“WE GAVE UP OUR LETTERS SO YOU CAN FIND YOURS:”
RECRUITMENT COUNSELORS’ NEGOTIATION OF VOLUNTARY DISASSOCIATION FROM SORORITY MEMBERSHIP

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One opportunity for involvement within a sorority community is serving as a sorority recruitment counselor. The sorority recruitment counselor guides potential new members (PNMs) through the sorority recruitment process. This position is considered a peer-leadership educator role, filled by an experienced, undergraduate sorority woman, who is responsible for providing impartial advice to women interested in joining the sorority community. The recruitment counselor role has many requirements, but one most notably is to disassociate, or temporarily step away from or separate oneself from sorority membership.

The purpose of this interpretive, qualitative study was to describe the perspectives of sorority recruitment counselors as they negotiate disassociating from each of their sororities for a finite period. Framed in the lens of Bridges’ (2004) and Schlossberg’s (1981) approaches to transition, I sought to describe the participants’ experiences as each moved into, through, and on from this role, returning to sorority life. Eight sorority recruitment counselors from one university campus participated in the study in the fall of 2014. The recruitment counselors were interviewed using Seidman’s (2013) three-series phenomenological interview technique. Participants described their experiences in two
ways, or two categories: the recruitment counselor experience, and negotiating disassociation.

The results indicate that recruitment counselors find disassociation a necessary requirement to performing this role, although more emphasis on what it means to actually be disassociated from sorority membership is needed. Implications for those who advise fraternity and sorority life, as well as opportunities for additional and extended research are also addressed.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the recruitment counselors – those who participated in the study as well as those I have advised over the years.

Thank you for giving up something you hold so dear to help others find what they need.

Thank you for showing others how they matter.

This dissertation is also dedicated to David & Laura Carnell
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Are you getting nervous about sorority recruitment? Don’t fret! You’ll encounter many amazing women throughout recruitment week but most important, you’ll meet your recruitment counselor, who will be by your side during the entire process. (National Panhellenic Conference [NPC], 2013a, para. 1)

One opportunity for increased involvement available within a sorority community occurs during the recruitment of new members, when sorority women represent their chapters by serving as recruitment counselors (Witkowsky, 2010). The sorority recruitment counselor guides potential new members (PNMs) through the sorority recruitment process. This position is considered a peer-leadership educator role, filled by an experienced, undergraduate sorority woman, who is responsible for providing impartial advice to women interested in joining the sorority community.

As part of this role, recruitment counselors should “be completely disassociated” (NPC, 2016, p. 51) from their sorority. Recruitment counselors are required to disassociate “from their sorority to ensure that their actions and decisions support the welfare and best interest of the Panhellenic Community” (NPC, 2016, p. 51). Disassociating means the recruitment counselor is required to intentionally limit interaction with her sorority sisters, and is restricted from sharing information about the Panhellenic recruitment process or its participants with members of their sorority (NPC, 2016), for the period immediately before and throughout the duration of sorority
recruitment. Further, each recruitment counselor is not permitted to share which sorority
she is a member of with the PNMs in the recruitment process.

Situated within the context of sorority life, disassociating from sorority is also
referred to as disaffiliating, although the two constructs are somewhat dissimilar. The
term disassociation is used by the NPC to describe the action of setting aside one’s
sorority affiliation for a short period to return to it later. Disaffiliation, however, is
described as an individual’s disidentification with a specific group or belief system with
the intent to discontinue adherence to organizational beliefs or membership in the group
(Bromley, 1991). In a study of recruitment counselors, Witkowsky (2010) described how
the recruitment counselors in the study engage in disaffiliating from their sorority
membership; however these recruitment counselors are actually disassociated, in
accordance with NPC guidelines. The notion of what disaffiliation means, to either the
role or to the recruitment counselor herself, is not defined within the context of
Witkowsky’s study, but rather described by the researcher as a process that “was by no
means easy for the recruitment counselors” (Witkowsky, 2010, p. 54).

Disassociation is the action or behavior of role distancing, a strategy that enables
an individual to enact a role but also to separate themselves from the role in which they
have committed (Ashforth, 2001; Goffman, 1961; Sayles, 1984). Role distance is about
conveying detachment from a role one is performing, or allowing one to play the role, but
deny “the virtual self that is implied in the role for the allocating performers” (Goffman,
1961, p. 108). Role distancing is considered to be successful when others (i.e., PNMs,
chapter sisters, other recruitment counselors) recognize the cues (e.g., not attending
functions, not wearing items of dress related to specific sorority, etc.) as signification that the individual (i.e., recruitment counselor) is not in the role (i.e., sorority woman; Sayles, 1984). This disengagement from the role of member of a specific sorority is the process of withdrawing from the expectations associated with said role (Bridges, 2004; Ebaugh, 1988). The disassociated recruitment counselor temporarily breaks her old connections and withdraws herself from the social expectations of her individual sorority, and as she steps into this new role, finds the requirements of her own sorority are no longer appropriate (Bridges, 2004; Ebaugh, 1988). Instead of leaving the sorority permanently (disaffiliate), the recruitment counselor is asked to distance herself from her specific sorority for a limited amount of time (disassociate).

