorority by helping them recognize that their sisters come from different backgrounds, she commented, “So it just raises these questions, you know, for us as an organization. What each sister goes through and what they experience.” Procedures

for running meetings and elections for the sorority chapter also represent equitable practices. In the meetings I attended, a typed agenda was distributed, items for discussion were allotted time limits, and the time was monitored. If someone's topic was going over their allocated time, they asked for an extension and someone else could give up a minute or two of their assigned time. This structure provided the sorority a means by which they could cover many business items in a realistic amount of time. Another example came when an alumna described how members are selected to hold leadership positions within the sorority. She explained, "We have a formal nomination process and a formal acceptance. We can accept or decline nominations and then there's a formal vote." During an election I witnessed to fill leadership positions within the sorority, the candidates made statements about why they would be good for the position, sisters asked questions, and then the candidates were asked to leave the room so their candidacy could be discussed and voted upon. One of the sisters running for a position has a physical disability, and as she started to stand in order to leave the room, the rest of the sorority immediately offered to go out in the hallway to vote and let her stay seated. I also learned during an interview that a stool was provided for this sister during her emergence, which is not typical. My sense from observing and interviewing sisters that members of the sorority were constantly thinking about the needs of their sister in order to best support and assist her rather than her having to ask for accommodations required by law. These adjustments and practices provide examples of fair and equitable practices. In examining such structures within an organization for equitable practices, Schmidt (2007) emphasized the importance of "observ[ing] how unearned privilege of a select few might upset the balance of fairness within the larger community" (p. 18). No

evidence was found in my data that members of the sorority specifically explore the concept of unearned privilege, however, the structural integration of Theta Nu Xi is supported by the heterogeneity of its members and of the chapter presidents.

Expectation. The second element of diversity is expectation. According to Schmidt (2007), “People form *expectations* about situations and relationships based on experience and knowledge....Fundamental expectations, however, begin within basic human relationships” (p. 18). Members of Theta Nu Xi develop a variety of personal and professional relationships with students across campus in and out of the sorority. Their receptiveness to the learning process of getting to know people is a core component of how they internalize the sorority’s mission through their actions. One sister’s desire to get to know people developed during high school, when she began appreciating differences between herself and others:

Taking classes with these people and just getting to know them on an individual level and just realizing that I’m so much like some of them and I’m so different from some of them and it has nothing to do with what color your skin is.

Another sister shared the importance of basic human relationships to establishing expectations:

But just having the different cultures present and respecting all of them, you know, not questioning, not dismissing, not having- trying not to bring all your prejudiced stereotypes about certain groups to the table and just say, hey, that’s what, tell me more, I want to know more. Just really open minded when it comes to different cultures and all aspects of that...Having room for everybody and every subset or, you

know, there's really, there's no hierarchy basically. So they're all valued, there's no best or better or minority, majority. They're all there and all have equal time, equal work.

Schmidt (2007) went on to say, "When working with diverse populations, we will be successful to the degree that our expectations limit or expand the relationships we form" (p. 18). Another sister described the realization she had about herself and others that then allowed her to begin breaking down stereotypes and change her expectations about others:

Just being able to meet these people of different races except I'd never met them before and realize that they're not, like, this bad – they're not different from me, basically that's more what it was. I'm like, they're not different from me. Like, they're just as different as I am as an individual – that's what makes us different is that we're individuals, not because they're of a different race and culture.

Recognizing the impact stereotypes can have in setting negative expectations about others, many of the women I interviewed talked about trying not to stereotype people. One sister explained ways in which she is working to break down stereotypes, believing the process takes effort and work by people on both sides of any given stereotype. Another approach she likes to take is telling people information about herself that can possibly counter and break down some of their stereotypical beliefs, particularly as they relate to her. "That's really what breaks down stereotypes. It's just fighting the ignorance and not allowing the stereotypes to keep you from getting to know someone because you want to give it a chance."

Procedures and behaviors are effective means of assessing the presence of this diversity element. The Stomping on Stereotypes program facilitated by Theta Nu Xi specifically worked to dispel myths used to judge others based on broad generalizations, which can be so deeply ingrained in our consciousness that we assume them to be true. Members of the sorority also seem to have higher expectations for themselves and their sisters regarding behavior. One sister commented, “Being in Theta Nu Xi in particular means that I have a mission to uphold and sort of...almost like expectations of myself that others have and that I have, that I wouldn’t otherwise have.” Another woman gave an example of how the sorority held themselves accountable:

We were thinking of doing a mixer...with a specific fraternity on campus. And one of the girls sent me an e-mail asking me oh, what kind of guys are these? Are they like nerdy guys, are they party guys? And I was just like, please tell me you didn’t just ask me what these guys’ stereotypes are...It’s our willingness to get to know the people in it who are actually representative of that organization that really matters. This alumna shared how her desire to learn about others has continued beyond college and how she processes such experiences:

I think that stereotyping in general is really hard *not* to do, I guess. And I think a lot of times what I end up doing is I might have an initial thought about someone based on just how they appear, but I like to stand back and say, OK, you’ve already kind of thought about it initially, but really you should give that person time to let them show you who they are. So, stereotypes aside, what is this person like?

These examples demonstrate how Theta Nu Xi incorporates the diversity element of expectation into their daily beliefs and interactions.

Enlistment. The third element of diversity is enlistment. “To enlist people, as used here, is...gaining the cooperation and support of people for moving an organization (or a relation-ship [*sic*]) toward common goals” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 18). Theta Nu Xi demonstrates enlistment through their acceptance of others, members feeling connected around a common mission and purpose, and through their outreach to and support of various groups on campus. Several sisters were drawn to Theta Nu Xi because of the acceptance they felt when first meeting members of the sorority. Other sisters expressed embracing the acceptance they felt as part of the sisterhood within their chapter and by sisters in other chapters. Feeling as if she did not fit in at Monarch University during her first semester, one sister shared her desires and reactions about attending a sorority interest meeting:

I was kind of looking for a group that wasn't going to look at me – wasn't going to look at how I looked. I mean, I didn't want a materialistic group. Didn't care about how I looked, just cared about who I was and what I wanted to do...And then I went there and I just loved the people. Like how accepting they are. That was my biggest thing – was the acceptance. They were so accepting of everyone, and they were so accepting of me. And it wasn't like, you're not wearing the right clothes, obviously you're just not, you know, you're not the image of our sorority. I mean they just looked at me, and they were like, you know, we're so interested in you. What do you have to share? And everything after that was just like, wow, we're so excited, we think you have such a perspective or we, you know, we're really excited about you

joining the sorority. It wasn't about this whole, I don't know, you know, if she's right or not. It was just totally accepting, and that's really the bottom line, I think.

Once in the sorority, many women recognized the deep level of acceptance by the sisters in their chapter, a space where they could relax and be themselves. One sister stated, "Even though they realize that I'm totally different, they still respect and love me for my differences." A couple of sisters framed the acceptance they felt in the context of personal identities when one said, "I feel like, especially in the sorority, you can appreciate the individual and you're not looking to categorize them, and so, like appreciating their differences, not in a demographic sense but as, but as an individual." The second sister remarked, "A very accepting, universal sisterhood...I don't feel like I'm carrying the banner for all biracial people." One sister reflected on where the acceptance might come from:

I don't know if it's as simple as in the mission statement or if it's, I guess, a sharing about people involved. Experience during the pledge process. The things that they have learned, you know, not only what the founders wanted for this organization, but just the general bonding that comes initially through the pledge process...And I think just in the title, multicultural in part of the name, um, you're saying a lot. You're saying that we want you because you're different or regardless of whether or not you feel like your, if you, even if you don't feel like you have any differences, you do and we want you.

Although these women are from very different backgrounds, they come together around a common mission and a core set of values. An alumna sister who helped establish

the chapter of Theta Nu Xi at Monarch University described her continued attraction to the sorority:

I look at the mission and I see that there are all those pieces to it, and I feel like that it was pretty progressive for its time. For example, there is the phrase, lifestyles. It's clearly written in there and it's about LGBT sisters. Um accepting all races, religions, backgrounds, lifestyles. They took into account class...It just has staying power, the mission statement. It hasn't faded, and I think it's still the core of why people still want to be Theta women.

Describing how the women continue developing their connection to the sorority's mission, one sister asserted, "The sorority encourages a lot of personal, you know, tell me all about your sister and who she is as a whole, a complete being, that involves everything." Another sister revealed how the strong sense of sisterhood contributed to her wanting to join the sorority when she remarked, "I liked their relationship with each other. I liked how close they were, and not on such a superficial level...It was just really appealing how they could joke around with each other so well, and, like really, really close." This inviting stance is important in making all sisters feel welcome in this multicultural sorority and committed to its mission. One sister stated,

We've made such an emphasis to say multicultural does not just mean race...And I think it's kind of like making an effort to come together, to have these hard discussions, and usually they are tough, um, because people don't understand each other.

Another sister seemed to summarize the importance of having and using a broader definition of multiculturalism when she said, “Multicultural means to me that it is a way to promote the end goal of diversity, that it’s just a way for people to come together and explore those differences.”

Schmidt (2007) expands his explanation of enlistment when he elaborates, “With this definition, enlistment becomes an active stance of creating multiple invitations to involve an expanded audience in the work of the organization. Enlistment is the precursor of partnerships” (pp. 18-19). This element of diversity in invitational practice continues to be demonstrated through Theta Nu Xi’s outreach efforts across campus. Collaboration efforts are guided by Theta Nu Xi’s mission to promote multiculturalism and their objective to bridge gaps between GLOs as well as ease of access. The sorority co-sponsors many events with GLOs and cultural student organizations. Theta Nu Xi also feels strongly about showing support for other organizations through participation in programs aligned with the sorority’s mission and values. This may include attendance at a cultural group’s dance performance, a step show featuring historically Black Greek letter organizations, a program by the LGBT organization, or a race relations discussion. This sister’s remarks demonstrate how the sorority has shown support and led by example: “So just showing up there and we always wear our letters, and so letting people know that even if we’re not Asian or Black or whatever, we still support and we still want to learn about these things.” Concerned about the direction the Greek system is headed, another sister talked about how they showed support for the traditionally White sororities and fraternities by participating in their non-social activities such educational forums and community service in an attempt to help those

organizations get back to the principles on which they were founded. She commented, “So it would be like we really support you guys, and this is going in the right direction.” Other ways the sorority members informally raise awareness on campus is through their daily lives and interactions, being living examples of the diverse sisterhood for which the sorority strives such as visual presence and self-composure. Seeing the visual diversity of the sisterhood enticed many women I interviewed to learn more about the sorority and eventually join Theta Nu Xi. Having a visual presence on campus can be powerful in many ways. This sister’s comment seems to summarize the concept of enlistment: “Theta Nu Xi really breaks down ignorance. It helps people come together as a *group* of people.”

Empowerment. Theta Nu Xi can also be assessed as an inviting organization through the fourth element of diversity – empowerment. According to Schmidt (2007), “Empowerment is the outcome of establishing and nurturing helpful relationships that combat oppression, negate marginalization, and elevate the elements of equity and enlistment mentioned earlier” (p. 19). This element is demonstrated through the inclusiveness of the sorority’s mission statement and the safe space created among the sisters. The inclusiveness of Theta Nu Xi’s mission statement is critical in examining this element, especially in light of research indicating the homogeneity of GLOs with regard to lack of diversity, affluence, and religion (Astin, 1993; Whipple, 1998; Winston et al., 1987). An alumna sister who helped establish the chapter of Theta Nu Xi at Monarch University described her continued attraction to the sorority:

I look at the mission and I see that there are all those pieces to it, and I feel like that it was pretty progressive for its time. For example, there is the phrase, lifestyles. It’s

clearly written in there and it's about LGBT sisters. Um accepting all races, religions, backgrounds, lifestyles. They took into account class...And as I look at the mission statement, I don't personally see something that's missing, so like it's a very comprehensive set of words that, that still appeal to me, still resonates, um, I still want to be that woman who brings together people on campuses and in communities and, you know, and hit on all of those pieces...So I still think it works and it just has staying power, the mission statement. It hasn't faded, and I think it's still the core of why people still want to be Theta women.

A key component of identity found in the data analysis is the individualized aspect taken on in the sisters' views of themselves and others. Part of what drew many of the women to the sorority is being immediately accepted as an individual, with all of their differences and potential contributions respected and valued. As sisters struggled with their own personal identities, the sorority was there to support them through the process.

Essential to the mission of Theta Nu Xi and their ability to function as a culturally diverse sisterhood is the creation of a safe space for open yet critical dialogue. The sorority's small chapter size, emphasis on sisterhood, and focus on multiculturalism provide an ideal combination to allow for the creation of this type of safe space. One sister described what such a safe space looks like within the sorority:

I think we can talk a little bit more real about [sensitive topics like racial tensions]. I think that we all know and we approach all with a good amount of respect for everything and everything that's different. And being able to talk about things and ask questions and say, oh, so in this religion, what does it mean when you say this?

Or why do you believe this and where does it come about? And you can ask those types of questions without feeling stupid or feeling ignorant or feeling like that these are just tacky questions to ask.

In exploring how the sorority impacted their identity as women, I found several sisters who felt empowered through their involvement in Theta Nu Xi. The experience of being in the sorority and having to take on leadership roles because the chapter size is so small helped some women improve their self-esteem and self-confidence at the same time developing their leadership skills. As a senior about to graduate, this sister reflected on how her three years in Theta Nu Xi empowered her:

I think that me as a person, I've changed a lot. From the beginning, I felt like I didn't know much. I was a scared freshman on campus. I was really not very confident in myself in making decisions, you know, when I was given a task, I would always second-guess myself, and I'd be like I don't know how to do this and kind of freak out. And I've seen myself grow. I go now and I'm a lot more comfortable in classes, and I think a lot of it has to do with Theta Nu Xi...I feel like I've become a lot stronger as a female.

Another sister shared how Theta Nu Xi significantly impacted her identity as a woman:

I think I've gained a much better sense of self in terms of feeling stronger about my capabilities and knowing that I have leadership skills that go beyond the chapter that I can use in everyday life. I think that being surrounded by a group of women who are amazing in all different aspects of their life really inspires you to do more...I think it really helps empower women – I think the sorority does, because we're all put into

leadership positions, and we have to work through a lot of different personalities and be able to come up with different programming and events and new ideas, and so it makes you be innovative and a leader and a go-getter....I think that had I not known about the sorority or had I not joined the sorority, that I wouldn't be as open minded as I am, and I wouldn't be as strong of a leader or a woman or have as strong relationships as I do now.

Schmidt (2007) also says, "At the same time, such organizations and persons would establish methods of assessing how they contribute to this notion of self-empowerment and what nuances exist that help people become empowered" (p. 19). My analysis did not uncover evidence of assessment by the sorority regarding their policies, procedures, or activities.

Encouragement. As the fifth diversity element, "encouragement is an important element to use when applying invitational assumptions and principles with diverse populations because it incorporates the fundamental philosophy of *being with* versus *doing to*. In contrast, praise is a doing to process" (Schmidt, 2007, p. 20). With Theta Nu Xi encouragement often happens in conjunction with their learning. One sister described what this looks like within the sorority:

So I think when we discuss multiculturalism, it's like helping each other and supporting each other through the fact that when we want to learn more about other people and other cultures, we're not denying our own heritage. We just want to know more and we want to be accepting of everything. And we believe it makes us better people and I believe it makes us better people to know more about what's going on around you.

The sorority presented the opportunity and safe space to discuss personal struggles on a level not found in a classroom or with more casual friends. One sister reflected,

I think a lot of the learning doesn't happen in a formal setting. It happens when we're just hanging out and talking....We often have really eye-opening discussions and just talking about one sister's day and what she had to go through because of the special circumstances that she may be in or the color of her skin or how somebody reacted to her and being able to support one another but also learn from one another.

In talking about the essence of critical dialogue within the sorority, this alumna inadvertently describes how these women are not only present with their sisters through this process of learning and supporting one another, but she also touches on how critical those experiences are considering they are encouraging others to dialogue in similar ways to enhance their learning. She commented,

Any situation where you have people coming from different backgrounds, you'll have um, you may have long- you may have discussions about issues and not everyone's going to agree because of their different backgrounds. However, the difference I think in our sorority and maybe other situations where maybe people can't overcome those differences is that we understand that we have to and we have to respect other people's opinions because of where they, because that's what we're about. That's part of who we are. That's sort of why we exist and we try to encourage other people to sort of understand other people's backgrounds and be able to still collaborate.

The sorority also allows for learning in individual areas of interest as well as providing opportunities to learn together. The learning is individualized in the sense that everyone is

encouraged to pursue their area of interest regarding social change and multiculturalism, which might include exploring different cultures, homelessness and class issues, sexual orientation, and tutoring children. Sisters then bring those experiences or the knowledge gained through exploring these areas of interest back to other women in the sorority. One sister explained,

We push each other to be the best of what we could be and learn the most that we can and so it's like whether it's in a subject that you're already interested in and we push you to learn even more about it, or if it's something that you've never heard of but sounds really cool, and we're like OK, well go learn more and teach us about it because we want to know, too...So it's like we're there to say, like bounce ideas off us or talk to us about what you've learned. So it's not just something that like it's not such an individualized experience. It's something that you share with all of us, and then we help you understand and you take different ideas from it, and so, it's about pushing you to learn more just by being there with these women. And who are willing to help you in whatever capacity you need as you go out and learn more.

I believe the diversity element of encouragement in invitational practice is connected with universal learning rather than unilateral learning as described later in Finding #5 of this study. While the five elements of diversity just described are vital when applying invitational theory to diverse populations, the sixth and final element serves to enhance the other pieces.

Enjoyment. The sixth and final element of diversity is enjoyment. According to Schmidt (2007), “Being with people of diverse cultures, backgrounds, religious beliefs, ethnicity, and other characteristics provides abundant opportunity to enrich our experiences and develop more fully our personal and professional lives” (p. 21). Gaining pleasure out of being with diverse people and being able to recognize and celebrate the diversity you each bring to the relationship enhances the experiences you have together and what you take away from such relationships. The enthusiastic acceptance of potential members at an interest meeting demonstrates Theta Nu Xi’s enjoyment factor from the beginning. A sister shared,

I mean they just looked at me, and they were like, you know, we’re so interested in you. What do you have to share? And everything after that was just like, wow, we’re so excited, we think you have such a perspective or we, you know, we’re really excited about you joining the sorority.

Learning about differences includes having an openness to understand and explore both differences and similarities between oneself and others. Most of the women I interviewed joined Theta Nu Xi already having the desire to learn about differences, and many of them developed or enhanced that desire through their membership in the sorority. Coming into the sorority with the desire, one sister said, “It was very important to me to just learn about other cultures and to be with people who are different from myself because that is interesting to me and exciting.” This sister discusses why she ended up joining Theta Nu Xi after feeling like she was initially “missing out” at college, and the sorority provided opportunities to enrich her experiences:

[The sorority presented ideas that I was] not so much struggling with, just like thinking about on my own. [Some examples included] the whole idea of broadening your horizons and not secluding yourself to your own comfort zone. And interacting with people and learning a lot from people who are not the same as you, but I mean, and also just the whole idea of celebrating differences and really gaining everything that you can from just, like, this whole variety of people.

In taking time and getting to know a new member of the sorority over lunch, a sister about to graduate describes the pleasure she gained from the conversation about their families and religious beliefs:

We decided to have lunch together and then it was the first time that I had had an in-depth conversation with her. She had just joined, um, I think like less than a week before that...I mean it was just like us sharing of like our experiences with no judgment on either sideI could see that she was really listening, and we were just having such a great conversation and learning about each other's families and everything and who each other were...And so that was really fun and really special to me.

This sister touches on the importance of enriching our experiences through personal interactions from diverse friendships rather than interactions with strangers when she remarked,

When you're with your friends, it'll come up, you know, naturally. Like, I'll be with my friends and I can say, oh I was eating Kimchi and rice with my mom, and they'll say, like, what's Kimchi, and then I'd explain or something. And then it'll just come

naturally. It's so much like, when you give that information voluntarily it makes a huge difference.

Another sister shared how important learning about the little cultural differences that you might not learn about without such personal interactions when she explained,

They have a shoe closet outside because it's part of Korean culture not to wear your shoes inside the house, and I saw this cabinet outside, and I was like, what is that? Why do you have a cabinet outside? They're like, oh, it's for your shoes. And so like just interactions with people that teach you about different cultures, and I wouldn't have gotten that if I hadn't met [my sorority sisters], and I wouldn't have gotten that if I hadn't come to Monarch and joined Theta Nu Xi.

Such enriching experiences as the ones just described helped the sisters develop personally and professionally. Several other sisters shared how they had been able to explore and develop their own identity and their perceptions of others as well as the interrelationship between the two. One sister noted, "I can see myself now more in relation to other people...the similarities that I have with other sisters and of other ethnic backgrounds and differences and what all." The powerful synopsis of identity development within the sisterhood of women that I interviewed can be found in this insightful comment:

You want to be able to have your individuality and appreciate that but also know that not everyone is going to be the same as you, and that's a good thing...you don't have to sacrifice your individuality or your own belief system by knowing about someone else's. So, I think it's a very ideal way of people getting along, I think, just appreciating differences but not losing your uniqueness.

In discussing what she hoped to gain from being in Theta Nu Xi, she explained, “Another thing for me was the multiculturalism aspect, just learning about different people and their experiences and sort of seeing how they affect my view of the world and just sort of learning from other people.” Another sister stated,

I’ve always been really open to making all kinds of different friends and having people be more accepting....I guess I always knew more about race issues than anything else....I’ve become a lot more interested in different cultural groups ever since I’ve been here. Theta Nu Xi helped make me really interested. I love learning about different things; I love different languages.

Speaking of stereotypes, this alumna shared how her desire to learn about others has continued beyond college and how she processes such experiences:

I think that stereotyping in general is really hard *not* to do, I guess. And I think a lot of times what I end up doing is I might have an initial thought about someone based on just how they appear, but I like to stand back and say, OK, you’ve already kind of thought about it initially, but really you should give that person time to let them show you who they are. So, stereotypes aside, what is this person like?

Theta Nu Xi has many indicators of the six elements suggested for applying invitational theory to diverse populations. As a young organization created to focus on promoting multiculturalism, Theta Nu Xi is not trapped by outdated policies and procedures that tend to marginalize or discriminate certain people. There is room, however, for Theta Nu Xi to enhance their practices through intentionally examining and assessing their processes in order to be more intentionally inviting in their work with diverse populations.

Characteristics of a Multicultural Organization

Theta Nu Xi identifies itself as a multicultural organization both in name and through specific language in their mission statement. Structural issues internal to an organization affecting functionality include cultural differences, structural integration, and management of intergroup conflict. With regard to the topic of cultural diversity in organizations, Cox (1994) defines an organization as being multicultural if it is one in which “members of all sociocultural backgrounds can contribute and achieve their full potential” (p. 225). The internal structure of the sorority was analyzed using Cox’s (1994) six characteristics of a multicultural organization. Albeit intended for large corporations, this framework still applies to smaller organizations such as the sorority studied.

Values diversity. The first characteristic of a multicultural organization is one that values diversity and appreciates cultural difference. Cultural differences may have some bearing on an organization in such areas as leadership styles, communication styles, time and space orientation, and individualism versus collectivism (Cox, 1994). Since some of the differences cited by Cox (1994) revolve around gender differences in the workplace and this study is on a sorority consisting of all women, those differences are excluded from this discussion. There was no indication of cultural differences regarding leadership style, which Cox (1994) presents as typically being task-oriented versus relationship-oriented. The sorority election I observed included a long debate between two candidates for chapter president. The focus, however, centered around whose vision for the future would best serve the sorority chapter, both of which indicated task and relationship orientations.

Communication styles can also vary depending on one’s culture. Some cultures appreciate

modesty and deference while others value bold assertiveness. Two sisters in Theta Nu Xi from different cultural backgrounds, however, were both described as potentially “abrasive.” The inability to curse in the sorority’s letters came up as the subject of another communication style difference. One sister grew up in a household where everyone cursed as a normal means of communication and found it hard to stop when wearing her letters, so she and her sisters regularly deliberated whether or not that was cultural. Time orientation surfaced in several situations. At the chapter meetings I attended as part of this study, the meetings functioned in a professional manner with a typed agenda where items for discussion were allotted time limits and the time was monitored. If someone’s topic was going over their allotted time, they asked for an extension and someone else could give up a minute or two of their assigned time. As one sister told me, “There’s time, there’s seconds, second the motion, whatever, so I think because we have structure, we’re able to sort of achieve what we set out to do.” My observation was that this structure provided the sorority a means by which they could cover many business items in a realistic amount of time, as indicated by this sister’s remarks regarding time and cultural differences:

I think culturally some people are just more timely than others. Like, it's just like within their family, not just like as in like ethnic culture. It just, if that's the way they operated in their family. Like even the wider family, like oh, 15, 20 minutes late – you're still on time! So, like getting that kind of idea that we have to be respectful of other people's time because everybody's so busy, especially as a Monarch student, is probably the one that's biggest affect of things because, like, meetings – we can't have run on like 2, 2 1/2 hours. Like that's just, it just doesn't work. We all go like crazy.

So we have to be like, no you have to come, and this is the way – you have to be on time. And you request very specific minutes, and we're going to hold you to those minutes, so you have to use them very wisely. So that's probably the biggest difference, like the biggest cultural thing that we've had to like make sure each girl understands and sometimes had to work with because even beyond minutes, you have to be on time for events. Especially if we're going to be there early to start setting up and so, communicating that well and getting each girl to understand that differs depending on what they've been exposed to earlier on.

Another sister shared her perspective regarding cultural differences and time orientation:

Well, I think whenever you get people with different cultural backgrounds, you like can often get people who just interact in different ways... There's a joke in Miami that there's regular time and there's Cuban time, like Cubans are always late, and so something that my poor sorority sisters have had to deal is that [my sorority sister] and I run on Cuban time a lot of times, and so that's a constant thing because a lot of people, like [two of our sorority sisters], they're like, they run by like very precise times and they get very offended when people are late because they're like you're wasting my time. And I totally understand that, and so that's something that we have to deal with constantly because people, like you could be late to meetings or whatever and you're just like, you have to realize that even though you may have run like this in Miami, you're not in Miami anymore and you need to be respectful of other people's understandings of time. *They* may not understand that like 8:00 really means 8:10, 8:05 to you.

Individualism versus collectivism is another way that cultural differences can emerge within an organization. “Compared to individualists, collectivists place greater emphasis on the needs and goals of the group, social norms and duty, and cooperation behaviors” (Cox, 1994, p. 113). Developing the ability to work together during stressful times came out in the data, a benefit of maintaining the sisterhood relationships while also managing the business functions of the sorority. One sister points out why she feels the sorority size is intentionally small:

Everyone has to know everybody else and be able to work together as a cohesive unit.

I think once you get large numbers, you're unable to do that. And I think to be able to reach the mission, you do have to be able to work as a group together.

While everyone I interviewed was concerned about doing what was best for the sorority, I was intrigued by the tendency for the sisters to accept the dominant – or Euro-Anglo as Cox (1994) calls it – culture's time orientation, regardless of their cultural background.

Pluralism. The second characteristic of a multicultural organization is an acculturation process that entails pluralism rather than assimilation. “*Pluralism* refers to a two-way learning and adaptation process in which both the organization and entering members from various cultural backgrounds change to some degree to reflect the cultural norms and values of the other(s)” (Harquail & Cox, 1994, p. 167). Theta Nu Xi's emphasis on educating themselves and the larger community about multiculturalism is confirmed through their actions, and there did not appear to be a dominant culture within the sorority chapter I studied. One sister commented, “One of the things that people, we like to say during intake is that the organization does not define you, you define the organization.” Multiple

interviewees expressed appreciation for the diversity within their sisterhood and how the cultural differences introduced members to new ideas and ways of thinking and doing. Sharing personal backgrounds about cultural practices and family dynamics provides a topic of conversation to which each sister can contribute, and given the diversity within the sorority, the experiences vary greatly. The concept of two-way learning is demonstrated when one sister noted, “A lot of it is learning how similar our families are and how similar we are and talking about how different we are...It’s kind of like a culture exchange.” Harquail and Cox (1994) go on to say, “Pluralism is an acculturation process in which the entering members assimilate a limited number of core behaviors and values while preserving important differences along other dimensions” (p. 167). Although these women are from very different backgrounds, they come together around a common mission and a core set of values. Appreciation of those differences is reflected in this sister’s remark:

Differences are just a part of who we are, and it adds a lot to, like our different experiences add a lot to our, like the functioning of the sorority, culturally speaking, like far beyond race or ethnicity or anything, including just the way that you live your life and your theories and your values and all those other things add to our mission and the programming that we offer and our education of one another, and so I think it's a positive.

Myriad examples were presented in Chapter Five that support this concept of pluralism.

Membership and leadership diversity. The third characteristic involves full structural integration, typically measured by examining the diversity within an organization’s membership and leadership. Structural integration of Theta Nu Xi involves the heterogeneity

of its members and within the positions of power. Examining the cultural diversity of sorority membership and the chapter presidents over time provides insight into the formal and informal power distribution within the organization (Cox, 1994). The cultural differences of the 10 women I interviewed are a starting point for looking at membership diversity. With no disrespect for how the women I interviewed self-identified racially or ethnically but in an attempt to provide a simplified summary of how the larger society might identify these women, I would say that one is Chinese, one is Black, two are White, two are Asian American, two are Hispanic/Latina, and two are bi- or multiracial. Some of the women interviewed identified as being from a lower socioeconomic background while others acknowledged that they did not need financial aid to attend college. This adds another component of diversity to the sorority, especially given the often affluent nature of Greek life (Astin, 1993). The national sorority office conducted surveys in 2001 and 2008 that demonstrate their diversity, discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Both surveys indicate diverse membership of Theta Nu Xi in multiple categories such as race/ethnicity, religion, and languages spoken. Additional questions asked in 2008 such as gender identity and gender expression demonstrate the organization's openness to other aspects of diversity. There can be sorority chapters, however, whose membership might be more homogeneous. One sister expressed concern about the potential lack of heterogeneity within a sorority chapter when she shared,

People identify with their own culture and race, so if we don't have representatives of that race in the, in the sorority, that could potentially affect whether or not they want to come into the sorority or something. Happens all the time, you know. If they see

like a bunch of, you know, say they see a bunch of us standing [together], and neither one of us is like African American or something, the African American applicants might not even- or potential candidates, might just walk by and might not even think that it applies to them, so, you know, even though we say multicultural, they need like a visual representation...It just, I feel like the more culturally diverse we are, the better.

A couple of sisters indicated that the chapters in Texas may attract more Latinas and in Utah more Mormons given the demographic composition of the region, although the photographs on those chapters' websites visually portray a diverse sisterhood. Another sister said, "Each chapter is different. They all have their own personalities."

Looking at the leadership diversity of this chapter of Theta Nu Xi is the second dimension to consider when examining the organization for full structural integration. Keep in mind that due to the small chapter size, sisters often hold several leadership positions at the same time within the sorority. I wondered if the dominant culture – either of society in general (White) or another one in the chapter as an organization – would most often serve in such powerful positions as chapter president. As mentioned above, there did not appear to be a dominant culture established within the sorority. Reviewing this chapter's presidents for a period of 9 years, only one woman is White. During chapter president election mentioned above, the person who was not elected was White and had seniority by virtue of class year and length of time as a member in the sorority.

Informal networks and friendships. The fourth characteristic of a multicultural organization is the integration of informal networks. According to Cox (1994), “The principal aspects of participation in informal groups are (1) access to social networks (informal communication networks and establishment of friendship ties), and (2) mentoring activity” (p. 195). Because the weekly meetings are chock-full of business and the sorority does not live together, the women realize the need to plan social events that allow them time to more deeply develop the sense of sisterhood on a personal level. Sharing why planned informal events arose, a founding sister of the chapter acknowledged,

When we first came on campus...I still thought of it as Theta Nu Xi, this organization that I'm a part of, and I really liked the girls, they're a lot of fun, but I wasn't, um, I wouldn't call them and talk to them about my problems or anything like that...I feel like we started realizing this at some point at the end of the semester and started talking about, you know, we really only see each other at chapter meetings...and we really should do things just for fun, just to hang out with each other and get to talk and things like that. So we started trying to do weekly dinners and things where we would just be able to get together and talk. So I think that helped a lot.

Although the sisters still maintained planned informal events such as weekly sisterhood dinners, their friendships evolved and they seemed to value and appreciate the social aspect to their interactions. One sister explained, “Whenever we see each other, we try to make the most of our time together because we know that there's hardly any time that we're together that it's not dealing with business.” Their commitment “to make more of a personal effort to call one another and to have sleepovers” seemed to work. They try to stay in touch via email

or by calling one another. If they saw each other around campus, they would intentionally stop and chat for a few minutes. Smaller groups and even pairs of sisters got together for lunch or dinner outside of the regularly scheduled sisterhood dinners. Sisters described going shopping together, enjoying sporting events, going to the state fair, attending church together, and going to parties. A sister may be planning to do something and will send out an email inviting others along. A recurring response as to how they informally interacted with sisters included sleepovers, watching movies, and appreciating “down time together.” These social interactions helped the sisters get to know one another and feel comfortable with one another in a way that allowed them to engage in meaningful multicultural conversations.

Mentoring activities where someone with more experience guides a newer member of the sorority in a way to help that person be successful were not readily visible. One sister shared her perspective as she commented,

I think the women in our organization, in their daily lives are trying to uplift each other and other women who are coming in from behind. Also mentoring, all of these things. Just so that, I guess, we can all support and help each other as a whole and, you know, the, I guess, the gender as a whole.

I found not as much mentoring but rather women being inspired by wonderful other sisters and alumnae who were role models and women feeling empowered because they were forced into leadership positions. As a senior about to graduate, this sister reflected on this process and how her three years in Theta Nu Xi empowered her:

I think that me as a person, I’ve changed a lot. From the beginning, I felt like I didn’t know much. I was a scared freshman on campus. I was really not very confident in

myself in making decisions, you know, when I was given a task, I would always second-guess myself, and I'd be like I don't know how to do this and kind of freak out. And I've seen myself grow. I go now and I'm a lot more comfortable in classes, and I think a lot of it has to do with Theta Nu Xi. A lot of it, just – I've had so many responsibilities and I've taken them on and I've been able to successfully carry them out. Even if I don't do it successfully, I'm able to basically accept the consequences for my actions, you know, if I don't end up doing it the right way, and I learned. So, it's very different now. I was the one asking all the questions, and now I'm the one giving all the answers.

The importance of having positive role models in the development of one's gender identity was emphasized. Many of the women interviewed openly acknowledged how much they admired other women in Theta Nu Xi, both locally and nationally, describing them as “amazing women” doing “amazing things.” Another sister shared how Theta Nu Xi significantly impacted her ability to be successful within the sorority and in other areas of her life:

I think that being surrounded by a group of women who are amazing in all different aspects of their life really inspires you to do more. Seeing sisters that have overcome so much academically or personally or any aspect with life makes you feel like you can do the same things...I think it really helps empower women – I think the sorority does, because we're all put into leadership positions, and we have to work through a lot of different personalities and be able to come up with different programming and events and new ideas, and so it makes you be innovative and a leader and a go-getter,

so I think that it really helps to kind of cluster all the successful skills that you need in college and outside college and in your future.

The lack of mentoring activity may be due to the small chapter sizes essentially forcing everyone into leadership roles from the moment sisters join the sorority, providing hands-on learning experiences and little time for mentoring by older sisters. Student turnover within the sorority through graduation may be another factor.

Institutional bias. The fifth characteristic is a lack of institutionalized cultural bias within the organization's practices. "*Institutional bias* refers to the fact that preference patterns inherent in how we manage organizations often inadvertently create barriers to full participation by organization members from cultural backgrounds that differ from the traditional majority group" (Cox, 1994, p. 207). Organizational values are often influenced by the values held by the organization's "founding fathers," which may have been a long time ago. Founded in 1997, however, Theta Nu Xi is a young organization and one that was founded around principles of multiculturalism. Describing the impact Theta Nu Xi's diverse membership can have within the sorority, an alumna shared,

We're so young and because you can give as much as you want to this organization, you can take things in new directions. You can start new initiatives. You can be the leader of something and not just at your chapter.

There was certainly no evidence of intergroup bias within the sorority as demonstrated above when discussing the first three characteristics of valuing diversity, pluralism, and membership and leadership diversity. The closest indication of institutional bias found was the tendency for sisters to accept the dominant culture's time orientation, regardless of their

cultural background. One could question the decision to establish Theta Nu Xi as a sorority rather than a student organization, which imbeds them in a long-standing, biased tradition. The decision, however, was intentional by the founders. Although they wanted the selective sisterhood built around shared rituals and values inherent in the Greek system, they also recognized the central role Greek letter organizations play in social life on many college campuses and saw that as a practical way to impact greater social change in that community.

Intergroup conflict. The sixth and final characteristic of a multicultural organization is the ability to proactively manage conflict related to cultural diversity. Opposing interests that cause conflict can emerge from power discrepancies, identity affirmation, competitive goals, resources, and cultural differences. Power discrepancies and identity affirmation (assimilation versus pluralism) often involves conflict between the majority group or dominant culture and the minority group. I did not perceive a dominant culture within the sorority and have already discussed the level of pluralism within Theta Nu Xi, and the data does not indicate any power discrepancies. The other three sources of conflict – competitive goals, resources, and cultural differences – can result from majority-minority or minority-minority interactions. Resolution strategies presented by Cox (1994) for managing conflict in diverse workgroups include collaboration/negotiation/bargaining, alter situation/context (e.g. organization redesign), procedures/rules/policies, alter personnel, alter/redefine the issues of contention, hierarchical appeal, smoothing (emphasize similarities, play down conflict), superordinate goals, structured interactions, integrative problem solving (mediation + compromise).

A situation involving the purpose of a sisterhood retreat for chapter members is one I would describe as conflict between groups around competing goals. Originally the plan was to go camping so the sisters could spend time together without internet or phone interruptions, although the NPHC step show was happening that night. The different goals for that night included relaxing time for sisters to bond, business-related planning, and wanting to increase the sorority's visibility through attending the step show. A sister revealed the underlying tension:

Raising awareness on campus is one thing but bonding is another, so we were really struggling to find a balance, and it seemed so simple at the meeting. I thought we made a decision, but afterwards we had all these e-mail discussions that were just pages long where people were like I don't want to go camping.

Realizing that e-mail was not the best means of communication for this type of conversation, a special meeting was called to discuss the issue. They took turns sharing their concerns and priorities, listening to each other without interruption, and working on resolving the concerns expressed. Another sister summarized the situation when she commented, "So, it was more like a lack of communication, and we talked a lot about saying what you mean when you mean it and not waiting until later when your emotions start to fester." Rather than go camping, the retreat was held at a sister's apartment. Some of the sisters gathered at the apartment for dinner and a movie while other sisters went to the step show, and they all regrouped at the apartment later that evening to spend a little time talking about long-term goals of the sorority and then having the rest of the night "talking about personal stuff." The sorority was able to reach a resolution by using multiple strategies such as focusing on

superordinate goals of the sorority, which included all three areas of concern, actively listening to one another in a structured interaction, and negotiating.

According to Cox (1994) group conflict can occur regarding competition for resources such as land and jobs. The sorority does not allocate resources to its members, but conflict about resources still arose, specifically around money. Keep in mind that members of Theta Nu Xi come from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Still referring to the retreat conflict just mentioned, there was also conflict regarding resources. Some sisters wanted to go to the step show but did not want (or could not afford) to buy a ticket. Their creative problem solving shifted to collaboration:

If you really wanted to go but you didn't want to buy the ticket, then we all decided that we could pitch in and get your ticket for you because it wasn't that much and that was something that we could do.

Spending money came up as a general concern with regard to participating in sorority activities and other aspects of Greek life. A discussion arose about whether or not to order t-shirts with the sorority's name written on it in Greek letters in short-sleeve or long-sleeve, as this sister explained,

So we talked about being more considerate as far as when we're planning for things remember that not everybody's gonna have all the money to shell out that everybody else does. But when you do feel like, maybe you feel pressured into it because you don't want to *not* get the t-shirt because then you don't want to feel excluded or like you're not being a part of the sisterhood, but at the same time you really don't want to get it and then feel like, oh I wasted my money on that.

A sorority sister who identifies as being from a higher socioeconomic status provided her perspective on conflicts related to money:

I think one issue that is really difficult to talk about is on money. Like we have people in our sorority from completely different socioeconomic backgrounds...and \$5.00 to them is not the same as \$5.00 to me. So, like there've been some conversations with money that have been kind of heated, and not in the sense of like, oh like why can't you just go bowling but more like why can you not realize, why are you not taking into account, like you form plans to go bowling or go to the movies, and you have to realize that you're overlooking some things, that like we can't just drop everything and use our money to do that. We need to save it for food or for tuition or whatever. And then it can also be the reverse, stuff like people saying, assuming that just because people like me, like I have parents that can provide for me, that money doesn't mean anything to me...So, I think those can be the most sensitive, but I think we've gotten a lot better in trying to educate ourselves on both aspects, just realizing that just because you have money doesn't mean you're spoiled rich kids. And just because you don't have money doesn't mean you should be ashamed of it or that people shouldn't realize that you work hard for your money.

Utilizing such strategies as superordinate goals, structured interactions where they can learn to better appreciate each other's point of view, and collaboration and negotiation helped ease conflict around resources.

Cultural differences can result in conflicts due to "misunderstandings and misperceptions that are related to the different worldviews of culture groups" (Cox, 1994, p.

142). Discussed at length above in the first characteristic of a multicultural organization on valuing diversity, cultural differences include such areas as leadership styles, communication styles, time and space orientation, and individualism versus collectivism. Cox (1994) recommends resolution strategies involving conflict around cultural differences include educating the organization about cultural differences to promote tolerance and acceptance and redefining cultural differences as an opportunity rather than a problem. The women who join Theta Nu Xi value cultural diversity and seek to learn about differences, and the sorority creates the safe space to dialogue about those differences. As discussed above regarding pluralism, a sister described their learning as a “culture exchange.” At the same time conflict can arise through lack of communication or different expectations. The sisters shared stories of learning to speak up when they were unhappy with a decision and telling the group how they felt. Becoming skilled at how to manage conflict and prevent such problems from happening again helps to ensure this multicultural organization thrives. One alumna reflected,

I think when you have so many different women who are from such a diverse background, there generally tends to come up where people are kind of butting heads about what’s best to do or their ideas of what’s the best course of action, I guess, or different viewpoints. And I think in some ways it’s like, yes, we have a lot of diversity and it’s good. Sometimes we also have a lot of disagreement. But I think that’s part of being a multicultural sorority, that no one’s ever going to agree all the time, and that’s a good thing. And ‘cause I think we wouldn’t want us all to be cookie-cutter versions of ourselves, you know...And it’s OK to disagree and argue

and voice your opinion, and no one's really trying to change your mind. It's just getting it – it's just an avenue to voice different ideas and to understand other people. But that it's not a place where you feel like you have to defend yourself or feel like you're being attacked for your own opinions. That it's there and it's fine, and you may or may not agree, and it's OK but I'm glad we're talking about it.

Ultimately seeing cultural differences within the sorority as a benefit by virtue of contributing different perspectives, one alumna also reflected,

I can also see it kind of deterring from productivity, I guess, because there are so many people who have so many different ideas and opinions that it could be – could take you longer to get to where you want to be. But I think that everybody comes to the table with a respect for each other, and you work through that.

The relationships they have established through their sisterhood allows them to have difficult conversations, including about controversial issues where strong and differing opinions are held, in a respectful way where they can hear each other's perspectives, which may or may not change their minds about the issue being discussed. This sister asserted, "Multicultural means to me that it is a way to promote the end goal of diversity, that it's just a way for people to come together and explore those differences." Analyzing Theta Nu Xi using Cox's (1994) six characteristics of a multicultural organization and reviewing my research data through the lenses of valuing diversity, pluralism, membership and leadership diversity, informal networks and friendships, institutional bias, and intergroup conflict, I believe this sorority appropriately identifies itself as a multicultural organization.

Is Theta Nu Xi a Feminist Organization?

Several studies (De Hon, 1995; Milem, 1991; Whitt et al., 2001) indicate that women are more open to diversity than men, suggesting the potential for women to play a leading role in promoting diversity and social change around multicultural issues on a college campus. I chose to explore how one particular multicultural sorority defines and addresses intercultural issues on their college campus due to the organization's commitment in uniting students across differences both among members and in the larger campus community. In the context of this sorority where the organizational membership predominantly consists of women, I wondered how a feminist lens would perceive their sisterhood working to promote multiculturalism.