Statement of the Problem

Many aspects of sorority life have been investigated and researched, including the effects of membership on body image, retention of members, and the impact of participation in a sorority on alcohol use or on grade point average (Asel, Seifert, & Pascarella, 2009; Basow, Foran, & Bookwala, 2007; Chapman, Hirt, & Spruill, 2008; Fouts, 2010; Handler, 1995; Nelson, Halperin, Wasserman, Smith, & Graham, 2006; Rolnik, Englen-Maddox, & Miller, 2010). Witkowsky’s (2010) research is the only known study to focus exclusively on the experience of recruitment counselors. This research examines the recruitment counselors’ experiences through the lens of critical ethnography, and focuses on the “leadership experience of recruitment counselors and the challenges they face while serving as mentors to [PNMs]” (p. 49), identifying disaffiliation [disassociation] as one of those challenges (Witkowsky, 2010). Because of
the unique requirements for the recruitment counselor role, additional inquiry is necessary to know why a sorority woman chooses to serve in this position within her sorority community. With regard to this study, questions that surround the recruitment counselor experience include why the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) chose to create such a role that includes requirements such as disassociating from sorority membership. Further, why is the recruitment counselor role portrayed as being “an asset to the [PNM]” who is charged with being “point [person] who builds a secure relationship with a [PNM] as she looks to join a sorority on campus” (NPC, 2010); as well as historical information and data supporting the need for such a role, and why disassociation as a requirement is virtually non-existent?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe the perspectives of the sorority recruitment counselor as she negotiates disassociating from her sorority for a finite period. I sought to describe the participant’s experience of serving as a recruitment counselor and of disassociating from her sorority as she moves into, through, and on from this role, returning to her original membership.

**Research Questions**

Because distancing oneself for a limited amount of time from membership in a specific sorority is an instrumental requirement of the recruitment counselor role, I sought to describe the participants’ experiences of temporarily disassociating from their sorority, and in particular, focus on what the experience of that disassociated time is like as they transition through the recruitment counselor role. The research question in this
study is: What are the experiences of participants as they negotiate being disassociated throughout the entirety of the transition into, through, and then out of the sorority recruitment counselor role? Data were collected in a series of three individual, in-depth interviews, spaced throughout the recruitment counselor’s experience in the role, and each of the research sub-questions matches up with each one of these three interviews. The first interview, called the Life History Interview (Seidman, 2013), sought to answer the following research sub-questions: What is the recruitment counselor’s experience of sorority life thus far? Why become a recruitment counselor? What is the sorority recruitment counselor’s experience as she moves away from her sorority and into the recruitment counselor role? I intended to learn more about each participant’s experiences with her sorority up to this point and what it meant to become a recruitment counselor. The second interview, the Contemporary Experience Interview (Seidman, 2013), sought to look at the following sub-questions: What is the experience of serving in this role? The women were interviewed immediately following the sorority recruitment process on their campus, after performing the role. Finally, the third interview, the Reflection on Meaning Interview (Seidman, 2013), sought to answer: What is the experience of the recruitment counselor as she moves on from this role and returns to her sorority member role? What was the overall experience of being a recruitment counselor like? I want to know more about if and how creating distance between herself and her own sorority influenced her membership.
Conceptual Frameworks

Transition and role transition provide a framework for conceptualizing the experiences of the participants in this study, particularly as they navigate disassociating from their sorority membership.

Transition

The work of both William Bridges (1991, 2004, 2009) and Nancy Schlossberg (1981) provided theoretical underpinnings to envision and share the perspective of the study’s participants. The notion of transition can seem obvious to the average person because it is a widely used term in a variety of disciplines to describe basic social, political, and economic processes (Burns, 2010). However, in its most fundamental sense, transition is indicative of movement. These two particular approaches or models of transition frame this study because each is descriptive of the movement or shift in recruitment counselors’ participation within and outside of her sorority.

Bridges (1991) illustrates transition as “the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation” (p. 3). He differentiated between change and transition, stipulating that change is situational and external; it occurs with or without transition, wherein transition is internal and psychological. Change drives an individual to reach a goal, wherein transition involves letting go of something, for example, an assumption, an idea, or a way of seeing oneself (Bridges, 2009). Because transition is a process in which individuals are disconnecting from one role to engage into a new one, Bridges (2009) stated that transition actually starts with an ending and finishes with a beginning. An individual’s transition starts with the person having to let go of
something else, which Bridges referred to as an “ending” (Bridges, 2004). Once an individual has come to terms with the specific experience that is ending, thus prompting transition, she moves on to the neutral zone, or a “moratorium from the conventional activity of [one’s] everyday existence” (Bridges, 2004, p. 135). Within the neutral zone, individuals have the opportunity for self-renewal, for this “emptiness” between the stages of endings and beginnings is a chance to develop perspective on the stages themselves (Bridges, 2004). The neutral zone is the time when the “old way of doing things is gone, but the new way doesn’t feel comfortable yet” (Bridges, 2009, p. 8). Only after experiencing an ending and negotiating the neutral zone does an individual arrive at a beginning. The beginning is the presentation of a new self, one changed and renewed by the “deconstruction of structures and outlooks of the old life phase and the subsequent journey through the neutral zone” (Bridges, 2004, p. 157).