Lack of feminist identity. As discussed in Chapter Five, Theta Nu Xi is not promoted as a feminist organization, and most of the women interviewed did not appear to have thought about whether that label would pertain to the sorority. Out of the 10 women interviewed, only one was fairly quick to identify the sorority as feminist while another woman said yes after thinking about it. Although many of the women could see aspects of feminism in the sorority, there were several who said that connection did not exist. Not accepting the identity of feminist but espousing feminist values of gender equality is not a new phenomenon; it usually sounds like this, "I'm not a feminist, but..." Ashcraft (1998) describes her own personal journey of feeling like a strong young woman who was not oppressed, "enjoyed relationships with men and was not oversensitive to gender issues" (p. 588), and therefore distanced herself from feminist identity. Through day-to-day communication in the workplace, what she calls organizational micropractice, she came to

the realization that the little inequalities built upon one another and affected how she was perceived by management and by herself, despite the care she took to never state that gender was at the root of the sexist behavior she was experiencing. Such experiences caused Ashcraft (1998) to reexamine her gendered politics, although she continued to resist the feminist label. Weiss (1998) writes about the reasons why people are hesitant to identify as feminist, after acknowledging her own initial distancing from the word. She found several motives including the perception that feminists are radical, concern about social rejection, being perceived as homosexual, being seen as going against feminine and masculine social norms, the perception that feminists are antimale, and being viewed as narrow-minded and harsh. Such misconceptions of feminism are promulgated by antifeminists who fear losing power in an equitable society. “Yet when we allow their judgment to become ours and shun identification with feminism, we leave the myths intact; we accept as valid the cat’s version of the trouble-making mouse” (Weiss, 1998).

Several of these reasons can be seen in Ashcraft’s (1998) experiences above as well as in a few of the responses I received from the women in Theta Nu Xi. The negativity around the word feminist was apparent in multiple responses, whether or not they chose to distance themselves from the label. Regarding the sorority’s identity, an alumna declared,

No. Most definitely, I wouldn’t say feminist. I don’t really know why, I mean, I just, I think that, I don’t know, I guess when I hear feminist, I think of negative connotations and I don’t think that anything the sorority did was, at all, has done, does, is at all negative for women or it seemed to be, ah- I think, when I hear feminist, I think of close mindedness I guess. A little close minded like, kind of, women are so

much better than men rather than women are equal to men. I think the sorority's take is women are equal to men and it's about time we got our rights, you know. Rather than being like oh, women are so much better than men. You know, men bashing or whatever you want to call it. So I guess it's not taki- I'm probably taking the definition, and I'm just thinking about what I'm thinking in my head when I hear it rather than what the definition probably is.

Her quote assumes the myths of feminists being narrow-minded and antimale, and she does not want to risk social rejection of the sorority by associating the organization with such a negative word. She also indicates a potential awareness of her statements as not being rooted in fact. This next sister's comment indicates an understanding of the sorority's feminist acts through empowering women but attributes the myth of feminists dominating men to an older definition of feminism:

I think that the work of the sorority is definitely promoting an empowering woman...And so instead of, you know, I guess the older ideas of what feminism was, was that men and women are competitors and that only one can succeed, but I think more of the sorority is like, is *not* throwing any negatives on men but empowering women.

This sister also perceives the misconception of feminists being man hating and underestimates the contemporary definitions of feminism:

Most people in the sorority have a boyfriend or significant other, and so we call them Theta men or Theta gents, so they're very, we recognize that they are a very big part of who we are, you know, in our lives....If we were to highlight the fact that we were

just women, it kind of would go against our mission because we're supposed to be inclusive of everyone, and so if we downplayed the importance of that or downplayed the role of men in life, then it kind of contradicts what we're trying to do, in a sense.

A couple of sisters indicated that the sorority "focus[es] more on the cultural aspects than we do on the fact that we are just women." This aligns with Bracken's (2008) finding that students "sometimes claim an interest in 'diversity issues' but reject stronger terms such as *social change*, *social justice*, *feminism*, and *activism*" (p. 163). Although I chose to study Theta Nu Xi because of its potential to affect social change, none of the four phrases appear in the language used by the sorority. Bracken (2008) goes on to suggest that these students are possibly involved in "submerged feminism(s). They are actively engaged in strategies that submerge their feminist leanings, yet they attempt to preserve feminist work, ideals, and social change" (p. 165). The majority of the sisters interviewed understand the empowering nature of Theta Nu Xi for the women involved. These examples, however, show just how much antifeminism plays a role in shaping society's beliefs about how feminism is defined and should be a call to action for everyone who believes in feminist values to set the record straight between what is myth and fact.

Sisterhood. Interestingly, the women interviewed seemed to underemphasize the concept of sisterhood when discussing the sorority in the context of feminism, yet they all talked passionately during other points in their interviews about the sense of belonging and support they felt with their sisters as well as the lifelong friendships that they formed through the sorority. One sister shared, "I would say that the primary thing with the sorority that touches my life the most is the sisterhood." The sorority's national website ("Theta Nu Xi

homepage") gives sisterhood as one of two main reasons Theta Nu Xi chose to be a Greek organization:

We have a yearning to be in a sisterly relationship with people who significantly differ from us...but also to show others that the ideal of sisterhood is truly ideal in this sense – that it can transcend the barriers which have historically kept women (and men) apart.

According to hooks (2000b), earlier visions of sisterhood were based on collaboration derived through common oppression. True sisterhood, however, is formed when women bond together “on the basis of shared strengths and resources” (hooks, 2000b, p. 46).

Women must work together in solidarity, overcoming the barriers that divide them, in order to overcome various forms of oppression imposed on them as a larger subculture. Theta Nu Xi is bringing women together in a sisterhood not bound by their oppression as women but rather to fight multiple forms of oppression. I will reiterate from Chapter One the call to action by bell hooks (2000a): “Individual white women and women of color who have worked through difficulties to make the space where bonds of love and political solidarity can emerge need to share the methods and strategies that we have successfully employed” (p. 59). Hopefully this study helps contribute to such literature.

Characteristics of a feminist organization. In addition to resisting negative stereotypes associated with the word feminist, the many definitions of feminism also seemed to be at the root of the many varied responses to lack of feminist identity given by the women interviewed. Feminist thought and ideology takes many forms and includes working to provide equal opportunity within the existing patriarchal system to demolishing the status

quo and building a new system. Certain feminist perspectives approach gender inequality with a particular emphasis such as the role of class and capitalism, psychoanalysis, or ecology (Tong, 1998). Feminism as a mass movement, however, is discussed as three distinct waves – first-, second-, and third-wave feminism. What is now considered first-wave feminism began in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 with the first women’s rights convention discussing the role of women in society. Running into the 1920s, this suffrage movement focused on the success of “key legal, educational, and economic issues [that] could not be gained without greater political leverage, and thus the vote emerged as a unifying objective for feminists” (McPherson, 2000, pp. 208-209). Second-wave feminism gained momentum during the 1960s, often called the women’s liberation movement, and focused on raising awareness about the social and cultural influences that subordinated women and demanding greater sexual freedom, control of their own bodies, economic equality, and redefining domestic responsibilities. Women’s Studies as academic scholarship also emerged during this wave. “By the 1980s organisations [sic] of non-western, visible minority, immigrant, refugee and aboriginal women complicated and diversified feminist notions of a female condition” (McPherson, 2000, p. 209), and the third wave of feminism gathered momentum and shifted direction of the feminist movement once again. Involvement by more young women in the third-wave feminist work and creation of knowledge characterized this movement along with more inclusive practices with regard to race, class, gender, and sexuality. Theta Nu Xi looks at oppressive issues in these categories individually but doesn’t appear to examine the intersectionality of them and how privilege plays into maintaining power within the dominant culture. Third-wave feminism is “concerned with personal aims

and with wide social and cultural change accomplished in part by becoming cultural producers” (Starr, 2000, p. 474). According to Baumgardner and Richards (2000), there are three elements to feminism:

It is a *movement*, meaning a group working to accomplish specific goals. Those goals are *social and political change* – implying that one must be engaged with the government and laws, as well as with social practices and beliefs. And implicit in these goals is *access* to sufficient information to enable women to make responsible choices. (p. 56)

When asked if she identified the work of the sorority as feminist, this sister’s response addresses the concept of access just mentioned:

Feminism for me has always been about a woman's right to choose. And so I think whatever we do and whatever we're learning, each woman is making their own choice about what they want to do. So I would, I would ascribe the label of feminist to it very easily because it is like giving women more options to make that choice because like, they're going out and learning more about the world and not just like the specific generalization of cultures and what people are across the world but specifically, like these are what these women are doing when they leave Monarch or these are what some people have found is meaningful to them. And so like giving women more information to make choices is feminism to me, and so I would, I would ascribe it to Theta Nu Xi.

Viewed through a lens of feminist waves, I would argue that Theta Nu Xi most closely resembles a third-wave organization, despite the fact that social and political change is not an explicit objective of Theta Nu Xi.

The literature on feminist organizations has yet to take on the full complexity of third-wave feminism. Ferree and Martin (1995) defined feminist organizations that emerged in the 1960s as “embracing collectivist decision-making, member empowerment, and a political agenda of ending women’s oppression” (p. 5). Recognizing a shift in feminist organizations, the authors go on to say that “contemporary feminist organizations mix both elements [of collectivist and bureaucratic forms] in their structures, practices, and goals as they work to survive and to transform society” (pp. 5-6). There is a sense of foreshadowing when Mansbridge (1995) says, “Women’s organizations, women’s literature, women’s politics, and even women’s fashions, directed not toward ending male domination but toward producing whatever women now want, will inevitably intertwine with the feminist movement” (p. 33). Yet Acker (1995) questions whether feminist organizing can be inclusive across differences such as race, class, and gender. In reference to another chapter in the same book, she goes on to remark, “[Chapter 23] describes Latina activists who organized across racial and ethnic lines...but such multiracial action is unique among the organizing experiences reported in this volume” (p. 142). English (2006) defines feminist organizations as working to address women’s concerns but also takes into account third-wave feminism in her research about such organizations and the ability to value the informal and nonformal learning that occurs, both strong components of learning within Theta Nu Xi. Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) describe feminist organizations as “grassroots’ endeavors [that] embody the desire to create

tangible forms of social change that enhance equality and justice in the lives of real people” (p. xxiv). In their attempt to contribute to feminist organizational scholarship, they propose a feminist communicology of organization, which centers human communication as the basic, constitutive activity of organizing. In other words, it is as people engage in communicative action that identity, action, and structure – individual and collective – become possible and meaningful. (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004, p. xxv)

As an organization Theta Nu Xi has hierarchy through positional leadership, but within the sisterhood there is not a dominant culture or power structure.

Multicultural feminism. According to a multicultural feminist perspective, gender is not viewed as a common oppression because there are multiple aspects to each woman’s individual identity. Women actually have multiple identities throughout their lifetime, many of which come with their own forms of oppression or inferiority (Lorde, 1984). Within the multicultural feminist perspective, different aspects of identity often leave women feeling like their self is fragmented because women do not fit just one definition or identity. “All women are not created or constructed equal...[and each] will experience her oppression as an American woman differently” (Tong, 1998, p. 212). According to hooks (2000b), a feminist theory that takes into account the interconnectedness of gender with race and class is necessary for a mass-based movement to end sexism and other forms of oppression. Feminist theory must go beyond the historical perspective of privileged White women to “include knowledge and awareness of the lives of women and men who live on the margin” (hooks, 2000b, p. xvii). In an attempt to combine multicultural and feminist pedagogies, Enns and Forrest (2005) present an integrated concept that includes three components:

(a) an emphasis on holistic learning based on conscientization and consciousness-raising and designed to build connections between personal experience and social structural issues as well as emotional and cognitive learning; (b) a reliance on egalitarian methods that include self-reflection, dialogue, the coconstruction of knowledge, and participatory methods of learning; and (c) an intentional effort to address, redistribute, and equalize dynamics of power and privilege as they influence individuals and groups, the dynamics of classroom interaction, the structure and content of knowledge, and educational and other institutional structures. (p. 21)

Tong (2009) discusses several challenges for multicultural feminism as it continues to evolve. Although multicultural feminism looks at the intersections of oppression and gives voice to women of color, there is concern that the dynamic of opposition is being established. The fear became that women who identify as African American, Native American, Latina, and Asian American might use White women as the reference point, inadvertently “othering” themselves. Another conceptual challenge raised is that “just because a woman of color looks white or colored *phenotypically* does not mean she is white or colored *genetically*” (p. 209). The complex racial backgrounds of many individuals in our society today are being forced into boxes that define who they are, even within multicultural feminism. An example within Theta Nu Xi is the way the women interviewed identified themselves racioethnically. Groups coming together around a shared identity such as class or sexual orientation are increasingly using the term multicultural feminism, “exceeding the boundaries of women-of-color feminism” (p. 214). The broader definitions of multiculturalism exhibited by the sisters

in Theta Nu Xi speak to this concern. The last problem Tong (2009) discussed is differences in understanding of what entails White culture:

If by white culture is meant a group of individuals who, because of their skin color, share a living, breathing, organizing tradition that weaves together customs, religious beliefs, musical, artistic and literary works, family stories, and so forth, then white culture does not exist. In contrast, if by white culture is meant a hegemonic power structure that will do whatever it has to do to retain and increase its privilege, then white culture most certainly does exist. (p. 214)

In discussing her racioethnic identity, one White woman interviewed in Theta Nu Xi touched on the first definition when she stated, “I don’t feel like White really approaches it because White is so broad and there are so many categories.” Another woman shared how one of her sisters speaks up with regard to White culture:

[She’ll say] I’m just White and that it’s just a culture as anybody else. And so I think that we have women who do that, who say that like no, these things that you take as like every day or something that my people consider just like normal. No, that’s White culture. That’s just another culture that you should like recognize as a culture just as everybody else.

Although they feel safe talking about White culture, there is no indication in my data that members of the sorority specifically explore the concept of power and privilege.

As a sorority wanting a culturally diverse sisterhood, then creating a space where they “can engage in open critical dialogue with one another, where [they] can debate and discuss without fear of emotional collapse, where [they] can hear and know one another in the

difference and complexities of our experience, is essential” (hooks, 1994, p. 110). Sharing her personal journey in working to bring race into the fold of feminism, hooks (2000a) states,

We sought to put in place a concrete politics of solidarity that would make genuine sisterhood possible. We knew that there could no real sisterhood between white women and women of color if white women were not able to divest of white supremacy, if feminist movement were not fundamentally anti-racist... We put in place a vision of sisterhood where all our realities could be spoken. (pp. 57-58)

Third-wave feminism is shaped by such questions as “how to think ‘sisterhood’ in terms of difference and hybridity” (Heywood & Drake, 1997, p. 23).

Theta Nu Xi’s mission and objectives do not explicitly mention feminism or even use the language of women’s empowerment but rather promotes self-improvement and building self-esteem through diverse sisterhood. Their activities, however, educate themselves and the campus community on gender issues along with topics of racism, cultural diversity, and sexual orientation. Examples include the Gender Feud program shared in the Chapter Four vignette and the list of films given in Chapter Five that were shown followed by a discussion with participants. As an organization that does not fully incorporate all aspects of feminism through lack of intentional political activism and incorporates a broader definition of feminism than some multicultural feminists like, I would argue that Theta Nu Xi most closely resembles third-wave feminism and describe the sorority as not intentionally but inherently feminist.

Discussion of Activities Findings

Examining the sorority's activities provided supporting evidence of how the sorority spends its time promoting multiculturalism among members and to the larger campus community. Two key findings emerged with regard to activities. The purpose and activities of Theta Nu Xi differ from traditional Greek letter organizations (GLOs) and are explored by looking at the focus of activities by predominantly White and historically Black sororities and fraternities. The last key finding examines the concept of universal learning rather than unilateral learning within the sorority.

Finding #4 – Purpose and Activities Differ from Traditional GLOs

The fourth finding in this study is how different the purpose and activities conducted by Theta Nu Xi are from traditional GLOs. Members of Theta Nu Xi truly believe in the mission and founding principles of the sorority, and they program around those values. Predominantly White sororities and fraternities are much more focused on social events that often involve alcohol. Historically Black sororities and fraternities are more service oriented and maintain a strong membership beyond the undergraduate years. Theta Nu Xi, however, focuses on attempting to bring about social change through uniting students across differences both among members and in the larger campus community in addition to developing the deeper bonds of sisterhood. Their activities overwhelmingly emphasize both internal education of members and the external education of the campus. There is no literature available about traditional GLOs promoting social change in the same way as Theta Nu Xi, although the historical activities of Black GLOs come close.

Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority

Theta Nu Xi has a strong educational or activity emphasis and takes a more comprehensive approach in an attempt to bring about social change through uniting students across differences both among members and in the larger campus community in addition to developing the deeper bonds of sisterhood. When I interviewed this alumna, she articulated how women in the sorority came together to serve a larger purpose that would extend beyond campus as she reflected,

I think the mission of the sorority is to bring together women who believe in a greater good...I think that every woman in this sorority believes that they have the power to change the world and to change how people view not only the Greek system but also women in general...But they take all of these major social issues and really go forward with them and want to make a change and believe that they can. I think that we have started to make changes, which is really cool...Some people are really interested in gay rights and they want to just really go forward with it. A lot of us are very interested in making sure that there, people are not racially prejudiced. But my personal vendetta is classism because of where I grew up, and sort of like my story. So I think we all have our little personal thing, but we bring it together and it all falls under, you know, just like improving, changing the world. Making people see things in a different light, and helping us kind of move forward and make things better. I don't know, to get rid of the injustices, I guess...It was always something that was in the back of my mind, but it wasn't until I joined the sorority that I found an outlet for that...I think the sorority really gave me an outlet to be proactive in that way.

Most of the sorority's formal activities are programmatic events planned for the larger campus community. Many are "educational events" that attempt to "bring about awareness" and "educate others about different cultures." These events included movie nights, forums and panels, food events, and dances. Showing such films as *Real Women Have Curves*, *A Day Without a Mexican*, *Crash*, *Killing Us Softly III*, and *But I'm a Cheerleader* present different perspectives on various multicultural and social issues that promote dialogue. The most challenging collaborations are with Panhellenic and their member sororities and with IFC and their member fraternities due to the more social nature of programming by those groups, which often involves alcohol. Although the relationships are not antagonistic, one sister admitted,

We want to get Panhellenic involved in that because, like women's issues are all women's issues, not just Theta Nu Xi's...Just again, they're set in their ways. They do these certain parties every year. That's what they do, and to get them to take that extra step forward is a little bit hard because they're like why do we need to do that, we already do this.

Theta Nu Xi has been able to work occasionally with those organizations on philanthropic or service-related activities and continues to reach out to them. Concerned about the direction the Greek system is headed, another sister talked about how they showed support for the traditionally White sororities and fraternities by participating in their non-social activities such educational forums and community service in an attempt to help those organizations get back to the principles on which they were founded. She commented, "So it would be like we really support you guys, and this is going in the right direction." Why Theta Nu Xi values so

strongly their interactions with other Greek letter organizations, however, is best summarized in this sister's statement:

And it wasn't until the MGC got formed that it became clear that we needed to have better relations between all the fraternities and sororities on campus. So I think before we had maybe tried to go to one of, one sorority in Panhellenic's community service event. And maybe we would go to one community service event that one of the fraternities from IFC did. But this time it was really kind of center focus that we needed to be, we needed to be ambassadors regardless of how we thought that these sororities dealt them-, you know, themselves, these sororities or fraternities conducted themselves. We needed to champion the effort for all of the Greek system, because if we don't all band together then the Greek system's pretty much going to be flushed away because there's a lot of problems with, particular IFC and Panhellenic I would say for the most part. They're just social organizations now. They're not based off of what they were founded on. They were founded on a lot of principles that, like Theta Nu Xi is, you know, principles and integrity and service to the community, and it's really not that any more. It's a social, it's a social organization so I think when we joined the MGC, we really wanted to be a part of the Greek community and serve as an example of what we think being Greek is all about, and to also help these fraternities and sororities kind of find their roots and get back to basics and so whenever they had any activity that was not a social activity, we would try to be there and be a part of it.

Another sister explained how she came to the realization that the sorority's mission serves a larger purpose and what it means to her, touching on how her understanding of multiculturalism changed:

I think, [the sorority mission] kind of, for me, just kind of embodies a utopia...it kind of embodies a world that I would want to be in. One day, maybe, it'll be that way. I think, I mean, it would be the perfect world, I think, if we just eliminated all ignorance, you know, just differences and everything, and were just ultimately accepting. Accepting of the fact that there are differences and just really understanding them. Just not being closed minded to the fact that people can be different – they will be....Understanding that there are different cultures. That's something that I didn't think about before. I was always like, oh maybe, er, I thought it was best to think of everyone just as, you know, no one's different. Everyone is equally the same and equally valuable, which they are, but I think that one thing that I really learned is that people *want* to be different. They *are* different....I mean, for us, multicultural is, it's not even just accepting that there are differences. It's finding those differences and highlighting them, and then telling other people about it, you know, spreading it to other people. That's why we do the events we do.

Attempting to live their lives by the mission and principles of the sorority, the women I interviewed ultimately – as the saying goes – practice what they preach.

Predominantly White Sororities and Fraternities

Although predominantly White sororities and fraternities were founded on such principles as honor, integrity, truth, and justice, their current actions and behaviors no longer

reflect such a purpose (Earley, 1998; Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). As discussed in Chapter One, Astin's (1993) national longitudinal study on the impact college has on students found that membership in a fraternity or sorority has both positive and negative influences. His study found positive effects in the development of leadership skills but also a tendency for alcohol consumption and hours of partying as well as reduced chances of altruistic behavior and social activism. Although "Greek letter organizations were founded to complement and reinforce the institution's highest ideals" (Earley, 1998, p. 39), negative behaviors such as hazing, alcohol abuse, and sponsoring racist and sexist activities contradict those ideals as well as the founding principles upon which many of these organizations were established. Whipple and Sullivan (1998) point to research conducted by the National Panhellenic Conference and National Interfraternity Conference that shows fraternity and sorority members are more likely to volunteer and make donations to nonprofit organizations later in life, but the authors also express concern about "the lack of emphasis on academic matters in chapter programming and the pervasiveness of anti-intellectualism reflected in members' behavior" (p. 11). A study comparing White and Black sororities by Berkowitz and Padavic (1999) highlights the social nature of White sororities:

The emphasis on a social life centering on interactions with men is further exemplified through the high number of date functions that the white sororities sponsored....The atmosphere [at 'socials'] is bar-like: The music is loud and there is little to do but mingle and dance. (p. 544)

Alcohol use within GLOs is so pervasive that it is considered a significant problem on college campuses and is often associated with hazing incidents. "Much of this drinking

occurs in environments that are difficult to control and during situations in which heavy drinking is normative” (Riordan & Dana, 1998, p. 50). Recruitment practices that call for such large membership numbers may also be connected to the continued use and abuse of alcohol, maintaining a culture of drinking within predominantly White fraternities and sororities (Earley, 1998; Riordan & Dana, 1998).

During my interviews with members of Theta Nu Xi, comments about predominantly White sororities and fraternities included, “[Panhellenic sororities] do a variety of different things...they usually have only a few set events that they do every year beyond parties,” “They’re more social,” and “They have resources that I wish we could have...and they have more history than we do because we’re relatively new.” The Interfraternity Council (IFC) is the governing council that administratively houses the traditionally White fraternities.