We see the recruitment counselors moving into this role through an ending, through a temporary separation from her sorority. Each recruitment counselor transitions through the experience by first participating in training, which is a sort of neutral endeavor, or a gap in what they experience as sorority members. After training, they continue to transition, as they engage in the sorority recruitment process as this sort of neutral third party, which is an experience they had not yet encountered in their sorority experience. Finally, the recruitment counselor moves on from this role to begin again as a full-fledged active member of her sorority, only now with new members and time passed since she last was involved. Bridges’ approach allows for the conceptualization of how disassociation is experienced throughout the study by the participants.
In concert with the work of Bridges, Schlossberg’s (1981) model of transition also provides a way in which to frame the experiences of recruitment counselors’ experiences as they move into, through, and out of this role. Schlossberg identified a transition as “an event or non-event [defined as the anticipation of an event that fails to come to fruition] resulting in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behavior and relationships” (p. 5). Transition is a process, occurring over time, which includes phases of assimilation and continuous appraisal of situations (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). Schlossberg’s (1981) approach is not so much focused on the transition itself, but rather how the transition “fits with an individual’s stage, situation and style at the time of the transition” and “how much it alters one’s roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions” (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 5). In particular, this approach highlights the experiences of leaving one role (i.e., sorority member), set of relationships (e.g., friendships with sisters), and assumptions in favor of establishing new ones (e.g., associations with fellow recruitment counselors; Anderson et al., 2012). Because a transition is a transaction between the individual and her environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), how a recruitment counselor appraises her movement from one role to another will influence how she feels and copes with the event or non-event (Anderson et al., 2012). Because individuals differ in their reactions and interpretations of particular types of events, it must be taken into consideration how individuals cognitively process the situation for which they have entered (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In other words, individuals in transition make two types of appraisals of their situations simultaneously—the primary, on the perception of the transition itself (is
it positive, negative, or irrelevant); and secondarily, assesses the resources available for coping with the transition, most notably through the four S’s—situations, self, support, and strategies (Anderson et al., 2012). As transition occurs over time, an individual’s appraisal and reappraisal is continuous—reactions and perspectives are constantly changing and evolving, therefore the four S’s do so as well. How central sorority membership is to a recruitment counselor’s social identity is apparent in how each participant describes the movement over time away from and returning to sorority life.

Both approaches of transition are relevant to this study for they highlight the ways in which transition “involves interpretations of experience and the impact of these experiences on identity formation” (Falls & Wilson, 2012, p. 574).

**Role Transition**

Role transition refers “to the process of changing from one set of expected positional behaviors to another” (Allen & van de Vliert, 1984, p. 3), as it relates to the role(s) an individual inhabits. Described as the process of moving in and moving out of roles that construct a social system, role transition is the psychological and/or physical movement between roles, including the disengagement, or exit, from one role and the embrace, or entry, into another (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Burr, 1972; Goffman, 1961). Both Ashforth (2001) and Dube (2014) conceived role transition as a boundary-crossing endeavor, whereas role entry and exit involves movement between settings, circumstances, time, and space.

Role transitions occur on both a macro and micro level (Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth et al., 2000). A role transition is said to occur when an individual either moves from one
role to another (also referred to as an interrole or macro transition), or changes his or her orientation within a role they already occupy, which is referred to as an intrarole, or micro transition (Ashforth, 2001). Macro role transitions, often referred to as role transition, are one-time, relatively permanent occurrences, occurring sequentially (Ashforth, 2001; Ebaugh, 1988). Micro transitions represent those transitions that occur frequently, within roles, simultaneously, and are often recurrent in day-to-day life (Ashforth et al., 2000). Macro role transitions can be reversed, as is the case with temporary, short-term role enactments. According to Ebaugh (1988), a role is reversible when a role occupant can return to the role she has exited.

The move or shift from sorority member to recruitment counselor can also be conceptualized as an intraorganizational role (Dube, 2014) which is similar to that of a short-term or temporary work assignment, because although she retains the identity of a sorority member, she is unable to take part in or otherwise demonstrate specific associations with one particular group (Ashforth, 2001). Dube’s (2014) qualitative study of role transition of IT professionals at the close of successful, temporary projects provides context for short-term, temporary roles such as the recruitment counselor. Within this study, the IT professional exits his or her functional unit role (e.g., the sorority membership) in order to adopt and engage in a project work role (e.g., recruitment counselor) and vice versa (e.g., returns to sorority membership; Dube, 2014). In this study, participants reported a period of adaptation but some felt reentry shock upon returning to their functional unit. These results show how people react in varying ways to role change. This study is indicative of a need for additional information in order
to better understand role transitions, and questions the assumptions that employees effortlessly navigate between short-term projects and their long-term, functional work environments (Dube, 2014).

Once a recruitment counselor occupies this role, she is required to set aside her own affiliation at a predetermined deadline in order to serve the entire sorority community in a capacity that better enables more women to join said community. Temporarily suspending sorority membership has bearing on both the self and the social identity of the recruitment counselor. According to Goffman (1961), when interacting with others, individuals often act as though they are playing a role and it prompts others to attribute those behaviors to the actual individual. In other words, others generally consider the individual to be the role unless cues direct them to disparities between the individual and the role they are occupying (Sayles, 1984; Turner, 1962, as cited in Sayles, 1984). Membership in a sorority, however, calls for what Goffman (1961) called role embracement, which is contrary to what is asked of the recruitment counselor. To embrace a role is to immerse oneself completely, so as to be seen fully in terms of that role, as well as confirms the individual’s acceptance of such role (Goffman, 1961). Role distance, on the other hand, is actualized when the recruitment counselor steps away or actively withdraws from behaviors and tenets required of sorority life.

In a 1997 study of sorority women, Arthur draws from Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) and Coser (1974) to contextualize symbolic self-completion in sorority women. According to Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982), symbolic self-completion is the use of indicators of attainment or other items recognized by others as “indicating progress
toward completing the self definition” (p. 89). The researchers postulate that individuals who feel incomplete in their social roles may use props, such as jewelry or clothing, to create a self-definition and symbolize completeness (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). In sororities, wearing letters is an example of establishing those symbolic boundaries between members and non-members. These boundaries are visible in organizations where membership may dominate members’ identities, or what Coser (1974) called “greedy institutions” (Arthur, 1997, p. 365). Evidence of just how central to and salient sorority membership is to recruitment counselor’s social identity is demonstrated through how she describes her own thoughts and feelings as she negotiates this distance. This is particularly true with regard to what she can and cannot wear, with whom she can or cannot interact (and how they interact), as she acquires and occupies a new role outside of sorority membership.

Overview of Research Design and Methodology

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed of their experiences, and how people perceive and make sense of their world (Merriam, 2009). Because the purpose of this study is to describe the perspectives of the sorority recruitment counselor as she moves into, through, and out of the recruitment counselor role, specifically as she negotiates being disassociated from her sorority, a basic qualitative approach is employed. Basic qualitative studies are often conducted using interviews, observations, and/or document analysis as the primary forms of data collection, enabling participants to explore meaning. In response to carefully crafted
questions, prompts, and probes, participants have the chance to reconstruct their experiences using rich descriptions, memories, and depictions (Merriam, 2009).

In this study, data were collected using Seidman’s (2013) three-series individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews, occurring throughout the recruitment counselor’s occupancy of this role. According to Anderson et al. (2012), the only way to truly understand individuals in transition is to study them at varied points in time within that experience, and therefore each of the participants are interviewed three times, at three separate points in their experience as a recruitment counselor. I interviewed each participant prior to the start of the sorority recruitment process, immediately following the conclusion of the recruitment process, and for a final time during the month following re-association with her sorority. Participants for the study were recruited by the fraternity and sorority life professional on the campus the students attend, and their selection for the study is solely based on their participation in the recruitment counselor program. I was not personally acquainted with any participant prior to the start of the study.

Through the use of open-ended questions, this three-prong approach to interviewing engages participants and the researcher, building on participants’ experiences to reconstruct their whole experience as a recruitment counselor, specifically focusing in on the feelings, thoughts, and ideas surrounding being disassociated from their sorority, to generate a sort of conversation between the two. Because the primary goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret meaning constructed by the participants, the researcher’s interpretation of participants’ understanding of relevant experiences is what drives the overall interpretation of this study (Merriam, 2009). Each
interview was audio-recorded on the participants’ campus, and then each interview was transcribed for analysis.

Analysis of qualitative data involves identifying repeat patterns within the data collected that characterize that data (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 1990). There is no one right way in which to conduct qualitative data analysis, and qualitative analysis must be rigorous. Rigor, defined by Yin (2011), is exercised employing three precautions—checking and rechecking the accuracy of the data; making the analysis as thorough and complete as possible; and continually acknowledging unwanted bias imposed by researcher values when engaging in data analysis (p. 177). Further, findings in basic qualitative research are those reiterative patterns derived from analysis of the data (Merriam, 2009).

In this study, I employed Yin’s (2011) five-phase approach. First, I compiled the data by organizing the transcripts for review and to code. According to Saldana (2013), in qualitative inquiry a code is often a word or short phrase that “symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). Coding is the process critically needed to link the collected data to the explanation of their meaning (Saldana, 2013).

From the codes developed, themes were established. The act of analyzing the content of interviews and then creating codes and categories within the data is how I came to make carefully considered decisions about what was meaningful in that data to the research question (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000). Finally, from those themes, two main categories were established.
Study Limitations

The principal limitation in this study is its execution on only one campus. The use of one campus’ sorority recruitment counselors was an intentional decision by the researcher in the hopes of focusing solely on the experiences of those who serve at a small, private, religious-affiliated institution. In addition, this study only included participants who were members of the subset of sororities affiliated with the NPC, selected to serve as recruitment counselors on this campus. The five sororities on this specific campus were all NPC-member groups, whose chapters in turn construct this university’s Panhellenic Council, a collegiate chapter of the NPC. This second limitation is necessary as the sorority recruitment process and recruitment counselor position are both female-only, undergraduate experience, only found in NPC sorority life. While a variety of social Greek-letter, fraternal experiences exist on university campuses, for the purposes of this study, the research conducted is limited to those participants who were members of this specific type of sorority experience.

Definition of Terms

Sorority life has a vocabulary unique to this undergraduate student experience. Terminology represents the organizational and structural development to sorority life (Callais, 2005). Terms that are frequently used throughout this study are defined here for contextual understanding.

Asked back. In this study, when a recruitment counselor or sorority woman refers to being “asked back,” this is when the sorority invites PNMs to return to the sorority for another round of recruitment.
**Bid.** The term bid is an invitation to join a sorority.

**Chapter.** Identified by the National Panhellenic Council (2016) as the membership unit of a larger international women’s organization, this is the term frequently used to denote a single organization on a given campus. This term also refers to the sorority’s weekly meeting, typically held on Sunday evenings in the campus center on this campus.