Regarding IFC, one sister stated,

They’re big and they have housing. And they spend...an obscene amount of money on alcohol every year, and so that really limits our interaction with them. They don’t do a whole lot of non-social stuff...they’re a lot bigger, and they have probably the biggest campus presence, just because they have housing...They have the place and they can have parties.

While these organizations may be well known for their social events, another sister acknowledged their altruistic abilities when she noted, “That’s the face you see of fraternities on campus...They have their own housing...They’re stereotyped as, you know, stupid frat guys or whatever, but a lot of them actually do believe in more than just partying.”

Regarding Panhellenic sororities, another sister touches on the philanthropic component of these organizations when she remarked,

These are the sororities you hear the most about...They have a lot more members than we do, they have a lot of power to do a lot of things on campus. So although they are social organizations, a lot of them have philanthropies that they're really closely associated with, and they are able to raise a lot of money for them.

Berkowitz and Padavic (1999) support that sister's statement and point out a distinguishing difference between philanthropy and community service:

The white sororities were far less focused on community service. Most had one philanthropic event a year, usually a fund-raiser. Fund-raisers were first and foremost social events, such as dance contests or sports tournaments, that brought many Greek organizations together. Sororities went the money to a charity designated by the national chapter, a format that does not allow for direct involvement with the people receiving the money. (p. 547)

Concerning how chapter size shapes the ability of sisters to know one another well and its importance, one sister commented,

I heard someone talking from a Panhellenic sorority and they were joking about how they didn't even know the name, like, they ran into this girl who they didn't even know was in their own sorority. And that just totally shocked me, because I was like that would, I mean, I just can't understand how you can *not* know someone that's your sister, like much less their name, like how can you not know about their

background or their family or what they care about. So that's why I think the size is really important, to keep it small.

Despite the strong social nature revolving around alcohol of organizations in Panhellenic and IFC as well as those organizations being "set in their ways," Theta Nu Xi continuously struggles to engage with these groups.

The significance and potential consequences of such activities by predominantly White sororities and fraternities cannot be underestimated. Whipple and Sullivan (1998) discuss the possibility of GLOs becoming communities of learners:

If Greek organizations implement the ideas that they claim to cherish, they can undertake productive activities that provide viable educational outcomes. It is imperative that these organizations define themselves as contributing members of the educational institution. If they are unable to do so, their relationship with institutions of higher education may soon be forfeited. (p. 16)

Based on research that indicated membership in GLOs negatively impacted cognitive development and critical thinking skills for White men and somewhat for White women, Randall and Grady (1998) offered the following strategies for success to GLOs: "Provide new member education programs that develop problem-solving skills, and have members apply them to chapter experiences.... Sponsor chapter programs that challenge analytical abilities and welcome diverse opinions" (pp. 33-34).

Historically Black Sororities and Fraternities

A distinction can be made by examining White GLOs' efforts regarding philanthropy, albeit not the perceived focus of those organizations, and Black GLOs' work around

community service (Kimbrough, 2003). Another distinction can be made between Black GLOs and Theta Nu Xi regarding their emphasis on social action versus social change. Black GLOs were established in the early twentieth century during an era of overt discrimination when few African Americans were able to attend college, and their community service activities are rooted in that history. “There is a prevailing commitment to racial uplift embodied through social action. The nine intercollegiate BGLOs...have worked extensively to improve the quality of life for African Americans” (Harris & Mitchell, 2008, p. 143). These organizations were actively involved in various aspects of advocating for civil rights through the 1960s, and at least one sorority participated in the women’s suffrage movement. In one way or another, these organizations have been committed throughout their history to serving one another and their communities (Gasman et al., 2008; Harris & Mitchell, 2008). Black sororities tend to focus on educational endeavors, health matters, and civil and human rights, while Black fraternities concentrate on how “to increase blacks’ participation in education, engage them in political processes, stimulate their entrepreneurial ambitions, and establish a tradition of giving through fraternity-based foundations” (Gasman et al., 2008, p. 198). In their study comparing Black and White sororities, Berkowitz and Padavic (1999) found that

In keeping with their founding principles, African American sororities were much more community service oriented than their white counterparts. The black women described community service as a central and meaningful part of their sorority experience, while white women generally viewed it as a way to facilitate their social lives. (p. 546)

According to Gasman, Louison, and Barnes (2008), the term “social action” was often used to reference voter registration and political activities by Black GLOs. “In formal and informal ways, black sororities and fraternities have worked to serve and shape their local, regional, and national communities” (Gasman et al., 2008, p. 204). For Black sororities activities tended to include one formal “ball” per year at most, a sorority “week” of events designed to promote the sorority and unity among sisters, which may include workshops and step shows. Informal social activities may include events that raise funds for a philanthropic cause. Other events focus on building relationships such as dinners, bowling, or board and card games tournaments (Berkowitz & Padavic, 1999). Regarding Black sororities and fraternities at Monarch University, one of the women I interviewed for this study commented, “They have specific events that they promote themselves at, you know, they have step shows and they have long traditions on this campus of things that they do, so they’re pretty well known.” Collaborating on programs is also important, as demonstrated by this sister’s remarks:

We've done like, I feel like some of our most successful events with the NPHC organizations, we've probably, we did a movie night last, I guess in the fall, and we co-hosted with AKA and [a student organization focused on improving race relations] – Alpha Kappa Alpha – and we showed a movie and then we talked about it, and I feel like that was one of our most successful events... We were talking about the image of women in media.

Speaking about the multicultural emphasis rather than focusing on the gender aspect of Theta Nu Xi, one sister saw a difference in the programming emphasis,

I think that we really don't highlight the fact that we are women as much as we highlight the fact that we are multicultural...I feel like we focus more on the cultural aspects than we do on the fact that we are just women, which is different from a lot of other sororities, probably. Especially a lot of National Pan-Hellenic sororities, you know NPHC, traditionally Black. They focus a lot on the fact that they are strong women, and I feel like we don't do that as much.

Another sister in Theta Nu Xi stated, "I think we would align ourselves more with them, although we would say that it's very important to realize that we're not, we're not NPHC, we're our own entity."

Historically Black sororities and fraternities also maintain a strong membership beyond the undergraduate years. "Even though each sorority was established at the collegiate level, estimates place graduate-level membership at more than 70 percent of the total" (Gasman et al., 2008, p. 191). There are several Black sororities where graduate chapters organize leadership conferences and mentoring programs for the undergraduate members because the organizations believe that leadership development is vital. "Sororities treat the undergraduate years as a training ground for civic and graduate-level sorority leadership" (Gasman et al., 2008, p. 193). Although all nine NPHC member organizations collaborated with the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation around voter registration and voter turnout in 2004 (Gasman et al., 2008), there is still concern about the future direction of these organizations. "BGLOs should be focused on rededicating themselves to their original aims and plans and packaging themselves for relevancy in today's society" (Harris & Mitchell, 2008, p. 164). Evans (2004) also expresses concern

about the need for Black GLOs to stand up and resume the civic responsibilities established by their organizations' founders and rooted in their past. "Failing to do so means squandering our potential political power and succumbing to the critique of organizational irrelevance at a time when political activism is most needed" (p. 98). Despite the challenges Black GLOs face, Gasman, Louison, and Barnes (2008) see the good these organizations provide and their ongoing potential:

The enthusiasm and allegiance of their undergraduate and graduate members have helped these organizations grow and prove themselves to be powerful forces for social change, educational advancement, and community outreach... They remain vital to the next phase of the fight for equality, civil liberties, and rights. (p. 197).

A sister I interviewed who was on campus during the early years of Theta Nu Xi's existence at Monarch University acknowledged the role NPHC played when there were just three governing councils:

I think that they kind of were picking up some sort of programming ideas towards the multicultural slant, like bringing people together from um, not just from their fraternity and sorority but all over campus... And they definitely were kind of the outsiders from the inside.

I would argue that while the social action of Black GLOs has been and continues to focus primarily on improving the lives of African Americans, those efforts are still needed, and at the same time, these organizations are natural allies for groups like Theta Nu Xi in their work for social change.

Finding #5 – Universal Learning Rather than Unilateral

The fifth and final finding in this study is what I am calling universal learning rather than unilateral learning. By this I mean that two-way learning is occurring where each of the sorority sisters has something to contribute to the learning process about themselves and their lives. This is different from unilateral learning where one group, usually the dominant one, expects another group to educate them. I remember the first time I became aware of the concept of this one-way learning back in the mid 1990s. I was sitting in a room with maybe 20 women – a mix of primarily Black and White women – who had come together around the possibility of starting a discussion group on issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality. As a White woman I was surprised to hear several of the Black women state their hesitancy to participate in such a group on the basis of being tired of always having to teach White people about race issues and the fear of the information being used against them in some way. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this was also my introduction to White privilege.

The dominant culture in our society revolves around being White, male, heterosexual, Christian, middle to upper class, and able-bodied. In order for someone to be dominant, someone else has to be subordinate, and our culture has a history of oppressing people who do not belong to groups with these attributes (Ayvazian, 2001). Peggy McIntosh's (2002) classic article on White privilege points out a sampling of ways that White people receive unearned privilege from which we benefit on a daily basis, and she believes that White people are taught not to recognize such advantages. "In each form of oppression there is a dominant group – the one that receives the unearned advantage, benefit, or privilege – and a targeted group – the one that is denied that advantage, benefit, or privilege" (Ayvazian, 2001,

p. 610). The mainstream culture is defined by these dominant attributes and considered to be the norm, and subordinate groups have to learn how to live within that dominant culture.

“Dominants do not really know what the experience of the subordinates is. In contrast, the subordinates are very well informed about the dominants...The dominant world view has saturated the culture for all to learn” (Tatum, 1997, p. 24). Perceptions of subordinate groups by dominant groups are often based only on stereotypes because they can choose not to learn about non-mainstream cultures. The mainstream culture is not only easier for members of subordinate groups to learn, but according to Tatum (1997), imperative as a mechanism of survival due to the unequal power dynamics at play. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) describe the concept of Black women having to “code-switch” when moving between and meeting the demands of the mainstream culture and their own culture by adjusting such mannerisms as their language, tone of voice, and dress. Hurtado (1996) describes a similar concept where many women of color are able to shift consciousness by adjusting “from one group’s perception of social reality to another” (p. 384). I believe education is a key component to improving human relations in our society.

Becoming culturally competent in many different cultures is necessary to truly move our country forward beyond privilege and power resulting from differences. According to Kivel (1996), we are all competent regarding our own culture, although both White women I interviewed for this study expressed concern about White culture being too broad with many subcultures within it. Multicultural competence involves being sensitive to and understanding differences about many cultures with the ultimate goal of respect and inclusion. “The key element to becoming more culturally competent is respect for the ways

that others live in and organize the world and an openness to learning from them” (Kivel, 1996, p. 209). Taking your knowledge and becoming an ally, especially in your own circles of influence, is an important next step in continuing to educate others. Circles of influence emerged as an identified theme through open coding in my study as an aspect of social change by influencing thought and behavior in others. Tatum (1997) mentions in passing a sphere of influence we each have in our daily lives:

I can't fix everything, but some things are within my control. While many people experience themselves as powerless, everyone has some sphere of influence in which they can work for change, even if it is just in their own personal network of family and friends...Identify your strengths and use them. (p. 204)

Among other strategies, being a strong ally for subordinate groups involves listening to their concerns, showing respect for their experiences and perceptions, not making assumptions, not taking over, understanding how privilege and power affect any given situation, and offering support (Kivel, 1996). My research did not indicate, however, that internal or external education was happening that specifically examined the concept of privilege.

The women who are in Theta Nu Xi made the choice to join a sorority emphasizing multiculturalism, so they already have the desire to learn about differences. Tatum (1997) offers advice on finding others who have similar goals around diversity:

We all need community to give us energy, to strengthen our voices, and to offer constructive criticism when we stray off course. We need to speak up against racism and other forms of oppression, but we do not have to speak alone. (p. 205)

The importance of that supportive community presented itself over and over again in the data. For example one sister who had previously discussed how she was offended when strangers asked about her racial background went on to explain how such information should naturally come out through personal interactions:

I think it's like race and a lot of other things, like religion and sexual orientation, those types of things. When you're with your friends, it'll come up, you know, naturally. Like, I'll be with my friends and I can say, oh I was eating Kimchu and rice with my mom, and they'll say, like, what's Kimchu, and then I'd explain or something. And then it'll just come naturally. It's so much like, when you give that information voluntarily it makes a huge difference.

Constructive criticism was offered when sisters would challenge one another to think differently about an issue, albeit in a supportive and nonconfrontational way. One alumna shared,

It's not particularly easy when you say something and someone else says, you know, maybe you're wrong about that. And that happened a lot. Like we would always be asking each other are you sure you're right about this. And I think those situations, we grew out of that. And you know, you could see things a lot more clearly when someone disagrees with you about stuff. We didn't always agree about everything, and so I think our disagreements were really helpful. But they were always very honest and we always helped each other get to the heart of the matter...It was always difficult to hear someone say, you know, I don't know that I agree with that, I mean, maybe you should rethink the situation.

They became active bystanders and allies, able to speak up not only with their sisters but with others outside of the sorority as demonstrated by the story of a sister who confronted the chaplain of her campus ministry group after a comment was made during a meeting expressing concern about someone's possible sexual orientation. The sisters learned about many different cultures through their involvement in the sorority, increasing their multicultural competency. One sister noted, "I can see myself now more in relation to other people...the similarities that I have with other sisters and of other ethnic backgrounds and differences and what all." An alumna remarked, "It's just something that if you have the knowledge, I feel like it's almost an obligation to share it with people. And I wouldn't have it had I not been in a sorority." Many of the sisters emphasized the importance of sharing their personal and day-to-day experiences with one another in contributing to their development as a multicultural organization. The sisterhood relationships evolved to a point where such conversations could happen without barriers between them in a way that demonstrates universal rather than unilateral learning. One sister commented,

I feel like our personal education about each other, just getting to know each other, is the way that improves conversations because we've been able to break down the barriers. We are more comfortable together. We know a lot about each other. We know a lot about each other's cultures and different components of an individual, and it makes conversation flow a lot easier.

Another sister remarked, "It was just us sharing our experiences with no judgment on either side." This sister shared, "Everyone has a culture, I feel like, and you have something to contribute." The women in Theta Nu Xi gained a safe space for authentic conversations,

expanded their comfort zones and grew as individuals, and increased their desire to learn and share that knowledge.

Theta Nu Xi as a Model for Change

A sorority is arguably an unusual venue for social change, but ultimately I believe Theta Nu Xi has the potential to be a model for change and is making a difference to the women involved and the communities in which they exist. Using Tanaka's (2003) intercultural theory of student development as a framework, I review the findings of this study. According to Tanaka (2003), current multicultural approaches to diversity are not working. Multiculturalism is presented as the celebration of one's own culture, but many White people in the United States do not feel as if they have a culture because they do not know from where their family originated in Europe. Saying they are "American" is too broad and dismissive of the diversity that truly is "American." Personally, I can relate to this feeling of being cultureless. In other words, multiculturalism goes to the opposite extreme of Western civilization that alienates people of color by expecting assimilation within the dominant culture to alienating White members of the community by eliminating their voices altogether. Building on the positive work of multiculturalism and the strengths of social and student development theories, Tanaka (2002, 2003) proposes the intercultural theory of student development which "moves beyond the addition of new voices to... 'a process of learning and sharing across difference where no one culture dominates'" (p. 282).

This intercultural framework promotes an intersubjective society where everyone is at the center rather than the existing binary between our dominant Western culture and multiculturalism. Each person, or subject, is able to tell her or his story positively while

taking into account one's own history without objectifying others in a negative light. In examining the complexity of college campuses, Tanaka (2002) combines this individual interpretation of intersubjectivity with one that emphasizes "evaluating the meanings attached to abstract social identifiers like gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation – one's 'subjectivities'" (p. 283). By accentuating both the personal and social intersubjectivities, assimilation of one culture into another is not assumed, interactional power issues are more visible, and emphasis is placed on personal and social identities rather than essentialized categories such as gender and race. The intercultural theory promotes appreciation and respect for the multifaceted identities and experiences each individual brings to a conversation, classroom, or community.

Tanaka's (2003) research was a four-year study on how to build an intercultural campus, working with students, staff, and faculty at one college to change the campus dynamics so no one culture dominated. Several key lessons learned from Tanaka's study that are relevant to this study of a multicultural sorority include the value of storytelling, the importance of envisioning an equitable future, and the need for diversity when dialoguing.

The critical technique used with participants was sharing stories in small group settings about their family histories and experiences, incorporating both privilege and oppression in everyone's story. "Participants...could listen at the same table with others different from themselves and tell their own stories" (Tanaka, 2003, p. 136). Rather than facilitated, small group settings, the women in Theta Nu Xi created their own safe space to similarly dialogue about their backgrounds. One sister explained,

So I think when we discuss multiculturalism, it's like helping each other and supporting each other through the fact that when we want to learn more about other people and other cultures, we're not denying our own heritage. We just want to know more and we want to be accepting of everything. And we believe it makes us better people and I believe it makes us better people to know more about what's going on around you.

According to Tanaka (2003) storytelling techniques "proved extremely effective at breaking down student fears, anxieties, and false assumptions about culture, race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, and power" (p. 136). This sister shared what she has learned through her experience in the sorority:

Understanding that there are different cultures. That's something that I didn't think about before. I was always like, oh maybe, er, I thought it was best to think of everyone just as, you know, no one's different. Everyone is equally the same and equally valuable, which they are, but I think that one thing that I really learned is that people *want* to be different. They *are* different.

The value of this intersubjective space within the sorority is witnessed in this sister's remarks, which also support Tanaka's claim that current multicultural approaches to diversity alienate White people:

Being in a sorority, I feel like they really, um, they allowed me to appreciate my cultural identity. Because before, I mean, I'm not trying to like have a sob story, but I think if you're not, if you're not of color then, um, then a lot of, then it, it might be difficult for you to be culturally accepted...But I feel like since I joined the sorority, I

was able to accept, you know, well understand/accept what I was versus what being White defined me as.

These are just a few examples of how Theta Nu Xi uses dialogue and storytelling to gain insight into their sisters' diverse backgrounds and share their own personal history, discovering how they are different yet similar and feeling accepted within the sorority.

In Tanaka's (2003) study the general types of questions and ensuing dialogue allowed participants to envision a future without oppression. He believes this gave participants a goal to work towards and a scenario where they could see that no single culture dominated, so the binary opposition was eliminated. Correlating this concept with my findings regarding Theta Nu Xi, I would argue that the women who joined the sorority already were dreaming about what that future would look like due to their original lack of sororal intentions. There were attracted to the sorority's mission statement and visual diversity within the organization. One sister reflected,

I think, [the sorority mission] kind of, for me, just kind of embodies a utopia...it kind of embodies a world that I would want to be in. One day, maybe, it'll be that way. I think, I mean, it would be the perfect world, I think, if we just eliminated all ignorance, you know, just differences and everything, and were just ultimately accepting.

"The stories of pain, and then dreams of a better place, took participants out of a 'binary' mindset that has always nominated a victim and an oppressor and left individuals in a permanent state of binary oppositionality" (Tanaka, 2003, p. 136). As mentioned earlier, Tong (2009) also brought up concern that multicultural feminism might inadvertently create

a similar binary opposition by “othering” women of color, which presents an obvious concern in seeming counter to that theoretical perspective’s original intent.

The need for participant heterogeneity to ensure diversity and richness of the stories was another key lesson learned when trying to build an intercultural campus. Tanaka (2003) stated,

The advantage in having mixed groups of participants was that everyone engaged in a storytelling could arrive at an understanding that there was both privilege and oppression in their family histories, no matter their family background, and that others in the group did not personally cause those power differentials to occur. (pp. 135-136)

Theta Nu Xi’s national demographics and the chapter I studied personified the diversity to which he speaks. This sister affirmed how she benefited from the diverse sisterhood:

I feel that I learn a lot from them just by hearing them talk and seeing what their take is on an issue as a Black woman or as a Chinese woman or as a biracial woman or as a Caucasian woman.

Another sister acknowledged, “Everyone has a culture, I feel like, and you have something to contribute.” The richness of their experiences derives from the heterogeneous nature of their membership in addition to their desire to learn and educate others about different cultures.

Given members’ desire to learn and choosing to join a sorority committed to promoting multiculturalism, I wonder if that is sufficient within any potentially more homogenous chapters of Theta Nu Xi for the same deep sharing and learning experiences to occur.

Tanaka (2003) also presented several barriers to building an intercultural campus encountered by his study. One barrier stands out as being of relevance to this study with regard to my finding of self-segregation at Monarch University. Tanaka (2003) confessed, “Another development, and one I had not personally anticipated, was that U.S. racial minorities sometimes had difficulty letting go of personal need to have power over and ‘beat the white person’” (p. 145). He cited examples of a person of color intentionally wielding power over a White supervisee and that certain leaders of color would criticize other leaders of color who supported the intercultural campus project. Pondering if such behavior exposed “victim status mentality” created by the oppositional binary status within the dominant Western culture, he indicated the need to anticipate and address such behavior. Tatum (1997) asserts that Black students often seek out their racially similar peers as a coping strategy and “is often an expression of one’s identity development, which evolves over time” (p. 67), particularly at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). The concept of needing and wanting “comfort zones” by groups often marginalized within our society is understandable. What emerged from my data are student behaviors that went beyond establishing comfort zones in order to maintain self-segregation within their racial group. White’s (1998) research found that racial identity and Black community primarily affect Black college student experiences. Depending on their self-identity and level of awareness, a student may be more or less involved in Black organizations and within the Black community on campus. She defined Black community as “a particular place, made up of particular types of people, a particular set of attitudes and behaviors, an abstract, yet tangible, entity with boundaries that separate ‘insiders’ from ‘outsiders’” (White, 1998, p. 111). The concepts of attitudes and

behaviors as well as insider/outsider status seem to speak to the dynamics that emerged in my data about Monarch University. Tanaka (2003) poses intersubjectivity as a means by which to constructively engage various groups on a level playing field, and these types of barriers to interculturalism will involve intentional work.