**Disaffiliation.** The Oxford Dictionary (2014) defined disaffiliation as ending one’s official connection with an organization. According to Bromley (1991), disaffiliation is the termination of membership or active involvement in or individual symbolic connectedness with, an organization or organizational activity. Disaffiliation is the notion of disidentification; that is, individuals who withdraw from the normative expectations of a role, and begin to think of themselves as no longer part of the particular group or organization; no longer do they see themselves in the role in which they originally identified (Ebaugh, 1988). Often, the word disaffiliation is used interchangeably with disassociation, the proper term used by the NPC to represent the action of separating oneself from her sorority for a limited period time.

**Disassociation.** According to the NPC, disassociation is meant to be the temporary suspension of membership from sorority in order to ensure that the recruitment counselors’ actions are Panhellenically-based, or rather are neutral and representative of all the organizations on the campus. According to Ebaugh (1988), disassociation is the action of disengaging or withdrawing from the “normative expectations associated with role, the process whereby an individual no longer accepts as appropriate the socially
defined rights and obligations that accompany a given role in society” (p. 3), but does not necessarily disidentify as a member or possessing such identity characteristics of the former role.

**Drop.** The term drop, in the context of sorority life, is used to refer to when a PNM chooses not to select one (or more) sorority options to which she was matched. This is also the term used in reference to PNMs withdrawing from sorority recruitment altogether (P. Kyser, personal communication, September 2016).

**ICS.** This is the acronym for Interactive Collegiate Solutions, which is the software system used to match the PNMs with the sororities. According to the company website, ICS Collegiate Recruiter is “a secure internet-based recruiting system that integrates the University Greek System, Fraternity/Sororities, and PNMs” (ICS, 2016).

**Initiation.** Initiation is the formal ceremony in which a new member becomes an active or full member in the sorority. A sort of rite of passage, the initiation ceremony is also referred to as “ritual” (Callais, 2005, p. 33).

**Intentional single preference.** Intentional single preference is when a PNM lists only one sorority chapter on her membership recruitment acceptance binding agreement following the preference round of recruitment, the last round of the recruitment process. This term officially replaced the word “suiciding” in 1989, although the colloquialism is still present today.

**Legacy.** The term legacy refers to a PNM who has a family member (mother, sister, aunt, or grandmother) who is a member of a particular sorority.
**Membership Recruitment Acceptance Binding Agreement (MRABA).** This document is a binding agreement signed by a PNM, following the final preference event she attends during recruitment. A PNM agrees to accept an invitation to join from any sorority she lists on the MRABA. If she receives an invitation to join a chapter she lists and then chooses to decline membership, she is ineligible to join another organization [NPC sorority] on that campus until the beginning of the next primary recruitment period. Alternatively, if the PNM does not receive a bid to membership, she is eligible for continuous open bidding (NPC, 2016).

**National Panhellenic Conference (NPC).** The National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), founded in 1902, is the umbrella governing organization charged with decision-making and policy development for the 26 sororities and women’s fraternities. All 26 member-groups are represented on this council by four alumnae of each particular member sorority who compose what is called a delegation. Each delegation takes part in the activities of the NPC that relate back to the undergraduate sorority experience, which include policy development, procedural changes, and organizational updates. Universities hosting two or more NPC-member sorority chapters are also required to sponsor a governing board for these sororities, commonly called a College Panhellenic Council or College Panhellenic Association. These collegiate chapters of the NPC possess the responsibilities of enforcing and educating member chapters about those policies, procedures, and personnel of the NPC.

**Potential New Members (PNMs).** The NPC (2016) identifies potential new members as any woman interested in becoming a member of a sorority who is
matriculated and eligible according to that university’s Panhellenic Council requirements and guidelines. Often, this term is shortened and a potential new member is known simply as a “PNM.”

**Preference, or Pref.** This is the last round of events in sorority recruitment a PNM attends prior to signing the MRABA. The notion of *pref* in this study also refers to the PNM choosing a sorority and a sorority choosing a PNM. The recruitment counselor uses pref as a way to describe making any selection.

**Role.** The term role can be defined as a set of expectations that are applied to a particular position by the role’s occupant or role’s set (audience) that are within or beyond an organization’s boundaries (Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981).

**Rush crush.** The recruitment counselors refer to the PNMs they are most attracted to having as a member of their own organization.

**Sorority.** A sorority is an all-female student organization, possessing invitation-only membership, identified by two or three Greek symbols (Callais, 2005). Also referred to as women’s fraternities, sororities are considered to be Greek-letter sisterhoods, and are legally identified as women-only, private, social organizations that retain Title IX status as “bona fide private membership clubs,” recognizing that this type of educational program is exempt from the general prohibition against sex discrimination (NPC, 2016).

**Sorority recruitment.** Sorority recruitment is the method in which those who are interested in joining a sorority become associated with an organization (Chapman et al., 2008). The National Panhellenic Conference (2016) identifies recruitment as the “period
of time during the school year in which events are held by each fraternity for the purpose of selecting new members. The recruitment period is organized and implemented by the College Panhellenic” (p. 182). Further, the NPC (2016) recognizes recruitment as a mutual selection process, wherein both the sorority organization and those interested in joining a sorority select one another and are matched through a preferential system (Tollefson, 2009).