Theta Nu Xi embodies the intersubjective space presented by Tanaka's (2003) intercultural framework where learning occurs across difference through sharing of personal experiences where no one culture dominates. Although within the microcosm of a small but growing sorority, the women in Theta Nu Xi provide excellent role models on how to be effective agents of social change in a less activist way through their daily lives. In Tanaka's (2003) research,

Storytelling seemed to level the playing field by exposing all participants equally to vulnerability, risk, an reliance on each other not to ridicule, judge, or belittle. The emphasis on dreaming of a different kind of campus in the years to come placed a further gloss on the success of the storytelling. (p. 155)

This sister's remarks indicate strong intersubjective behavior within Theta Nu Xi:

But just having the different cultures present and respecting all of them, you know, not questioning, not dismissing, not having- trying not to bring all your prejudiced stereotypes about certain groups to the table and just say, hey, that's what, tell me more, I want to know more. Just really open-minded when it comes to different cultures and all aspects of that. I mean, that's sort of what comes to mind. Having room for everybody and every subset or, you know, there's, there's really, there's no

hierarchy basically. So they're all valued, there's no best or better or minority, majority. They're all there and all have equal time, equal work.

“The hope then is that these connections will form a foundation for each individual to evoke larger change “in anticipation of,” for example, a more diverse democracy” (Tanaka, 2003, p. 159).

This study’s first finding revealed that most women interviewed did not foresee themselves joining a sorority. The second finding around level of acceptance as well as the visual diversity and mission of Theta Nu Xi gave them hope for a better future in which everyone is equal. Sharing their stories based on personal experiences and perspectives in a respectful manner across many differences allowed them to learn not only about others but also about themselves. They came to appreciate and celebrate all of their differences and find more similarities than expected. The third finding determined that the sorority is intentionally multicultural but inherently feminist. Theta Nu Xi operates as a multicultural organization and includes elements of diversity in their invitational stance. To be an intentional feminist organization, the literature would argue that there must be an outward activist approach to their work, where activism carries a more aggressive connotation than the actions of Theta Nu Xi present. I question whether this is just another misconception about feminism. Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) connect the concept of intersubjectivity to their development of a feminist communicology of organization: “Centering communication means that reason and rationality, community and identity, must be placed within an intersubjective context, where organization entails the linguistic construction of shared assumptive grounds about what is real and meaningful” (p. xxvi). In retrospect I believe the

sorority incorporates many aspects of third-wave feminism rather than multicultural feminism, although there is much work to be done to better educate this generation of young people as to what that entails. The purpose and activities definitely differ from traditional Greek letter organizations (GLOs), as indicated in the fourth finding. The organization was established intentionally as a sorority given the power structure of the Greek system on many college campuses. The bonds of sisterhood are also believed to be stronger within a sorority setting. Theta Nu Xi uses their insider role within the Greek system to help build bridges between various GLOs and encourage the traditional White organizations to more closely examine their founding purposes. This is much needed given the excessive partying and unacceptable behaviors in which many social fraternities and sororities engage. As the literature and one sister noted, the Greek system runs the risk of collapsing if inappropriate and criminal behaviors are not brought under control. Traditional GLOs provide many benefits to their members and the philanthropies and communities they serve, and I believe they have the potential to improve their status. The last finding discusses the two-way, universal learning experienced within the sorority, indicative of the intersubjective space they have created where there is no sense of mistrust and the potential feelings of vulnerability and risk often found in one-way, unilateral learning is all but eliminated. One last connection between intercultural student development and third-wave feminism, both of which are relevant to this study, is the need to address all forms of inequalities – subjectivities – in order to truly achieve intercultural status. Tanaka (2003) closes the introduction of his book with sentiments that resonate with my own decision to do social work within institutions of higher education:

My belief after writing this book is that the creation of intercultural spaces on college and university campuses will not only have the positive result of reducing racial fragmentation in an increasingly diverse U.S. society, it will teach future citizens and leaders how to interact in peace and harmony with other nations and populations in a shared global society.

Theta Nu Xi Multicultural society is indeed a model for social change.

Implications and Conclusion

This final section presents several implications of this study and recommendations for future research emerged from this study and the generated data. The conclusion summarizes this entire study, reviewing the purpose, research design and question, and findings.

Implications and Recommendations

Several implications and recommendations emerged from this study and the data it generated. The implications and suggestions are a result of the data collected as part of this research and through my observations and personal interactions with Theta Nu Xi, and they are presented categorically by theory, practice, and research. While the research on this multicultural sorority is not intended to be generalizable to other multicultural sororities or even other chapters of the same sorority, the findings provide insight and understanding that can lead to further studies and improve practice. I kept a running list as potential research ideas as they came to me throughout the process of this study (see Appendix J), and several are discussed here. These research recommendations include ideas that I personally found intriguing and ones I thought might contribute to the literature.

Implications for Theory

Several implications for theory emerged from this study. This research contributes significantly to Greek life literature as seminal work examining a multicultural GLO and augments the higher education literature regarding diversity. This study contributes to the invitational theory literature by enhancing the application within a college setting and being one of the early attempts at applying the theory to diverse individuals or organizations. It also adds to multicultural organizational theory with such a unique application. The last implication discussed regarding theory is the imperative to face ongoing challenges to feminism.

This study contributes significantly to the literature about Greek life on college campuses. Little to no literature has been published on multicultural GLOs, yet they appear to be among the fastest growing phenomena in Greek life. The little available information on multicultural GLOs is primarily limited to such formats as unrefereed e-zines (see Castro, April 2005) and news sources (Troha, 2002). Torbenson and Parks (2009) recently published the only book of its kind focusing on diversity in college GLOs, dedicating a complete chapter to multicultural fraternities and sororities. That chapter presents an historical overview of this contemporary movement, sharing a list of organizations, when and where they were founded, their foundational ideals, growth patterns, and nuanced differences between the groups (Wells & Dolan, 2009). GLOs are among the most homogenous organizations in existence today, and this study highlights the work of one group of students to infiltrate the Greek life power structure on a college campus in their attempt to appreciate multiculturalism within their own organization and promote multiculturalism within the

homogenous, segregated Greek system and larger campus community. Theta Nu Xi potentially provides a model for diverse interactions and a positive influence for other GLOs who may wish to return to the roots of their organization's original purpose. This dissertation serves as seminal research examining a multicultural GLO and the roles such an organization plays on a college campus.

This study also contributes to the higher education literature regarding diverse interactions outside the classroom. According to Hu and Kuh (2003), "Most efforts by institutions to address diversity focus on structural and classroom diversity...less is known, however, about the effects of student interactions with peers from diverse backgrounds beyond the classroom" (p. 321). This study's focus on one aspect within the behavioral/interactional dimension (Gurin, 1999) enhances the literature base for improving campus climate around diversity. Diversity on our campuses provides multiple opportunities for students to learn about people different from themselves and be better prepared to live and work in a society that is becoming increasingly more diverse. Studying the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus by exploring identity, structure, and activities offered another means of approaching and improving diversity relations and enhancing Tanaka's (2003) intercultural theory of student development.

This study significantly contributes to the field of invitational theory by applying it to a multicultural sorority in an attempt to understand how members of Theta Nu Xi define and address intercultural issues on their college campus. Invitational theory continues to evolve through research and practice as a model of communication patterns that send positive or negative signals, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Most research and practice

regarding this theory primarily focused on teaching and learning processes within primary and secondary schools. Invitational theory is very limited in its application to diverse populations and in college settings. Seeing a lack of research where invitational theory was applied to diverse populations, Schmidt (2007) proposed six elements of diversity with which to examine an invitational perspective and encouraged more research applying invitational theory to diverse individuals or organizations. The field of student affairs provides a natural point of application for invitational theory due to the profession's commitment to student learning, inclusion, diversity, and equity. Student affairs professionals tend to be inviting to all students on a college campus, holistically supporting students in their cocurricular endeavors to ensure their overall academic and personal success and educating students to have similar inclusive values. This study contributes to the application of invitational theory within a college setting by examining a multicultural sorority, a novel context in which to apply this theory by focusing on post-secondary education, diversity, and women.

Existing multicultural organization development models previously used in higher education and student affairs focused on transitioning a monocultural organization to a multicultural one. Given that Theta Nu Xi was intentionally created as a multicultural organization, a different model not previously applied to higher education was used to examine the diversity climate of the sorority. Having employed Cox's (1994) conceptual framework of the Interactional Model of Cultural Diversity (IMCD) with a multicultural sorority is a unique application of looking at diversity within a workgroup, adding to that particular field of literature. Greek letter organizations historically have not been diverse within a single sorority or fraternity's membership, restricting the ability to use such a model.

Connecting GLOs and multicultural organizational theory in general opens a new door for theoretical applications and research that has not previously existed, benefiting both fields.

This study highlights ongoing challenges with feminist theories and within the feminist movement. In general feminism struggles with three distinct yet interconnected challenges dealing with negative stereotypes, multiple definitions, and lack of accessibility. Because the words “feminism” and “feminist” perpetually have been presented in a negative way by groups and individuals opposed to the equality for which it truly stands, many people may avoid being connected with such a potentially negative label. Weiss (1998) identified several reasons why people are hesitant to identify as feminist, from negative perceptions to social rejection. Multiple definitions of feminism produce confusion for many people less familiar with feminist theory. According to Tong (2009), feminism is often viewed as one massive theory, when in reality there are many approaches to “feminism’s intellectual and political commitments to women” (p. 1). Feminist perspectives approach gender inequality and women’s roles in society from a complex and often interdisciplinary methodology with categories such as liberal, radical, psychoanalytic, multicultural, ecofeminist, postmodern, and third wave. There is a general lack of accessibility due to the increased theoretical framework of feminism. I personally have witnessed an increased division between feminist theorists and activists, particularly within higher education, which concerns me and seems counter to overarching feminist values. As Women’s Studies attempts to prove itself as an academic discipline, there has been a greater shift from a political and activist commitment to an intellectual one by such departments and their faculty. Negative stereotypes may prevent people from initially exploring concepts of feminism, but for those who do, confusion around

multiple definitions and a theoretical lack of accessibility may prevent many people from staying connected who have benefited (and still can) from the feminist movement.

Regardless of why, there is resistance to identifying with the feminist label even though many people espouse feminist values.

In light of these challenges, I strongly encourage all feminists to engage in open dialogue about the challenges they see feminism facing as well as contemplate strategies for overcoming those challenges and ways to emphasize the positive aspects of feminism. Minimally I recommend setting a clearly identified and well-articulated agenda that takes a proactive, nonthreatening approach in positively identifying feminism. I encourage all feminists to do more education on the simplified ways to define feminism(s) and begin to challenge the misconceptions of feminism for the myths they are. One suggestion I have is for feminist theorists and feminist activists to translate feminist theories into practical terms easily understandable by everyone. Although Tong (2009) argues that the multiple definitions of feminism are strongly debated within the field, collaborating in this manner would provide a unified, underlying set of definitions easily understandable by individuals not interested in or unable to comprehend the theoretical complexities. Such nuanced differences are needed but should be reserved for intellectual debate within academia. Women's Studies as an intellectual field is needed to enhance our understanding of gender identities, women's oppression, and potential solutions to gender-related inequalities. Promoting the positive aspects of feminism and how women and men have benefited is also important. As discussed earlier, Ashcraft (1998) talked about feeling like a strong young woman until she started to recognize the microinequalities in the workplace that left her on

an uneven playing field. Connecting theory to practice within the context of everyday lives – or praxis – is a key component of critical engaged pedagogy and social justice (Adams et al., 2007; Freire, 2000; hooks, 1994). Individuals who participate “in strategies that submerge their feminist leanings” (Bracken, 2008, p. 165) would be able to better engage intellectually and contextually, becoming empowered to accept and promote their feminist values and activities. By working together to present feminism in a more positive light, feminist academics and practitioners can help others recognize how feminism benefits them on micro and macro levels.

In summary, the implications for theory I saw emerge from my data included:

- seminal work on a multicultural sorority as a model of diverse sisterhood contributing to the Greek life literature
- contributing to the higher education literature regarding the intersection of gender and multiculturalism
- contributing to the application of invitational theory to diverse populations and in college settings
- contributing to multicultural organizational theory
- the imperative to face ongoing challenges to feminism with regard to negative stereotypes, multiple definitions, and lack of accessibility

Implications for Practice

Several implications for practice emerged from this study. In light of their ability to discuss diversity issues on a regular, in-depth basis, I recommend that Theta Nu Xi openly dialogue about their identification or lack thereof with feminism. This research supports the

need for program planning training and assessment of the sorority's mission and objectives. Concerns about and strategies to avoid potential chapter homogeneity are discussed. I also encourage Theta Nu Xi to consider focusing more education around issues of power and privilege dynamics both internally and externally to the sorority.

This study of Theta Nu Xi identified the sorority as intentionally multicultural but inherently feminist, however, the intriguing aspect of this finding is the ease with which they talk about diversity yet the difficulty they have discussing feminism. Jackson and Holvino (1988) define a multicultural organization in part as one that "acts on a commitment to eradicate social oppression in all forms within the organization" (p. 14), which would include racism and sexism. Members of the sorority clearly articulated how their definition of multiculturalism expanded to be more inclusive as well as their desire to learn about differences. They discuss and program around various forms of oppression dealing with race, religion, and sexual orientation. They even embrace the concept of being empowered women, but it is apparent that they have not discussed the concept of feminism as it applies to the organization or themselves as individuals. Given the implications for feminist theory discussed above, I encourage the sorority to engage in open dialogue about feminism and how feminist theory does or does not connect to their everyday lives. If the founders of Theta Nu Xi view the sorority through a feminist lens, then facilitating a discussion about what that means to them would be a good idea for the sorority's annual conference. Regardless of the outcome, such dialogue is strongly encouraged given Theta Nu Xi's commitment to being strong women who promote multiculturalism.

Examining the invitational elements of diversity and characteristics of a multicultural organization within Finding #3, I discovered no evidence of assessment within the sorority chapter. Regarding the diversity element of empowerment, Schmidt (2007) encouraged assessing policies, procedures, activities, and behaviors in order to better understand how members of a diverse group feel empowered and what contributes to that notion. Cox (1994) also recommends the need for evaluation around measuring the impact of diversity and its management in organizations. He suggests two aspects of evaluation: determining if the organization has met their goals regarding diversity, and “the impact of managing diversity on other organizational performance indicators” (p. 240). The 2001 and 2008 demographic surveys conducted at the national level of Theta Nu Xi membership indicate an understanding of the need to assess whether or not the sorority is meeting its goal of diverse sisterhood. The second level of evaluation both authors reference could be obtained in a variety of ways. Programmatic activities are a main component of what the sorority does to educate the campus community about diversity issues. I saw no indication that they received training in program facilitation or setting learning objectives. Strayhorn and Colvin (2006) advocate the need for greater assessment of GLOs as evidence of positive outcomes within such organizations and discuss the role fraternity and sorority advisors can and should play. In order to know if what they hoped to accomplish through planning an event actually occurred, I encourage chapter advisors and/or Greek Life office staff to help ensure sisters receive basic program planning instructions or mentor them through the process to better ensure their success. This training could be extended to all GLOs on campus, encouraging other sororities and fraternities to engage in assessment and potentially align more of their

activities with original objectives of the organizations. This indicated need for assessment and program planning training along with the larger descriptive nature of this study could be the impetus in aiding campus administrators to work with GLOs in ways that enhance the positive experiences of all the organizations and ensure that Greek life as a whole succeeds.

A couple of sisters commented about the possible lack of heterogeneity within a sorority chapter such as Texas chapters potentially attracting more Latinas and the Utah chapters being predominantly Mormon. I have seen a chapter in the South whose sisters were almost exclusively Black and wondered how that might impact recruitment of new members, especially given how strongly so many of the women interviewed were drawn by the visual diversity they saw within the sorority. One sister's comment reflected this sentiment when she said, "People identify with their own culture and race, so if we don't have representatives of that race in the, in the sorority, that could potentially affect whether or not they want to come into the sorority." Tokenism is a concern when there is little to no representation of certain cultures within the group. Balanced representation enhances the ability of the group and its members to achieve their fullest potential (Cox, 1994). In such cases I encourage chapters of Theta Nu Xi to consider the messages their membership make-up could send to potential aspirants and strategically think about ways to disseminate information about interest meetings and sorority activities through communication routes beyond their personal ones in order to reach as broad a demographic base as possible and diversify the applicant pool. I must be perfectly clear here that I am not saying a homogenous chapter of women dedicated to the mission and values of Theta Nu Xi cannot promote multiculturalism, but the objective of diverse sisterhood is not being as evidently

met. Chapter advisors can also play an important role in helping their advisees think critically through these issues. As a staff member in a campus-based Women's Center, I made attempts to reach out to Theta Nu Xi, offering to co-sponsor events with them and to forward interest meeting and programmatic information to our listserv. I suggest other Women's Centers with campus chapters do the same as a means of opening doors and communication that also may help improve sorority members' understanding of feminism.

Having done much personal work internally around race issues for a number of years, I was surprised to find no evidence in my data that members of the sorority specifically explore the concept of unearned privilege. As indicated, however, the structural integration of the Theta Nu Xi chapter I studied supports the heterogeneity of its members and within the role of sorority president (Cox, 1994). Johnson (2006) examines how privilege, power, and difference play into the intersecting systems of oppression. He also discusses how we all contribute to social inequalities and, more importantly, how we can take action to do something about it. By combining a theoretical framework with practical applications (praxis), he offers opportunities for us to gain a better understanding of the problem and be part of the solution. I encourage Theta Nu Xi to consider focusing more programming on campus at the chapter level as well as at the national level that explores the dynamics of privilege and power. I also recommend that members take the time internally to explore within the safe space created by the sorority to more deeply explore the concept of White privilege. Authors such as Kendall (2006), Kivel (2002), and Rothenberg (2005) can help provide members with a contextual understanding to some of the ongoing challenges to racial diversity, and more specifically how to be an ally. According to Reason and Broido (2005),

“Teaching others about power, privilege, oppression, and the actions to counteract them requires a thorough understanding of the role these constructs play in one’s own daily life” (p. 82). The mission of Theta Nu Xi is in part to promote multiculturalism and be living examples across diverse sisterhood, and in order to be successful, the members need to understand the power and privilege dynamics with which they will be challenged.

In summary, the implications for practice I saw emerge from my data surrounded:

- dialogue around diversity versus feminism
- the need for program planning training and assessment of sorority goals
- the impact of potential chapter homogeneity
- the education about power and privilege dynamics

Implications for Future Research

Several implications for future research also emerged from this study. Concentrating on the single multicultural GLO level, I recommend conducting a similar study with a multicultural fraternity, expanding the focus of a multicultural GLO study beyond its members to include the perspectives of others impacted by such an organization, and comparing and contrasting the purpose of existing multicultural GLOs. Studying alumnae members of Theta Nu Xi would add another layer to the literature about GLOs, which is extremely limited regarding alumnae/i. On a more individual, psychological level, I suggest examining the racial identity development of Theta Nu Xi sisters, investigating why sisters deactivate, and exploring why women who express an interest in Theta Nu Xi choose not to join.

There is a strong need for additional research and publications on the emergence of multicultural Greek letter organizations, the roles they play on college campuses, the challenges they present both to the administration and for the organization, and potential solutions to the challenges. Of the 30 multicultural GLOs currently existing in the United States, multicultural sororities outpace fraternities, with 22 compared to 12 organizations, and the three organizations that have established more than 20 chapters are all sororities (Wells & Dolan, 2009). This information in conjunction with several studies (De Hon, 1995; Milem, 1991; Whitt et al., 2001) that indicate women are more open to diversity than men invites a similar study to this one to be conducted with a multicultural fraternity. Such research could examine how men experience a comparable emphasis of promoting multiculturalism through a diverse brotherhood. Exploring the roles they play on a different campus in relation to how they identify with their organization's mission statement, the structure of their organization, and the types of activities conducted may contribute to our understanding of how women and men learn about and respond to diversity. This would enhance not only our understanding of gender dynamics but also varying approaches to diversity.

Enhancing our understanding about various approaches to diversity while still focusing on the single multicultural GLO level would include expanding the focus of a multicultural GLO study beyond its members to include perspectives of others impacted by such an organization. This study was limited to the internal perspective of the multicultural sorority chapter members, so I recommend expanding the focus of a multicultural GLO study beyond its members. Broadening the focus would provide an

opportunity to explore the impact such organizations have on their campuses as perceived by different groups such as traditional GLOs, non-Greek students, and administrators. Are there additional benefits and challenges of having a multicultural GLO on a college campus that were not detected within this study? Administrators may be interested to learn whether or not such an organization is able to influence traditional GLOs in reconnecting with their organization's original purpose. A couple of members of Theta Nu Xi indicated feeling that the Greek Life administrators were pleased to see the amount of work – programmatic as well as administrative within the governing councils – especially given the small size of their chapter. Through informal conversations with Greek Life administrators and professional colleagues, I heard similar comments and had the sense that such a positively focused, active chapter working within the Greek system had the potential for influencing positive change. This perspective obviously was not part of my study but would be an interesting one to pursue. Exploring the impact of such an organization on other students and even members' family could provide valuable insight into the roles a multicultural GLO plays on their campus and in the larger society. The question also remains as to whether all multicultural GLOs would have a similar impact.

In reviewing the history, purpose, and mission of multicultural Greek letter organizations, a distinction can often be made. Some groups primarily seek diverse membership within the context of a social fraternal organization while others stress their desire to promote diversity through social change not only in the organization but also on their campuses and in the larger community (personal communication with a member of Theta Nu Xi, November 4, 2002). Theta Nu Xi appealed to me as a subject for study in part

due to the organization's commitment in uniting students across differences both among members and in the larger campus community. I suggest that a study be conducted that compares and contrasts existing multicultural GLOs in an attempt to better understand the purpose of the organizations with regard to having a social justice/activist orientation versus only the desire for a diverse sisterhood or brotherhood. The potential success of an organization only focusing on such internal diversity gives me pause for concern given the amount of social inequality that still exists today around race, gender, and other forms of oppression. I am curious as to how the activities of such an organization vary from a multicultural GLO that also focuses on diversity issues external to their membership. Examining the purpose and mission of various multicultural sororities and fraternities may also connect with how active alumnae/i are with the organization as well as their ongoing commitment to issues of diversity.

Studying alumnae members of Theta Nu Xi would add another layer to the literature about GLOs, and the current literature on alumnae/i membership is extremely limited. Hernandez (2008) writes about her exploratory research on Black sorority alumnae membership, which included women who joined as undergraduates and those who joined as graduate-only members. She also indicated that the literature on GLOs predominantly focuses on undergraduates, so there is a huge gap waiting to be filled in the area of alumnae/i membership. I recommend studying alumnae members of Theta Nu Xi to determine the long-term effect joining the sorority as an undergraduate had on them with regard to some of the findings in the Identity section that emerged from this study such as identifying with the mission of the sorority, acceptance of others, and a continued desire to learn. Similar to

Hernandez (2008), other factors worth examining might include why graduate-only members decided to join Theta Nu Xi and how all graduate members balance work, life, and the sorority commitments outside the space of a campus community.

On a more individual, psychological level, several implications for research come to mind. Although this study was not about racial identity development, I kept wondering where the members were in their racial identity development as I interviewed these 10 women. I recommend using stage models of cultural identity such as Cross's (1971) Black identity development and Helms' (1990) White identity development. I would expect them to be at the more advanced stages, but that may not always be the case. Although not a component of Cox's (1994) Interactional Model of Cultural Diversity (IMCD), he acknowledges that group identities based on race and culture connect to our internal identification of self and how others identify us. Within an organization group identities impact interpersonal relations and events. Research specifically looking at acculturation models of cultural identity may be relevant (Cox, 1994). Understanding where members' racial identity development is upon entering a multicultural GLO and how it progresses, particularly within organizations that focus on promoting diversity within the larger community, may provide insight on how to better support members through that iterative process. If members gain an understanding of these developmental stages, they may also better understand where others with whom they are interacting and promoting multiculturalism are located within a particular model.

Given the mindset of being open-minded and accepting of differences found in this study, I would be interested in seeing research done on the sisters who deactivated, choosing

to no longer be associated with the sorority in any way. The story caught my attention about a former sister (to my knowledge not in the chapter studied) who began practicing a certain religion that promoted the belief of not being accepting of other religions. This believe obviously goes against the values of the sorority of being accepting of different backgrounds and lifestyles, including religion, so she chose to deactivate from Theta Nu Xi. I found this really intriguing, especially given the major shifts sisters with whom I talked had towards being more open-minded about differences and wanting to learn and understand even if they do not agree.

Along similar lines, I would also be interested in exploring why women who attend Theta Nu Xi interest meetings and maybe even begin the intake process decide not to join the sorority. I wondered about the women I saw at the interest meeting described in the Chapter Four vignette. There was something about the sorority that piqued their interest enough to attend the meeting, but did they go on to join? I am pretty sure that at least two of the three women attending that particular interest meeting did not join Theta Nu Xi. What factors led them not to join? I also wondered what happened with the young woman who never joined yet ended up being the impetus for the chapter being established at Monarch University by taking another student to a Theta Nu Xi semi-formal at a nearby campus and pointing out that “this is what we’re missing out. This is what’s wrong on our campus.” Having a better understanding of why members of a multicultural organization regress in their openness to multiculturalism or what prevents someone who initially expresses interest from ultimately joining a multicultural Greek letter organization may assist in overall efforts to improve upon

multicultural approaches to diversity so that we can eventually live in a socially just, global society.

In summary, I recommend additional research in the following areas:

- a similar study with a multicultural fraternity
- expand the focus of a multicultural GLO beyond its members
- compare and contrast the purpose of existing multicultural GLOs
- Theta Nu Xi alumnae membership
- racial identity development of Theta Nu Xi sisters
- why sisters deactivate
- why women who express interest in Theta Nu Xi choose not to join

Conclusion

I chose to explore how one particular multicultural sorority works toward achieving their mission due to the organization's commitment in uniting students across differences both among members and in the larger campus community. As the population of the United States continues to become more diverse, so do our college campuses. Although the student population on most college campuses is becoming more diverse, there is a tendency for less social interaction among different cultural groups (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; X. Zuñiga & Nagda, 1993). Given my concerns about the future of human relations and desire to explore opportunities for respectful interactions among diverse individuals, I chose to narrow my research to the college campus environment and, more specifically, to a group of women. Several studies (De Hon, 1995; Milem, 1991; Whitt et al., 2001) indicated that women are more open to diversity than men, suggesting the potential for women to play

a leading role in promoting diversity and social change around multicultural issues on a college campus. Therefore, looking within one self-identified multicultural sorority at a Southeastern research university, the purpose of this study was to understand how members of this particular sorority defined and addressed intercultural issues on their college campus.

Very little literature has been published on multicultural Greek letter organizations, yet they appear to be among the fastest growing phenomena in Greek life. There is a strong need for additional research and publications on the emergence of such organizations, the roles they play on college campuses, the challenges they present both to the administration and for the organization, and potential solutions to the challenges. Studying a sorority that includes the word “multicultural” in its organizational name and emphasizes multiculturalism in its mission statement provides a unique setting within which to examine cross-racial and intercultural exchanges among women and potentially offers an alternative setting for social change. Little to no research has been done on the effect such sororities have on students individually or more broadly by improving diversity initiatives and climate on college campuses where chapters have formed. This study helps fill these gaps.

From the internal perspective of the multicultural sorority chapter members, this study explored how they work toward achieving their mission. Specifically, one overarching question guided this research: what describes the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus? To support this overarching research question, three areas were explored: identity, structure, and activities. The research design selected was a qualitative case study, both intrinsic and descriptive. Ten women were interviewed for this study, and additional data collection included reviewing documentation, conducting

observations, and examining physical artifacts. Additionally, three of the alumnae interviewed for this study were the same three women I interviewed for my pilot study (S. L. Johnson, 2001), and those three interview transcripts were included in the data analysis.

Five key findings emerged from the rich data collected. There was a lack of sororal intentions by the women who ultimately joined Theta Nu Xi. The women interviewed expressed a high level of acceptance they felt within the sorority – the environment was intentionally inviting. The third finding was that Theta Nu Xi is intentionally multicultural but inherently feminist. The purpose and activities of this sorority are different from traditional Greek letter organizations, attempting to bring about social change rather than focusing on social events or being service oriented. The fifth finding involves universal, two-way learning rather than unilateral, one-way learning among the sorority sisters. Ultimately each of the sorority sisters has something to contribute to the learning process about themselves and their lives. Using intercultural theory of student development as the primary framework, I argue that Theta Nu Xi is a model for change, albeit an unusual venue. Several implications of this study and recommendations for future research were presented in an attempt to offer practical applications and enhance the field of literature. This study touches on a variety of perspectives and academic literature and only begins to scratch the surface of examining one chapter of one multicultural sorority. The door has been opened, and it is my hope that additional research – by myself and others – will continue to explore the nature of the roles of multicultural Greek letter organizations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

North Carolina State University is a land-grant university and a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina

**Office of Research
and Graduate Studies**

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Sponsored Programs and
Regulatory Compliance
Campus Box 7514
1 Leazar Hall
Raleigh, NC 27695-7514

919.515.7200
919.515.7721 (fax)

From: Debra A. Paxton, IRB Administrator
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board

Date: July 24, 2006

Project Title: Sisters of Diversity: A Case Study on the Roles of a Multicultural Sorority

IRB#: 170-06-6

Dear Ms. Johnson;

The project listed above has been reviewed in accordance with expedited review procedures under Addendum 46 FR8392 of 45 CFR 46 and is approved for one year from its date of review. **This protocol expires on June 6, 2007, and will need continuing review before that date.**

NOTE:

1. This board complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU the Assurance Number is: M1263; the IRB Number is: 01XM.
2. The IRB must be notified of any changes that are made to this study.
3. Your approval for this study lasts for one year from the review date. If your study extends beyond that time, including data analysis, you must obtain continuing review from the IRB.

Please provide a copy of this letter to your faculty sponsor. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Debra Paxton
NCSU IRB

Appendix B

**North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM - INTERVIEWS**

Study Title – Sisters of Diversity: A Case Study on the Roles of a Multicultural Sorority

Principal Investigator: Shannon L. Johnson

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Susan Bracken

You are invited to be in a research study that will look at how members of a sorority, specifically your chapter of Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority Inc., collectively define and address intercultural issues with the potential for social change around diversity for members of the multicultural sorority and the larger campus community. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a member (current or alumna) of this particular sorority and were an active student member for at least one full academic year beyond the semester in which you joined the sorority. The researcher is Shannon Johnson, a doctoral student in Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University as well as a former employee of your university and former advisor of your chapter of Theta Nu Xi. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you decide to be in the study.

If you agree to be in this study, you would be asked to participate in at least two in-depth interviews with the researcher; each interview should take 1-2 hours each. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed, and you will be asked to review the interview transcripts to verify accuracy and provide any clarification of the information or additional comments. Should the researcher need to ask any follow-up or clarifying questions, a third interview of up to 1 hour may be needed. You may also be part of group observations during sorority meetings, programs, and/or activities. The time commitment for participating in these interviews should not exceed a total of 5 hours outside of your regular sorority activities.

There are no anticipated risks with this study. The only potential benefits of participating in this study include the possibility of gaining a better understanding of the benefits obtained by having joined a multicultural sorority as well as greater insight into how you are improving relations cross-culturally with other women.

The records of this study will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely for a minimum of two years after the research is completed and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study; you may choose a pseudonym to be used in place of your real name or allow the researcher to select a pseudonym for you. Unless you request otherwise, your real name may be used in various forms of data collection such as notes and interview recordings but will

remain confidential as previously explained. The information collected will be used in the researcher's dissertation and possibly submitted for publication and conference presentations.

No compensation will be given for participating in this study.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this study.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Shannon Johnson, at the NC State Women's Center located at 3120 Talley Student Center, 919-515-2012, <shannon_johnson@ncsu.edu>, or via cell phone at 919-210-4362. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Matthew Zingraff, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, at 919-513-1837 or <matt_zingraff@ncsu.edu>.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Please initial beside the statements to which you agree:

_____ I agree to be audiotaped.

_____ Please use this pseudonym in place of my real name:

_____ The researcher may select my pseudonym.

Participant's Name (printed):

Participant's Signature: _____ Date

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date

Appendix C

North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM – USE OF 2001 INTERVIEWS
Study Title – Sisters of Diversity: A Case Study on the Roles of a Multicultural Sorority

Principal Investigator: Shannon L. Johnson

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Susan Bracken

The researcher, Shannon Johnson, is a doctoral student in Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University as well as a former employee of Duke University and former advisor of the Delta chapter of Theta Nu Xi. Shannon's doctoral dissertation will look at how members of a sorority, specifically your chapter of Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority Inc., collectively define and address intercultural issues with the potential for social change around diversity for members of the multicultural sorority and the larger campus community.

You may recall that you were previously interviewed by the researcher in fall 2001 regarding your membership in a multicultural sorority. With your permission the researcher would like to include those interview transcripts and notes as documentation in this study. The information collected will be used in the researcher's dissertation and possibly submitted for publication and conference presentations.

Per your original consent form, the records of this study will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely for a minimum of two years after the research is completed and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study; you may choose a pseudonym to be used in place of your real name or allow the researcher to select a pseudonym for you. Unless you request otherwise, your real name may be used in various forms of data collection such as notes and interview recordings but will remain confidential as previously explained.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study, your data from the 2001 interviews will be returned to you or destroyed.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Shannon Johnson, at the NC State Women's Center located at 3120 Talley Student Center, 919-515-2012, <shannon_johnson@ncsu.edu>, or via cell phone at 919-210-4362. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you

may contact Dr. Matthew Zingraff, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, at 919-513-1837 or <matt_zingraff@ncsu.edu>.

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I give my permission to include interview transcripts and notes from fall 2001 as documentation in this study.

_____ Please use this pseudonym in place of my real name:

_____ The researcher may select my pseudonym.

Participant's Name (printed):

Participant's Signature: _____ Date

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date

Appendix D

**North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM – PHOTOGRAPHY**

Study Title – Sisters of Diversity: A Case Study on the Roles of a Multicultural Sorority

Principal Investigator: Shannon L. Johnson

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Susan Bracken

Shannon Johnson is conducting a research study that will look at how members of a sorority, specifically your chapter of Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority Inc., collectively define and address intercultural issues with the potential for social change around diversity for members of the multicultural sorority and the larger campus community. The researcher, Shannon Johnson, is a doctoral student in Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University as well as a former employee of your university and former advisor of your chapter of Theta Nu Xi. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before signing this consent form.

As a member of this particular sorority, you may be part of group observations during sorority meetings, programs, and/or activities. Photographs of sorority members and activities likely will be used as a part of this research study. The information collected will be used in the researcher's dissertation and possibly submitted for publication and conference presentations.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this study. There are no anticipated risks with this study. No compensation will be given for participating in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Shannon Johnson, at the NC State Women's Center located at 3120 Talley Student Center, 919-515-2012, <shannon_johnson@ncsu.edu>, or via cell phone at 919-210-4362. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Matthew Zingraff, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, at 919-513-1837 or <matt_zingraff@ncsu.edu>.

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I hereby give permission to the researcher, Shannon Johnson, to use my photographic likeness in all forms and publish photographs of me, or in which I may be included, for publications

and conference presentations related to this research. I retain the right to veto the use of a particular photograph in which I may be included in whole or in part. Should any photographs of me be used, they should be in conjunction with (initial those applicable):

My own name

This pseudonym in place of my real name:

_____ The researcher may select my pseudonym

No name to be used

Participant's Name (printed):

Participant's Signature: _____ Date

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date

Appendix E

Interview Questions

The overarching question I wish to examine is what describes the nature of the roles of a multicultural sorority on a college campus?

Location:

Date:

Time:

Demographics:

- Age
- Current Class Year or Year Graduated?
- How would you describe your racial or ethnic identity?

General:

- How long have you been in the sorority?
- Why did you choose to join a multicultural sorority as opposed to another sorority on campus?
- What does it mean to you to be in the sorority?
- How has the sorority become a sisterhood for you?
- How do/did you interact with your sorority sisters outside of the weekly meetings?
- Can you describe for me the relationships you have with each of your sorority sisters?
- How is that different from when you (or they, if joined after you) first joined the sorority?

Identity:

- What does the sorority mission mean to you?
- The mission statement includes “being living examples of sisterhood across different races, cultures, religions, backgrounds, and lifestyles.” Can you share some stories about

how you've been able to do that? (specifically around class, religion, or sexual orientation)

- When I say multicultural, what do you think that means?
- Has your definition of multicultural changed any since joining the sorority?
- What multicultural issues do/did you and your sisters talk about?
- How has your racial or ethnic identity changed since you joined the sorority?
- How has your perception of yourself as a female changed since you joined the sorority?
- Do you identify yourself or the work of your sorority as feminist? If so, how are you defining feminist?
- When you first joined TNX, what did you hope to gain from the experience? What did you end up gaining (are they the same or different)? (or, How has being in Theta Nu Xi changed your life?)

Structure:

- What difference do you think it makes that Theta Nu Xi is a sorority rather than a student organization?
- Describe the different Greek councils on campus and Theta Nu Xi's relationship with each.
- How do you think the campus community perceives Theta Nu Xi as an organization?
- Are there any cultural differences that might positively or negatively affect the internal operations of the sorority or the sorority's ability to achieving its mission?
- How are members selected to hold leadership positions?
- How does the size of your chapter affect your ability to achieve the sorority's mission? (or, What are the advantages and disadvantages to the sorority's size and organizational structure in achieving the sorority's mission?)
- Think for a moment about what you would consider to be an authentic or meaningful multicultural conversation. Describe a time when you or your sorority sisters had an authentic or meaningful multicultural conversation.

- Think for a moment about what you would consider to be a superficial multicultural conversation. Describe a time when you or your sorority sisters had a superficial multicultural conversation.
- Tell me about a time when the conversation wasn't particularly easy among sorority sisters.

Activities:

- Tell me about your favorite sorority activity or experience and why it has so much meaning for you.
- Describe a time when you or your sorority sisters had similar authentic and meaningful conversations with non-sorority members.
- How much did you know about multicultural issues before joining the sorority?
- Describe how the sorority helps its members learn more about multicultural issues.
- Describe how the sorority helps non-members learn more about multicultural issues.
- How do you spend your time outside of sorority activities and with whom?
- Who are Theta Nu Xi's allies on campus and why?
- Describe your relationships and interactions with other fraternities and sororities on campus.

Appendix F

Codes Sample**Initial Codes for Labeling Based on Research Question**

Identity

- Mission of sorority
- Level of significance of mission to individual members
- How mission guides sorority activities
- How sorority members define multiculturalism
- Identify themselves as feminist
- Identify the work of the sorority as feminist
- (how members personally identify culturally, e.g. racially/ethnically) – not specified in proposal

Structure

- External structural issues
 - o Greek council (umbrella org)
 - o sorority vs student org
- Internal structural issues
 - o Cultural differences among members
 - o Structural integration – heterogeneity of members
 - o Structural integration – heterogeneity within positions of power
 - o Creating a space to engage in open critical dialogue with one another
- Cox's characteristics of a multicultural organization
 - o A culture that fosters and values cultural difference
 - o Pluralism as an acculturation process
 - o Full structural integration
 - o Full integration of the informal networks
 - o An absence of institutionalized cultural bias in human resource management systems and practices
 - o A minimum of intergroup conflict due to the proactive management of diversity
- Size of the sorority
- Overall structure of the sorority

Activities

- Types of activities conducted
- With whom the sorority collaborates
- How they interact with others
- Who they have presenting activities – sorority member or external guest speaker
- Social interaction among sisters
- How they increase their own understanding of multiculturalism

- (sorority and member relationships external to sorority) – not specified in proposal

Inductive Codes

Identity

Acceptance
 Would not have joined a sorority
 Sorority/GLO stereotype
 Negative Stereotypes (perpetuated by ignorance)
 Respect
 Class/economic level
 Role/influence of parents
 Defining multiculturalism
 Self-confidence
 Larger purpose to being in TNX – defining experience

New Identity Codes While Coding:

As a woman
 Personality traits
 Values???
 Personal development
 Desire to learn about differences
 Looking for sisterhood

Structure

Chapter size advantages/disadvantages
 Safe space to explore inner conflicts (e.g. raised church beliefs vs. their own beliefs)

New Structure Codes While Coding:

Self-segregation of campus

Activities

Circles of Influence

- sorority
- friends
- Greek Life
- Family
- Classmates/acquaintances

- Strangers
- Community

Mentoring

Leadership Development

Exchange of information/get to know people on different levels => authentic conversations

Support

Sisterhood bonding/dynamics

Active bystander – speaking up and calling people out on discriminatory behavior

New Activities Codes While Coding:

Informal interactions

Making time for social sisterhood interactions

Role models

Sisters for other sisters

Sisters for non-sisters

Networking

Unclassifiable Inductive Codes

Identities

Additional Thoughts:

Intersections of oppressions they deal with

Informal vs. formal interactions (learning/influence)

Impact of changing personal relationships of sisters with non-members (impact on their allies and activities)

Tendency to hang out with guys before joining sorority

Finding things in common and appreciating the differences

Miscellaneous:

Campus culture/climate (self-segregation)

Seeing visual difference w/in TNX a draw

Initial Combined Inductive and Literature-based Codes

Identity

- mission, multiculturalism, feminist, racial/ethnic

Structure

- external Greek umbrella orgs, sorority vs student org, internal cultural differences, structural integration, size

Activities

- types, with whom collaborate, how interact with others, social interaction among sisters, relationships external to sorority

GLO's negative

- any actions, behaviors, or perceptions that are negative toward GLO's

GLO's positive

- any actions, behaviors, or perceptions that are positive toward GLO's

Sisterhood

- the ideal, the reality, how accomplished

Learning and sharing across difference

- where no one culture dominates

intersubjectivity

- telling her story positively w/o objectifying others negatively

Emphasis on individual identity

- personal and social identities important rather than essentialized categories like gender and race

Codes for Thematic Findings – OLD

Identity

Structure

- External
 - o Sorority vs student org
 - Relationships between members
 - Commitment and accountability
 - Educational or activity emphasis of each
 - o Greek council (umbrella org) → Greek social structure
 - Visibility and recognition
 - Very nature of strong Greek culture on campus
 - Creating umbrella org/governing council
 - Relationships with other governing councils
 - Descriptions of each (key components)
 - Interactions
 - Challenges
 - Ways to improve interactions
- Internal – Cox's characteristics of a multicultural organization

- *Values Diversity* – A culture that fosters and values cultural difference
 - “A major principle of this book is that America, like many other nations of the world, is really a macroculture within which many microcultures exist. In many situations, these microcultures provide alternative norm systems for guiding behavior” (p. 105). “Six areas of behavior with relevance to [cultural differences in] organizations [include] time and space orientation, leadership style orientations, individualism versus collectivism, competitive versus cooperative behavior, locus of control, and communication styles” (p. 108).
- *Pluralism* – Pluralism as an acculturation process
 - “*Pluralism* (ital in context) refers to a two-way learning and adaption process in which both the organization and entering members from various cultural backgrounds change to some degree to reflect the cultural norms and values of the other(s). Pluralism emphasizes interdependence and mutual appreciation among cultures and the importance of preservation of microculture group identity...pluralism is an acculturation process in which the entering members assimilate a limited number of core behaviors and values while preserving important differences along other dimensions” (p. 167).
- *Membership and Leadership Diversity* – Full structural integration
 - “*Structural integration* refers to levels of heterogeneity in the formal structure of an organization...Levels of structural integration are typically measured along two principal dimensions: (1) overall employment profile and (2) participation in the power structure of the organization” (p. 177).
- *Informal Networks and Friendships* – Full integration of the informal networks
 - “Thus access to informal networks has direct implications for the contributions of employees to total quality initiatives that depend heavily on employee involvement....The principal aspects of participation in informal groups are (1) access to social networks (informal communication networks and establishment of friendship ties), and (2) mentoring activity” (p. 195).
 - Social networks: “Social networks are important vehicles for communication in organizations (Guetzkow, 1965) and for personal efficacy of organization members (Dalton, 1959; Lincoln, 1982). However, research has also shown that participation and centrality in such networks is heavily influenced by friendship ties (Lincoln & Miller, 1979)” (p. 196).

- Mentoring: “Mentoring has been defined as a relationship between a younger adult (protégé) and an older, more experienced adult (mentor) in which the mentor provides support, guidance, and counseling to enhance the protégé’s success at work and in other arenas of life (Kram, 1985)” (p. 198).
- *Institutional Bias* – An absence of institutionalized cultural bias in human resource management systems and practices
 - “The term *bias* simply means a preference for a particular thing, persons, or style, and so on, compared to other possible things, persons, or styles. In the context of intergroup dynamics, an unfavorable bias toward one group implies a favorable bias toward another. *Institutional bias* refers to the fact that preference patterns inherent in how we manage organizations often inadvertently create barriers to full participation by organization members from cultural backgrounds that differ from the traditional majority group” (p. 207). Organizational values are often influenced by those of “founding fathers”, which may have been a long time ago.
- *Intergroup Conflict* – A minimum of intergroup conflict due to the proactive management of diversity
 - “The core element of conflict is opposing interests...issues, attitudes, and behaviors around which opposing interest may develop [includes]...competing goals, competition for resources, cultural differences, power discrepancies, and assimilation versus preservation of microcultural identity” (p. 138). Resolution strategies presented for managing conflict in diverse workgroups include collaboration/negotiation/bargaining, alter situation/context (e.g. organization redesign), procedures/rules/policies, alter personnel, alter/redefine the issues of contention, hierarchical appeal, smoothing (emphasize similarities, play down conflict), superordinate goals, structured interactions, integrative problem solving (mediation + compromise) (p. 152).
- Size of the sorority (internal and external issue)

Activities

- internal to the sorority
 - sisterhood interactions
 - mentoring / role models
 - leadership development
- external programs and interactions
 - finding things in common and appreciating the differences
- Circles of influence (identified theme???)