**Sorority recruitment counselor.** The sorority recruitment counselor, or simply recruitment counselor, is a representative of a university’s Panhellenic Council who serves as a guide for PNMs interested in participating in the sorority recruitment process (NPC, 2014a; NPC, 2016). Recruitment counselors are undergraduate initiated sorority women who possess a number of positive characteristics, including objectivity and impartiality in their opinions of sororities, sorority life, and the choices made by both PNMs and sororities on membership. She is considered a representative of all sororities on the campus and is valued to be an ideal of the best qualities of a Panhellenic woman. The sorority recruitment counselor is asked to refrain from revealing any information obtained from or about the potential new members (PNMs) participating in the sorority recruitment process to any sorority women (NPC, 2014a; NPC, 2016).

**Situating Self: The Researcher as Student Affairs Professional**

I chose to study sorority recruitment counselors because of my full-time employment as a fraternity and sorority life professional. For the past 15 years, I have had the opportunity to work closely with the sorority recruitment counselor role, and, prior to, serve as a recruitment counselor three times while an undergraduate. While my
own experiences speak to why the study was conceptualized, I seek to know more about why other women choose to serve as recruitment counselors, how each experiences the distance they asked to create between themselves and their sorority membership, and finally, what the experience is like when she returns to her sorority at the close of the recruitment process. Further, I look to hear of the experiences related specifically to the recruitment counselors’ disassociation, or as one sorority woman referred to serving as a recruitment counselor as, “giving up my letters so you could find yours” (R. Barrett, personal communication, 2012).

There is little existing research on the role of the recruitment counselors, and more specifically, their participation in the sorority recruitment experience; however, policies and procedures have been shaped around the membership selection processes of sororities that include this role. Therefore, using the results of this study, it is my intention to contribute to and inform the practice of those who advise and work with NPC sororities on college and university campuses.

**Organization of the Study**

This interpretive, qualitative study provides a review of relevant literature (Chapter 2), a detailed description of the data collection procedure (Chapter 3), followed by an outline of analysis of data (Chapter 4). The final chapter of the study (Chapter 5) provides discussion, implications, and conclusions characterized by data analysis.

Within the literature review, the topics of sorority life, sorority recruitment, and the sorority recruitment counselor are delineated, in concert with a detailed description of each theoretical framework: transition and role transition. As part of the methodological
overview, the sample and participants (including their selection) are described, as well as a depiction of the primary data collection technique, the Seidman (2013) three-series individual interview.

The series of three interviews represent the transition from sorority member, into the role of a recruitment counselor, and returning to sorority membership at the close of the recruitment process. The timeline for the entire study is included in Appendix A: Timeline for Research. As a basic, interpretive qualitative study, the three-series interview is designed to focus on specific phenomena related to the research question, while also engaging participants to share about their history with the sorority, including how they experienced sorority recruitment as a participant, as well as reflect on their experience of the recruitment counselor role to that point. The initial interview provided the chance to build rapport between the participant and me, creating an environment safe for sharing personal experience. Questions and prompts for all of the interviews were generated ahead of time, are based in the reviewed literature, and found in Appendices D, E, and F.

The final chapters of this dissertation present the analysis and detailed description of the data. Data analysis began with data collection, and once all the data were collected a transcript of each interview was created. Data collection and analysis were described as recursive and dynamic (Merriam, 2009). Once transcripts were created, each was coded, assigning a salient attribute to groups of data (Saldana, 2013). Coding is the critical link between data collection and their explanation of meaning (Charmaz, 2006) and the transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis (Saldana,
2013). Once coding was completed, I grouped codes to construct themes. Themes are those conceptual elements that span many individual codes in the previously identified data, and named for their representation of the research question, congruence with the orientation of the study, and are reflective of what is seen in the data (Merriam, 2009). The themes in this study constructed to two major categories: the recruitment counselor experience and negotiating disassociation.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recruitment counselors disaffiliate from their chapters prior to and during recruitment, so you shouldn’t know what chapter your recruitment counselor is in. This makes her an unbiased resource for you. She is specially trained in guiding potential new members through the recruitment process. (NPC, 2014B, para. 2)

The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe the perspectives of the sorority recruitment counselor as she negotiates disassociating from her sorority for a finite period. I sought to describe each participant’s experiences of serving as a recruitment counselor as she moves into, through, and on from this role, returning to her sorority membership. Two important theoretical frameworks contribute to conceptualizing the sorority recruitment counselors’ experiences—transition and role transition. Both Schlossberg’s (1981) and Bridges’ (2004, 2009) models are ways to contextualize the transition occurring in the sorority membership of recruitment counselors. Role transition (Allen & van de Vliert, 1984; Ashforth, 2001; Ebaugh, 1988) also contributes to framing the recruitment counselor experiences as she sets aside one role (member of a specific sorority) and for another (recruitment counselor) and then returns to the original role she once possessed (once again, sorority membership). Transition and role transition provide the context for the implicit actions of the recruitment counselor experience; however, the explicit notion of disassociation is also described, in particular, how disassociating is experienced by study participants.
This literature review highlights the following relevant and important concepts: sorority life; sorority recruitment; the sorority recruitment counselor; an explanation of disassociation, and thusly, disaffiliation; theories and approaches to transition; and finally, role and role transition.

**Sorority Life**

Women’s fraternities, or sororities, are all-female student organizations, possessing invitation-only membership, identified by two or three Greek letters (Callais, 2005). While the first men’s fraternities trace their roots to the founding of Phi Beta Kappa at the College of William & Mary in 1776 (Torbenson, 2005), the first women’s-only secret society was the Adelphian Society, followed shortly by founding of the Philomathean Society, both formed at Wesleyan Female College in Macon, Georgia in 1851 (Alpha Delta Pi, 2008; Becque, 2002). Historically originating primarily at coeducational institutions in the Midwest and the South during the mid-1800s (Torbenson, 2005), sororities provided an opportunity for young women to seek out support for themselves, both academically and socially, during a period of time where campuses were otherwise hostile to their presence. Sororities provided friendships and camaraderie, assisting women in navigating coeducational college life in a time when the average age of a female undergraduate was between 13 and 16 years old (Turk, 2004), and when the number of men on a campus tremendously outnumbered women. Many of the sororities continue to tout these characteristics as foundational to their existence.

Female-only social fraternities developed on a later, but parallel course to their male counterparts. In 1867, the first “national” fraternity for women, I. C. Sorosis, was
founded (Pi Beta Phi, 2012; Torbenson, 2005). I. C. Sorosis opened a second chapter at Iowa Wesleyan College in 1869 through the process of what is now known as extension (Torbenson, 2005), or the official practice of adding another sorority to a campus. Kappa Alpha Theta, founded in 1870, was the first women’s fraternity to use Greek letters in its name, and in 1874, Gamma Phi Beta was the first to call itself a “sorority,” following the suggestion to do so from Syracuse University Latin professor Frank Smalley (Becque, 2002; Torbenson, 2005). I. C. Sorosis officially changed its name to Pi Beta Phi in 1888 (Becque, 2002; Pi Beta Phi, 2012; Turk, 2004) to compete with the other sororities for members. In 1904 and 1905, the Adelphean and Philomathean Societies followed suit, changing their names to Alpha Delta Pi and Phi Mu, respectively (Becque, 2002).

As time passed, women’s fraternities and sororities incorporated numerous components that originated with the men’s groups of the day. This encompassed the inclusion of vows and oaths, outward and visible creeds or mottos, handshakes, initiation rites, and other rituals deemed secret, whose origins and meanings are known only by members. Also established during this time was the use of familial language (e.g., the notion of the sorority as a sisterhood, or calling one another sisters) to reflect the weight of promises made to one another and to the sorority. Each organization also wrote their own constitutions and bylaws, as well as publicly demonstrated their membership through badges affixed to their clothing (Turk, 2004), which are all practices that continue to present day.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the existing national women’s fraternities began to see a need to gather together as national organizations and discuss matters of the
day, which included “interfraternity courtesy, fraternity (sorority) jewelry and stationery and fraternity/sorority journalism” (NPC, 2016, p. 13). In 1902, the National Panhellenic Council, now known as the National Panhellenic Conference or NPC, was established in Chicago, Illinois. Nine sororities that existed at that time gathered to make decisions with regard to cooperative spirit and collaboration amongst groups, as well as develop guidelines regarding “rush,” or sorority recruitment and “pledging,” or the new member education process (NPC, 2016, p. 13).

Today, the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) serves as the umbrella organization for 26 national and international sororities and women’s fraternities who, through unanimous agreements, guidelines, and best practices, provide guidance and feedback on a variety of issues important to their members, as well as to their host universities. Sororities are an active part of campus life at an estimated 655 colleges and universities in the United States (NPC, 2011). According to the NPC 2010–2011 annual report, a reported 4,292,824 women were initiated as members of sororities; 285,543 of these members were reported to be undergraduate women, a 6.2% increase from the 2009–2010 academic year (NPC, 2011). The reasons for why undergraduate women choose to join a sorority are seemingly numerous and varied. For many collegians, sorority life provides engagement in a larger community, be it their fraternity and sorority community, the university community, or within the city where their university is situated. When sororities operate in their ideal state, each has the ability to provide exceptional leadership development, a highly supportive environment for scholarship and academic pursuits, a sense of belonging that creates a connection to not only the
organization but the university as well, and ways in which to assist members in further developing their social identity (Fouts, 2010; Piquette-Wiedenhoeft, 2008). Sorority life is also reported to positively affect campus involvement and cognitive development of members (Chapman et al., 2008).

Sororities are female-only, private, social organizations, and continue to exist as such in the spirit of the freedom of association provision of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution (NPC, 2016). In order to continue as single-sex organizations, social fraternities (and sororities) are provided an exemption under Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the law that restricts sex discrimination in public and private educational programs that receive federal funding from the Department of Education. Therefore, under Title IX (Title 20, U. S. C. Section 1681a), social fraternities and sororities are exempt with regard to membership practices, identified as “bona fide private membership clubs” (NPC, 2016, p. 38). In order to maintain such exemption, the NPC designates that social fraternities and sororities must demonstrate that recruitment practices and rites of initiation must be without need or dependence upon the opposite sex (NPC, 2016). The 26 member-groups and the NPC all support this notion through the encouragement and education of undergraduate members as outlined in the Unanimous Agreement entitled, “Protecting the right of NPC members to remain women-only organizations” (NPC, 2016, p. 38).

**Sorority Recruitment**

For over a century, sororities have continuously developed and revised guidelines, methods, and procedures for how women join. The founding of the NPC in 1902 was the
first indication that some sort of organized plan for joining a sorority was necessary in the interest of sustaining the member-groups in existence at the time (NPC, 2016). Women’s fraternal organizations were rapidly becoming part of the culture on campuses and many chapters were established. It became abundantly clear that a collaborative relationship between the sororities (at both the campus and national level) was necessary in order to ensure the future of the fraternal movement. One such demonstration of collaborative partnerships is evident in the method in which undergraduates join sorority organizations—the sorority recruitment process.