Revised Codes for Thematic Findings (Apr 2009)

Identity

- (start by acknowledging earlier discussion about tendency for many sisters not thinking they would join a sorority yet what attracted them to it, at which point begins their identity with the sorority and its mission)
- Individualized identity
 - o Acceptance/respect of the sister
 - o Struggles with personal identities (race/ethnicity/culture, class, profession/major)
 - o Identity development (not based on a specific theory) – how they view themselves, learning about their own identity and that of others, breaking away from stereotypes and essentialized categories
- Mission
 - o Internalization, sense of larger purpose
 - o Definition of multiculturalism
 - o Desire to learn about differences – openness to understand and explore differences (and similarities)
 - o Acceptance of others (and limitations on acceptance)
- Feminist (or not), as a woman – not intentionally feminist but inherently feminist (exclusivity a concern)

Structure

- Sorority vs student org
 - o Relationships between members
 - o Commitment and accountability
 - o Educational or activity emphasis of each
- Greek social structure
 - o Visibility and recognition
 - Very nature of strong Greek culture on campus
 - Creating umbrella org/governing council
 - o Relationships with other governing councils
 - Descriptions of each (key components)
 - Interactions
 - Challenges
- Size of the sorority
- Safe space created to explore and learn

Activities

- Educational activities (formal) – the mission guides their activities

- Types of activities conducted
- with whom they collaborate
- sisterhood interactions (sisterhood?)
 - types of planned activities (formal)
 - how they learn from each other (informal)
- interactions with others (informal)
 - finding things in common and appreciating the differences
 - active bystander – speaking up and calling people out on discriminatory behavior
- leadership development
- mentoring / role models

Possible Alternative Codes for Activities

- sisterhood interactions (sisterhood?) – internal
 - types of planned activities (internal formal)
 - diversity training/educational - multiculturalism
 - interest week/intake/emergence – sisterhood, multiculturalism
 - community service – service, sisterhood
 - fundraising/national philanthropy – service, sisterhood
 - conventions – sisterhood, leadership
 - business - leadership
 - retreats – business/informal – sisterhood
 - weekly/monthly sisterhood dinners/events - sisterhood
 - internal informal interactions (how they learn from each other)
 - examples
 - locations
 - sisterhood relationships
 - gains
 - mentoring / role models (women/feminist section???)
 -
- Formal activities (formal) – the mission guides their activities – external
 - Types of activities conducted
 - with whom they collaborate
 -
- interactions with others (informal) – individual and as a group
 - finding things in common and appreciating the differences
 - active bystander – speaking up and calling people out on discriminatory behavior
 -
- leadership development (identity or structure section???)

Possible Identified Themes

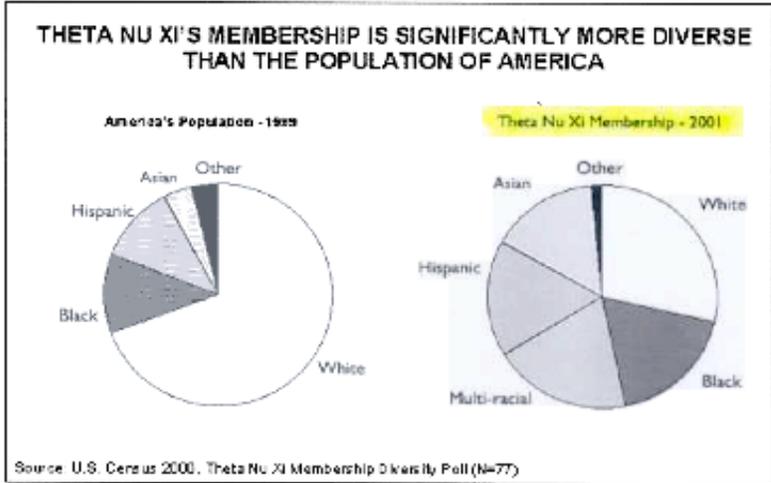
- Circles of influence
- Gender dynamic
- Self-segregation
- Intersections of oppression they deal with

Appendix G

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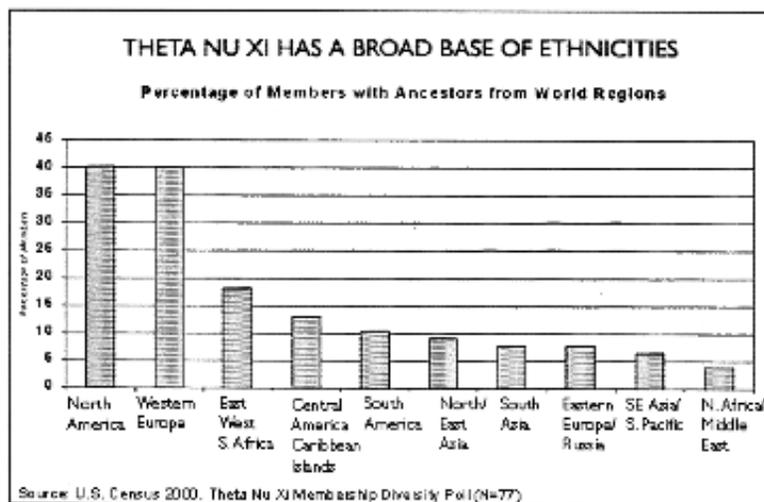
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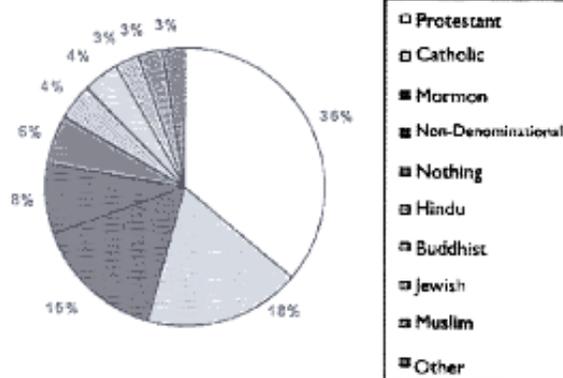


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SISTERS ARE FROM A VARIETY OF RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS



Source: U.S. Census 2000, Theta Nu Xi Membership Diversity Poll (N=77)

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SISTERS SPEAK LANGUAGES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD
Many Sisters are Bi-Lingual or Multi-Lingual

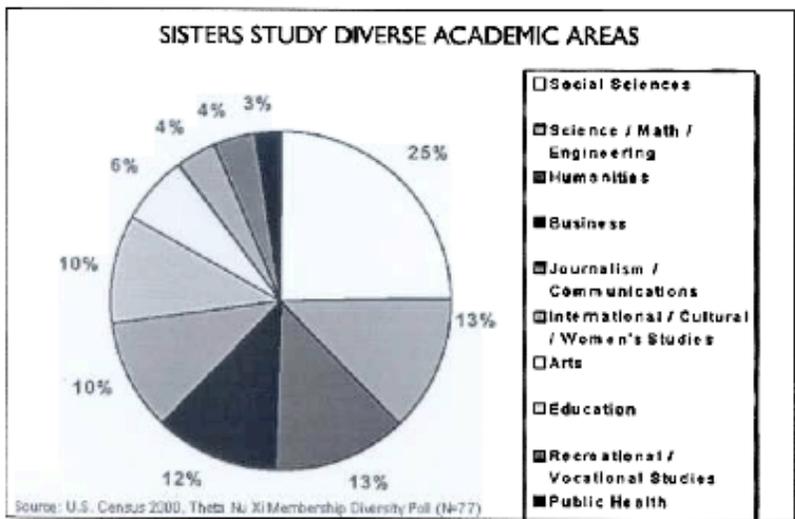
Arabic	Hindi (India)
Bahasa Indonesia	Italian
Cambodian	Japanese
Chinese	Korean
Farsi (Iran)	Portuguese
French	Pushto (Afghanistan)
German	Russian
Gujarati (India)	Spanish
Haitian French Creole	Taiwanese
Hebrew (Israel)	Thai (Thailand)

Source: U.S. Census 2000. Theta Nu Xi Membership Diversity Fol (1/97)

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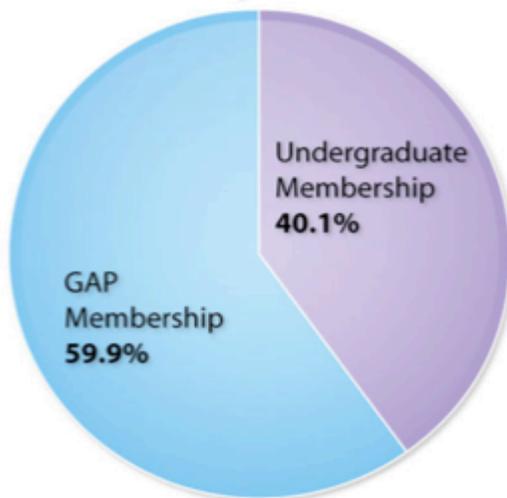
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Appendix H

Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority, Inc.

http://thetanuxi.org/res_demog.htm

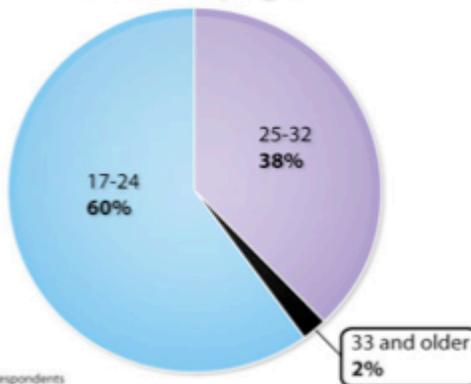
Membership Classification



267 Respondents
4.74 Margin of Error

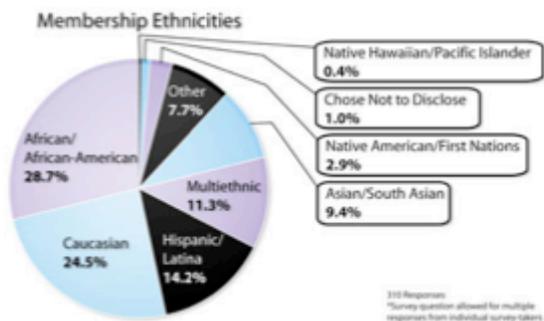
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Membership Ages

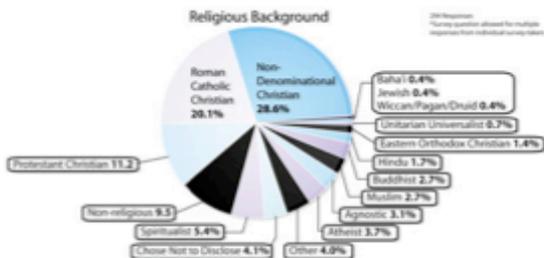


277 Respondents
4.74 Margin of Error

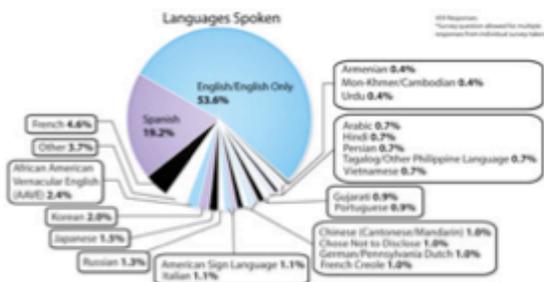
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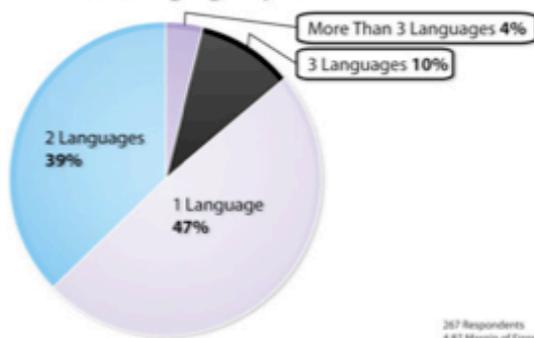


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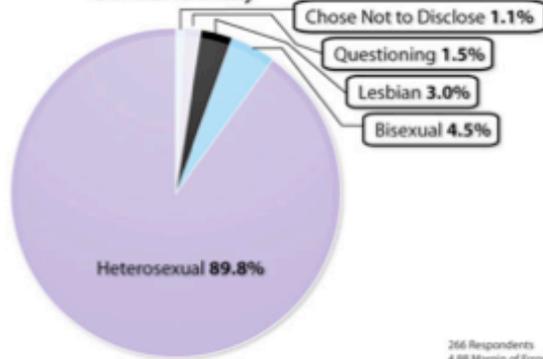
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Number of Languages Spoken



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Sexual Identity



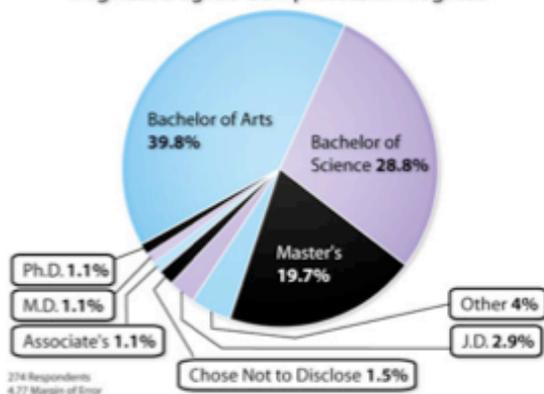
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Gender Expression



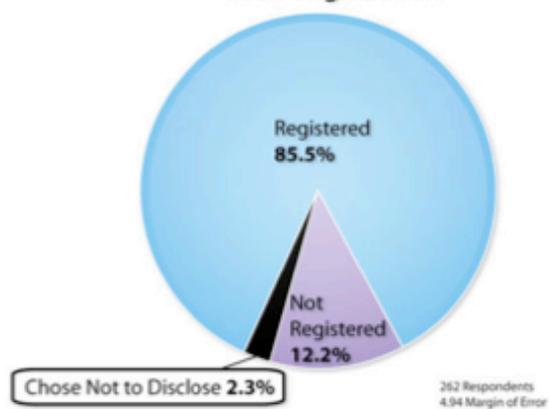
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Highest Degree Completed/In Progress

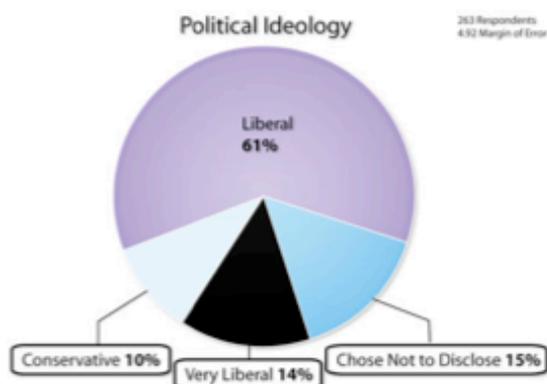


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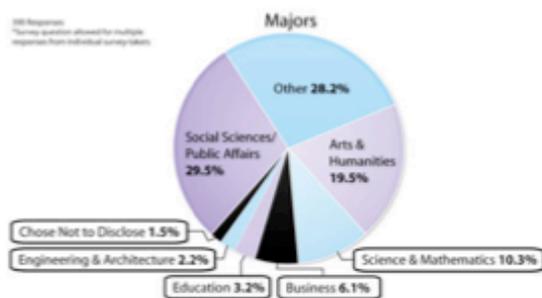
Voter Registration



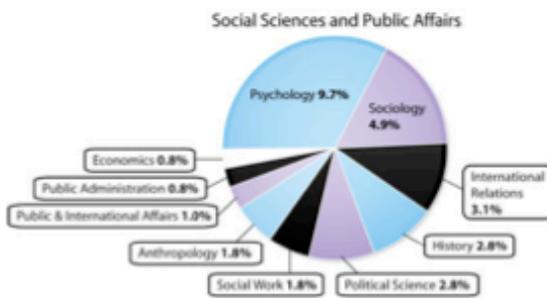
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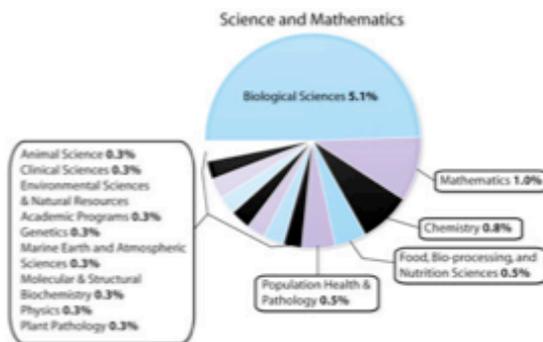
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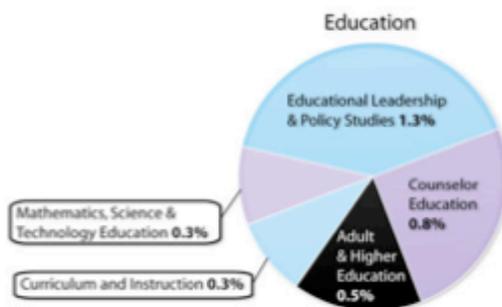
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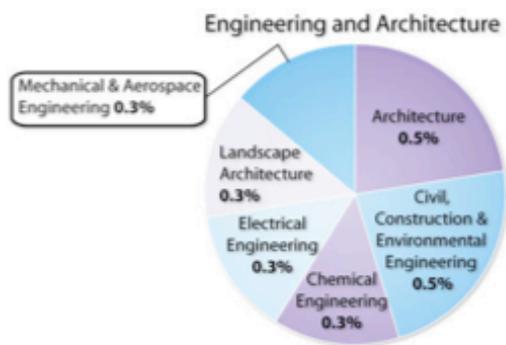
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Appendix I

ΘNE Vision

*The Official Newsletter of Theta Nu Xi
Multicultural Sorority, Inc.*



December 2009

Editor's Note

Greetings Beautiful Butterflies! Please take the time to peruse your newly reinstated ΘNE Vision. The 2009-2010 staff and contributors have worked very hard to bring you a publication that will be informative, enlightening and fun to read!

Check out the cover story on sisters within the sisterhood – biological sisters who pledged and what that experience was like; read the hard news story on hazing – what it is, who's affected by it and why we don't condone it; or see what great things Sorors are accomplishing across the nation in chapter news!

We want to make this enjoyable for you. Please send your comments, questions and story idea suggestions to me at director_communications@thetanuxi.org. Let's spread our wings to embrace all of humanity, promote social justice and fight for a better tomorrow!

ONWARD!

Sisterly,

Rashida Rawls

Editor, ΘNE Vision
National Director of Communications



Sorority Group Picture at Convention 2009 (Philadelphia, P.A)

More on page 6-7

Bonded For Life: Biological Sisters in Theta Nu Xi

By Arianna Smith
Staff Writer

Without a doubt, we all know the power of sisterhood. The ties that bind us together are engraved into the foundation of our Sorority and amplified in our hearts. These bonds force us to fight for one another, right or wrong, encourage us to give the clothes right off of our backs in time of need and compel us to neglect the more pressing things in life to capitalize on "quality time." For some, the ties that bind are deeper and come equipped with their own set of letters – DNA. Although biological sisters share genetic information, they are often as similar as two complete strangers. It is no surprise then that being a member of the same Sorority remains a unifying experience.

In search of the perfect sorority we all do a considerable amount of research before taking the plunge into Greek Life. Perhaps there is no better resource than a sister already in the organization. For Sami Kress, becoming a Theta Woman seemed inevitable as she was practically "raised by butterflies." Both her older sister, Desiree Bolibaugh, and her mother, Linda Kress are sisters of Theta Nu Xi.

The presence of sisters in her life, whether it was at her sporting events or buying her Girl Scout cookies, strongly influenced her decision to become a member. In most cases having a sister in the sorority acts as a first-hand testimony to the strength and uniqueness of our sisterhood and is a deciding factor in choosing to join.

(continued on page 5)

"WHAT'S IN THIS EDITION?"

MEET THE STAFF... CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS... MANAGING STRESS!... SISTER SPOTLIGHT...
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

2 MEET THE STAFF



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Rashida Rawls, "PENSive Paragon", joined Theta Nu Xi in Spring 2007 as the dazzling Deuce of "Equilibrium", in the Irresistible Xi Iota Chapter. Rashida has most recently been elected as the national director of communications. She is a graduate of Spelman College, where she received a B.A. in English with a minor in history. Rashida currently works as a Word Editor at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Elizabeth Edwards joined the staff of ΘNEVision because she tries to support our sorority where she can within her own time limitations and skills. She offered up her experience as a law journal editor during law school through which she managed writers and staff. Elizabeth also is currently working on the regionalization committee and has served on other national committees.



New to the spectacular sisterhood of Theta Nu Xi, **Krista Carter** crossed in Spring 2009 as the Tre and tail of her line. Although new to the organization, Krista has already taken on a list of responsibilities. She's the Gamma Chapter's vice president, publicity chair and dean of intake. As a junior year English major at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, she is excited to be a senior editor for ΘNEVision.

Shariff R. Smith joined Theta Nu Xi in Spring 2009 as the Ace of "Utopian Visions" by way of the Irresistible Xi Iota Chapter. Shariff has obtained her B.S. in Advertising and Public Relations from Grand Valley State University and is currently attaining her Masters in Communication at Ball State University. Shariff is currently serving on the ΘNEVision staff as the senior designer.



"Meet the Staff" continued on page 3

FROM OUR FOUNDERS

Sorors,

Maintaining a connection to our roots is a key element in our progression, development and success. Without a clear understanding of our purpose and intended involvement, how can we expect to change the world for the better?

Therefore, this space will be allotted for our esteemed founders to share with us their thoughts on anything pertaining to the Sorority. Although this column will be used on an ad hoc basis, we hope that by directly offering a vehicle for our founders to express themselves, we will gain valuable insight into their hopes, dreams and goals for us as an organization!

Sisterly,

Rashida Rawls

ΘNEVision Editor

SPOTLIGHTING OUR SORORITY 3



Riflettore di Sorella!

(Sister Spotlight)



By Krista Carter
Staff Writer

Each issue of $\Theta\Xi$ Vision will feature a sister who is showing tremendous Theta Woman qualities. Although the focus may not always be on their accomplishments, the staff of $\Theta\Xi$ Vision wanted to shine a light on what they are doing, their contributions to the Sorority or camps/community, or just what they are thinking.



SOROR SUZELLE GUINART
ALPHA ALPHA CHAPTER

1- What is your favorite Tenet? Why?

My favorite Tenet is Multiculturalism. I think while it doesn't define the Theta Woman, in a sense it makes her whole. I think this desire to want to learn about other cultures and to appreciate different lifestyles is essential to strengthening sister bonds, reaching out to the community, and raising awareness

in general. If Multiculturalism is present, then Leadership, Scholarship, Service, and Sisterhood can all be constantly worked on and will fall into place.

2- If you were speaking on behalf of the Sorority, and could only say one thing about Theta Nu Xi, what would it be?

This organization is a revolution on its own; it will continue to be a presence and will continue to transcend all barriers!

3- How difficult do you think this upcoming year will be while still being an undergraduate and holding a National Board office?

Honestly, the worst part of my year is over. This semester has been pretty hard between my course load, applying for graduate school, which has been a big headache, and all of my other responsibilities. However, since I have completed the application process, and next semester will be my last one, I have relatively easy classes, and will have much more time to give to the position. Time is all I really need. I still very much have the same level of passion and commitment, and I am ready to take it to the next level!

4- What caused you to fall in love with Theta Nu Xi?

Without a doubt, the mission and what the organization stands for. To know that I could go anywhere in the nation and find someone who valued the same ideals I did, definitely blew my mind. Regardless of how hard things get, or whatever troubles are happening in the moment, you can always look back on our mission and fall in love with Theta Nu Xi all over again!

5- Sum up the sisterhood of Theta Nu Xi in just 5 words.

Incomparable, unstoppable and simply amazing!

If you know of a sister you would like to see in Sister Spotlight please E-mail the staff of $\Theta\Xi$ Vision at director_communications@thetanuxi.org. Please provide their name, why you think they should be in Sister Spotlight, contact information, and any other relevant information, such as what you would like to hear from or about them. If you want to shine the spotlight yourself and volunteer to write the article, please let $\Theta\Xi$ Vision know as we are always interested in contributing writers and articles.



Nicole Benjamin is a brand new addition to the $\Theta\Xi$ Vision staff serving as a copy editor. Nicole became a member of Theta Nu Xi in Fall 2001 at Texas A&M University-Commerce and is currently an active GAP member in Dallas, Texas. With a degree in business and international studies, she has worked in marketing communications and media in the field of education, and currently works as an accountant.

Katie Gipson, "Lucid ONE", joined Theta Nu Xi in the Spring of 2006 at the Tau Chapter at Arizona State University. She currently serves as the director of undergraduate intake, as a designer and staff writer for $\Theta\Xi$ Vision and is establishing a new GAP Colony in the Northwest. She graduated from Arizona State University in May with a B.A. in secondary education, and now lives in Portland, Oregon.



Dara Monasch is a May 2009 graduate from Ramapo College of New Jersey. She crossed into Theta Nu Xi in the Spring of 2009 as a founder of the Transcendent Alpha Theta Chapter, and immediately upon graduation, transferred her membership into the Xi Alpha GAP Chapter. As a $\Theta\Xi$ Vision copy editor, Dara hopes to ensure that our sisterhood is able to streamline our ability to communicate.



Arianna Smith joined Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority in the Spring of 2007 (The A-List) at the Beta Chapter at North Carolina State University. Arianna is currently enrolled as a full-time graduate student in the Genetics Ph.D program at Michigan State University. Without a doubt, Arianna is dedicated to Theta Nu Xi and looks forward to contributing to its growth through $\Theta\Xi$ Vision!



Lindsay Romasanta is currently a GAL member but earned her wings from the Tau Chapter in 2004 at Arizona State University. This is Lindsay's first year as a contributing writer for $\Theta\Xi$ Vision. Lindsay graduated from ASU with a Bachelor's in Social Work and Asian American Studies and recently completed her Master's in Public Administration from Georgia State University.



Bahareh "B" Moradi joined Theta Nu Xi in Fall 2002 as the Ace (Air Force ONE) on the founding line (Set It Off) at the Pi Chapter at the University of Virginia. Bahareh graduated from UVA with a major in Middle East studies and a minor in international relations. She lives in Arlington, Virginia. Bahareh is currently a contributing writer, and will highlight topics currently relevant to the Sorority.



4 NATIONAL NEWS

WELLNESS: Identifying and Managing Stress

By Lindsay Romasanta
Contributing Writer

Hair- CHECK

Workout Session- CHECK

Healthy balanced meal- CHECK

Managing stress and ensuring mental health wellness?

The above checklist may be familiar to many of us, and as the holidays approach there are particular triggers that can make managing stress even more of a necessity. Whether it is final exams, holiday shopping or even a change of weather, different causes of stress can manifest into symptoms that affect our mental health and well-being.

Identifying triggers to stress and the different symptoms that it can cause can provide just as much relief as ensuring you are eating a healthy diet. Thinking of our health holistically--with just as much attention to self care for our mental health as we do with our physical well being--can make miles of difference. To help you transform ideas into action, here are some tips on how to start:

First, think of the stressors in your life--what are they? According to Arizona State University's Wellness and Health Promotion Department, most stressors can be categorized into two classes: ongoing everyday chronic stressors such as time, money, school, work, etc.; and secondly, isolated or major events such as an illness in the family or moving away from home, etc. These two classes can help determine which stressors you have control over, and which ones you do not.

The everyday, chronic stressors may easily have solutions such as creating a priority list that goes along with your to do list (cross off top priority tasks off your to do list) or even

setting your alarm 15 minutes earlier so that you are not late.

The isolated or major events stressors can be looked at as situations that you may not be able to fix on your own, but perhaps there are other ways to alleviate that stressor. Such techniques include meditation, dedicating time to self-care, or even having a friend sit down as a listening ear.



Being able to identify the different stressors in your life can help you strategically determine which solutions can be applied, or which ones are just out of your hands. Secondly, understanding symptoms of stress can help you identify prime opportunities for taking time for self-care. Symptoms of stress may include:

- Difficulty focusing or concentrating
- Increased anxiety
- Frustration
- Moodiness or change in temperament
- General irritability
- Feeling out of control or overwhelmed
- Restlessness or fatigue
- A change in behavior or routines

*Source: ASU Wellness & Health Promotion Department

If you are able to identify with any of the symptoms listed above, it is advisable for you to be mindful of the most effective stress management strategies. Evidence shows that prolonged and chronic stress can lead to illnesses and health conditions such as insomnia, cancer, heart disease and chronic fatigue syndrome, according to Tracee Cornforth in "Stress and your Health."

To be proactive about managing your stress, check out some of the self care tips that our sorors implement below:

Sumiye Jarreau,
Xi Epsilon Chapter

"To relieve stress, I work out, get together with friends and sisters and call my family. All works for me!"

Jessica Johnson,
Zeta Chapter

"When I want to relieve stress I repeat this, 'This is only temporary' ten times while smiling at myself in the mirror."

Sheila Williams,
Xi Eta Chapter

"To relieve stress, I try to do something creative like beading or some type of art project."

FEATURED ARTICLE

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BONDED FOR LIFE: Biological Sisters in Theta Nu Xi

While the power of an older sibling in the organization is undeniable, the determination and excitement of the "baby sister" cannot be ignored. Rashida Rawls, who joined after her older sister Mallikah Sharp, researched Theta Nu Xi for three years prior to joining. Whitney Smith, younger sibling to Arianna Smith, and Sami Kress also put in a great deal of effort to get to know the sisters in their chapters before joining.

Experiencing the Theta Nu Xi sisterhood with a biological sister around definitely has its perks.

One such benefit is "having someone you grew up with who knows you well enough to help motivate you, support you and tell you when you're messing up in ways that others might not be able (or are afraid) to do" says Rashida Rawls. More than anything, being members of the same Sorority has brought sisters who are very different much closer. Think Le, a Phi chapter founder, recalled the differences that existed between her and her sister growing up and acknowledged the role the Sorority played in bringing them closer. "As she got into college and was interested in joining the Sorority, I was excited that we finally had somewhat of a commonality. I think once she crossed we started to get a bit closer through sorority business," says Think Le. On a different note, for Desiree Bolibaugh, the biggest perk of having her sister in the organization was that there were no more secrets!

Unfortunately, with every up comes a down, and believe it or not there are some disadvantages to having your "blood sister" share membership in the same so-

rority. It is a proven fact that no pair in the world can argue like two sisters! For Mallikah Sharp, the worst part about having her sister in Theta Nu Xi is essentially the ability they have to push one another's buttons.

For Christy Gamble and Desiree Bolibaugh, who both joined before their siblings, the hardest part occurred during the Intake Process. While we all understand the purpose of the Intake Process and look forward to seeing those participating earn their wings, it is difficult to watch your younger sibling go through the emotional ups and downs that come along

"Although biological sisters share genetic information, they are often as similar as two complete strangers."

with it. For others, the worst part of having a sibling in Theta Nu Xi doesn't seem that bad at all. Whitney Smith's biggest issue with having a sister in the organization is sharing paraphernalia! In Greek Life, family members joining the same sorority or fraternity is quite common and referred to as "legacy."

In some cases, joining a sorority or fraternity different than what is family tradition is frowned upon. While we would all want siblings to make the best decision for them, it is hard for Theta Women to deny the power and impact that Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority, Inc has on one's life. In 2001, Theta Nu Xi welcomed its first "legacy," Christy and Misty Gamble.

Since then, a number of sibling pairs have joined the organization. As the mission of Theta Nu Xi becomes more widespread, more and more siblings will become interested and we will meet them with arms wide open, calling them sisters of our own.



Desiree Bolibaugh & Sami Kress



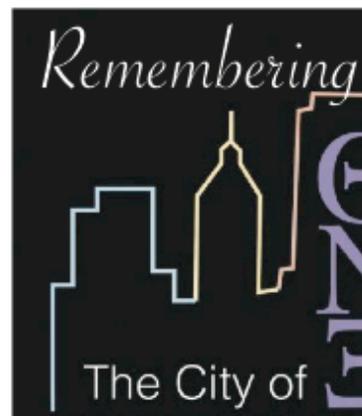
Whitney & Arianna Smith



Mallikah Sharp & Rashida Rawls

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CONVENTION 2009



*Convention 2009
Philadelph*





*September 11-13
Philadelphia, PA*



CHAPTER NEWS (Undergraduates)

Soaring High

In order to keep all sisters up to date on what our various chapters are doing, each issue of *ONEVision* will chronicle the highlights from the month from each contributing chapter.

Gamma

The Gamma Chapter has had two very successful educational events thus far in the academic year: "All Falls Down," a program detailing stewardship and correct ways of dealing credit and finances as a college student, and "Treat Her Like a Lady," a discussion on the type of relationships that exist on college campuses. They are having upcoming fundraisers on campus, including a hot cocoa/bake sale. Soror Jessica Hughes will be graduating in December, and sisters Ruby Reeves, Jessica Parker and Christine Edwards will soon be following in May. The Gamma Chapter will also be participating in Greensboro's annual Winter Walk for AIDS on December 6th to raise awareness, as well as funds to find a cure for the disease.

Epsilon

The Epsilon chapter recently put together a fundraising event to support their local philanthropy, the English Language Center on November 4, 2009. The ELC (English Language Center) teaches adults of many ages English grammar, language and computer skills. They were the celebrity servers for Golden Corral and raised \$400. They hope to donate this money to help the ELC with their recent move to a bigger and better location. The chapter is looking forward to a sisterhood activity in November to put together stockings for Upward Bound, a program for juveniles in detention.

Omicron

In November, at the 2008-2009 Order of Omega Greek Leadership Awards Ceremony, the Omicron chapter received the award for Highest New Member GPA for the academic success of their Spring 2009 line, "Avec Dynamisme." In addition they received the Outstanding Philanthropy Program award for an event for our national philanthropy, Girls for A Change, that was entitled "All Girls Lock-In" and was an all-girls slumber party with healthy lifestyle, nutrition, and beauty advice and exhibits. They were also winners of the Outstanding Risk Management Program award for their leadership event "Fear No ONE: Empowerment and Self-Defense" which was a workshop that brought in the University of Houston Police Department and a local Kung Fu master to teach the participants skills to help them stay safe and protected. The chapter also won the Four Star Chapter award for the second consecutive year and they were the only member of the Multicultural Greek Council to earn the award, which is presented for promptly complying with University rules regarding paperwork throughout the semester. The chapter is very proud of each member and the contributions everyone made to ensure the chapter's many achievements.

Pi

The Pi Chapter held its fifth annual event, "Portraits: A Production on Diversity" on October 22. "Portraits" has become an incredibly successful education event that showcases various student performances on topics of race, culture, ethnicity, relationships, self-identity, and just coping with the everyday life. This year the chapter co-sponsored the event with the University of Virginia's Programs Council and was able to attract over fifty people to the show. They had 13 amazing performers who entertained the audience with poems, songs, and monologues. The tradition of "Portraits" has become the trademark of our chapter at the University and will only thrive through the years to come.

On November 7, the Pi Chapter hosted its 4th annual Alumnae Reunion. Twelve of their beautiful Alumnae joined them for an afternoon of service, an evening of delicious food at a local Middle Eastern restaurant, and a later dessert party accompanied with a slideshow video serving as a chapter update. The Alumnae were especially impressed by the service event, which was called "We Put the Giving in Thanksgiving." The chapter held a food drive the previous week and on the afternoon of the reunion they put together Thanksgiving dinner baskets for five families in the community. The baskets will be delivered the week of Thanksgiving by the current sisters. Overall, the reunion was a great way to reconnect with their older sisters, gain a deeper insight into the chapter's past, and further improve and succeed as a chapter knowing they have the full support and love of alumnae.



CHAPTER NEWS [GAP] 9

Fall 2009

**Tau**

The Tau Chapter won the following awards during the campus' Greek Awards ceremony that was held in February of 2009: Academic Excellence, Chapter of the Year, Community Service, Membership Development, Chapter Management, Campus Community and Interfraternal Relations. The Tau Chapter would like to congratulate their sister Breezy Alvarez on her engagement, the couple is set to marry in June 2010. This past spring Tau crossed their first Dot in their chapter history: #1 cONgEnial with the collective line name of IONE Star. Stephanie Chavez, Tau's Nuestr member, is also the only new member on the Multicultural Greek Council Executive Board where she holds the title of Director of Administration. Anabel Hernandez was elected Social Director for Students Towards Educational Progress Multicultural Honor Society this semester. The chapter also celebrated the highest new member GPA across Greek life as well as highest overall GPA across all Greeks for the spring semester.

**Upsilon**

In an article entitled "Theta Nu Xi wins 'Chapter of the Year'" the Upsilon chapter's campus newspaper, the Indiana Daily Student, touted the accomplishments of chapter and the accolades it received at our 2009 National Convention in Philadelphia. The article discussed the four awards the chapter received from our national organization, "... for [the Upsilon chapter's] work spreading multiculturalism on IU's campus." The article also cited the chapter's history of winning awards for excellence on campus over the past few years as well as their tradition of collaborating across different groups—a trend that has caught on across the campus. The article included the following, admiring quote from their faculty advisor Eric Love: "They have been working on really substantive education programs that are really transforming the campus climate....They subscribe to diversity and multiculturalism, and they mean it." The article can be accessed at <http://www.idsnews.com/news/story.aspx?id=71644>.

*Xi Beta*

On October 17, sisters Sherea Burnett (Alpha) and Caresse Hightower (Alpha) facilitated diversity training about women in the Congo. The chapter made it an extended day of sisterhood by also supporting chapter sister Dara Silver (Gamma) by visiting the "Young Americans" exhibit at Winston-Salem State's Diggs Gallery, which is Dara's workplace. As an example of service, Xi Beta sisters Kat Stanley (Alpha), Jerri Kallam (Alpha), and Stephanie Cuadrado (Gamma) also volunteered/participated in the Breast Cancer 3-day walk in Atlanta this month.

*Xi Mu*

Chapter founders Chaka Grover (Lambda) and Annette Kalloo (Alpha Alpha) graduated with Masters degrees from Nova Southeastern University and the University of Phoenix, respectively. They are definitely proud of their new scholars! Aside from these scholastic achievements, there was big personal news for Chapter founder Gina Bethel (Lambda). Gina became engaged to her boyfriend of two years in August! They are in the process of planning a beautiful wedding in Miami Beach. On the career front, Kisha Howard (Xi Mu) is the new Admissions Representative for DeVry University. The chapter congratulates Kisha on her career advancement! The chapter is wrapping up a successful recruitment season and hopes to bring more butterflies into our sisterhood in early Spring 2010!

*Xi Theta*

Xi Theta celebrates several recent life changes. Kerry Vallant (Beta) got married in September and is now Kerry Vallant Morrow. Liz Gutierrez (Beta) became engaged and is planning a spring wedding. Desiree Downs Bolibaugh (Alpha) revealed she is pregnant with the new family member expected to arrive in April. Desiree, Elizabeth Edwards (Delta), and Tiffany Worthen (Alpha) were all promoted at their workplaces and the chapter celebrates their professional achievements. Marsha Bailey (Gamma) and Linda Kress (Xi Theta) both started new jobs. Additionally, one of the chapter's Nuestr members, Regina Taylor who is a member of the U.S. Air Force, has been deployed to Afghanistan. Regina will certainly be missed and be kept in everyone's thoughts.

If your chapter has any highlights that you think should be a part of ONEVision's Chapter Highlights, please email the Elizabeth Edwards @ elizabeth.d.edwards@gmail.com. Please provide your chapter name, and what events/highlights/awards/accomplishments/etc.

National President Touts Importance of the R.E.N.E.W.A.L Initiative



Dear Sorors,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for electing me as your National President for the 2009 – 2011 term! I am excited to be working with you in this capacity and look forward to a period of great and positive accomplishments. As we prepare to make significant changes in our organization during this fiscal year, I would like to invite each of you to join the National Board as we embark on The R.E.N.E.W.A.L Initiative!

It is important that we take this time to revitalize our sisterhood, friendships and dedication to Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority, Inc. Please take some time to reflect on the reasons you became a Theta Woman and spread that motivation and excitement around you.

In order to successfully get through the changes and growth in our organization, it is essential that our members engage in local endeavors, national committees and giving each other personal support. Take a moment and decide what you would like to be involved in this year, and help make a difference!

One of the great benefits of being a Theta Woman is having the opportunity to network with amazing women across the country and beyond! I encourage each of you to reach out and connect with at least one new sister this year. Get to know her story and how she represents our tenets in her everyday life.

I think we can all agree that a characteristic of a true Theta Woman is one who excels at everything she does. As you become more engaged in our organization this year, I hope you will take this opportunity to shine as you share your leadership and ideas with us.

Another trait of a Theta Woman is that we like to stay busy (busy changing the world, of course). As you go about your daily grind, remember to take time out for yourself and acknowledge your worth. Also, take the time to let your sisters know how significant they are.

It is important that we take the time to educate ourselves, whether it be about organizational process or diversity issues – in order to uphold our tenets, we must be accountable for our actions. In taking the time to educate ourselves about current issues, we are able to act appropriately and teach others - which allows us to represent our mission in a positive manner.

We would not be here today if it weren't for the leadership of several women. I believe each of us has something to offer when it comes to running this organization – share your guidance so that we may learn from you and have the opportunity to improve our organization as we grow.

Please let me know how I can be of service to you during my term.

ONE Love,

Amanda Tomchak
National President



Feiziyah

Hanukkah

Have a Safe and
wonderful
Holiday Season!

From Yours
ONEVision Staff



Please return misdirected mail to:
Rashida Rawls, Director of Communications
Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority, Inc.
4495 South River Bend
Ellenwood, GA 30294

Future Research Ideas – Running List

- looking at this subject area with regard to moral development through the theoretical lenses of Kohlberg and Gilligan (cognitive-structural perspectives)
- Quantitative, measurement/impact questions such as what difference it makes that the sorority is part of the campus community
- Quantitative – describe the potential for social change around diversity issues for members of this particular multicultural sorority and the larger campus community
- While this study is focusing on a sociological approach to the stated problem, a psychological approach could also be used (developmental theories which include identity development theories) – Stage models of cultural identity (Black ID development, White ID development) – where are the sorority members within such models? I'd expect them to be at the more advanced stages, but that may not always be the case. Also, research specifically looking at acculturation models of cultural identity may be relevant. See *Cultural Diversity in Organizations* by Taylor Cox, Jr (1994).
- Self-segregation component – the concept of being ostracized or looked down upon for not staying with/in (leaving) one's own "people" (neighborhood, etc.)
- Given the similar mindset of being open-minded and accepting of differences, it would be really interesting from a psychological perspective to research the sisters who de-activated, e.g., story of a sister who began practicing a certain religion that taught one could no longer be accepting of other religions (REALLY intrigued by this topic, especially given the major shifts sisters I talked to had towards being more open-minded about differences and wanting to learn and understand even if they don't agree)
- The organizational structure of multiple Greek Life offices regarding umbrella organizations for non-Panhellenic/IFC/NPHC GLOs – where are the cultural and multicultural GLOs living administratively?
- See Cox (1994), p. 240 – suggests the need for evaluation, measuring the impact of diversity and its management in organizations – “It should be emphasized that two distinct types of evaluation are needed. First, we need to evaluate performance on the achievement of diversity-related goals, and, second, we need to assess the impact of managing diversity on other organizational performance indicators....Since measures relating to diversity are generally not well developed at this time...interorganizational analyses is difficult.” Encourages applying a state model to evaluation. “At stage 1 affective outcomes of individuals such as career satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and attitude changes should be evaluated. At stage 2 individual achievement measures such as intergroup differences in performance ratings, promotion rates, and compensation should be measured. At stage 3, organizational performance indicators such as work quality, turnover, productivity,

- and absenteeism should be addressed. Finally, market share and profitability should be examined as long-term measures of effectiveness” (pp. 240-241).
- Women who attend interest meetings and maybe even begin the intake process but decide to not join the sorority
 - More homogenous chapters of TNX (e.g. Utah with primarily White, Mormon women; Texas with predominantly Latina women; maybe in the South with majority African American women) – examine any chapters that have more homogenous membership to determine if there are any differences to how they internalize the sorority’s mission and their activities – is there a dominant culture within the sorority, and does it impact recruitment?
 - There were many more nuanced ideas related to class (SES) that were alluded to during the interviews, e.g. women from financially well-off families but who didn’t receive much monetary support while at college so no spending money
 - Explore White sisters’ understanding of White privilege
 - it would have been interesting (more helpful?) to ask what it meant to them to be a group of women doing multicultural work
 - - One sister I interviewed offered to poll other TNX sorority chapters via Survey Monkey to see if they have a lot of self-segregation on their campuses and talk more about it
 - A colleague suggested that the self-segregation might be a factor of the large percentage of students who are Greek – she experienced the same thing at another university which is ~50% Greek
 - study of the alums of TNX – effect sorority had on them
 - do a similar study to mine with a multicultural fraternity to see how they compare with regard to my overarching research question (and in relation to identity, structure, and activities)