Sorority recruitment is the process in which female students who are interested in sorority life (often referred to as “potential new members” or “PNMs”) participate, to hopefully affiliate with one of the chapters represented on her campus (Chapman et al., 2008; NPC, 2014a; NPC 2016). The NPC Manual of Information (2016) defined the primary sorority recruitment process as “the period of time during the school year in which events are held by each fraternity for the purpose of selecting new members” (p. 198). This process is organized and executed by a university’s College Panhellenic Association, undergraduate sorority women who represent their sorority on this board, and is often referred to as the campus’ Panhellenic Council, or simply “Panhel.”

According to Wells and Worley (2011), the goal of the membership recruitment process for sororities is to align prospective members with a sorority chapter, “ideally allowing for each side to have a say in the outcome of the selection” (p. 302). Sorority recruitment at Midwest University is conducted using what is called the “quota-total system” (NPC, 2016). According to the NPC (2016), “quota is a procedure that
maximizes the opportunities for potential new members and chapters to successfully complete recruitment” (p. 103), and the goal of the “quota-total system” is to provide each PNM the maximum opportunity to join a sorority. This system also provides the sorority experience to as many of the PNMs as possible, and assists the sororities in achieving what is referred to as parity, or comparable sizes amongst all the sororities on the campus (NPC, 2016).

In order to achieve parity, the NPC (2016) implemented Release Figure Methodology (RFM), a mathematical formula that manages the number of invitations issued by a sorority for each individual round of recruitment, based on the chapter’s previous year recruitment performance. RFM enables each sorority to invite a sufficient number of PNMs to each round in order to meet quota at the close of recruitment. For the PNMs, use of RFM allows the PNM to “methodologically investigate realistic options and ultimately match with a sorority for which she has a preference” (NPC, 2016, p. 125). The NPC (2016) contends that it is unfair for a sorority to invite a PNM to an event if they have already decided to release her, and therefore, by releasing her earlier in the process, she has more of a chance to match to a sorority that she is more suited to join. It is in their opinion that the PNMs can then focus on chapters where they have a realistic opportunity to join.

The set-up and implementation of the recruitment process varies from campus to campus, so long as it is in alignment with the current year NPC guidelines. In most instances, recruitment typically spans a series of several days, consisting of events in which PNMs attend events, or rounds, with the sororities, often in sorority facilities or
designated areas on the campus (Rolnik et al., 2010). Those PNMs attend one function with each sorority during each of the day’s series of events, interacting with the sorority women at each chapter for a brief period. At the end of each of the days or evenings of recruitment, the potential new member is responsible for narrowing her choice of sororities to join. She is then matched up to a lower number of sorority recruitment events to attend each day as the process wears on, until she has selected one to two in which she is willing to accept an invitation to join based upon the sororities’ events that she’s attended. This invitation to join a sorority is commonly referred to as a bid.

In order to receive a bid, the PNMs sign a Membership Recruitment Acceptance Binding Agreement, or MRABA, on the last day of the recruitment process. The MRABA outlines what a PNM is committing herself to, in terms of what happens if or when each participant lists a sorority, or sororities, on the agreement (NPC, 2016). A PNM may submit as many of the choices for sorority membership as they are able, based on the last round of events they attended. The NPC (2016) highly encourages PNMs rank-order and list all the sorority options they have to select from on that MRABA. They are encouraged to do so in order to increase their chance for sorority membership. Often when a woman fails to obtain an invitation to join a sorority it is because they are limiting their options (Wells & Worley, 2011).

At Midwest University, this means the PNMs list a maximum of two choices. The recruitment counselors are trained to encourage PNMs to consider listing all the sororities to which they have attended events for during the final round on the MRABA,
in order to provide themselves more opportunity to match to a sorority, rather than only selecting one. One major reason for that is quota addition.

Quota addition is another process in sorority recruitment than is in place to assist PNsMs who do maximize their options (i.e., list all the sororities attended on their MRABA) in order to receive an invitation to join a sorority (NPC, 2016, p. 112). PNsMs who match to a sorority in quota addition are added to the quota provided by the Panhellenic advisor and Release Figure Specialist. Those PNsMs who intentionally single preference, or only list one of their options for sorority membership on their MRABA (and are not matched), are not eligible for quota addition. The NPC (2016) acknowledges that each failed to maximize all of the options she had. Wells and Worley (2011) shared this is sometimes because women seek only to join those groups designated as “high-status,” refusing to take a membership opportunity in an organization that may be seen as having lesser standing within that institution’s sorority community.

Intentional single preference as a concept is also frequently referred to by its slang name, “suiciding.” Engaging in intentional single preference has a high risk of not receiving an invitation to join a sorority at all. If a PNM is not matched to that singular choice sorority, she is released from sorority recruitment all together. She is, however, still eligible to receive an invitation to join a sorority once recruitment ends, but the chances of receiving an invitation are slim, because many, or all of the sororities may not have spaces available for additional members. PNsMs may also formally withdraw from recruitment and consideration for sorority membership using the MRABA. How this all affects recruitment counselors is that while they are responsible for encouraging PNsMs to
include all of their options on their MRABA, they must do so without telling PNM why it is in their best interest to do so.

At this same time the potential new members are making decisions about which sororities they are most likely to join, the sororities are engaging in much the same processes. They select those potential new members they would like to invite to each round of recruitment to get to know better, in the hopes of inviting potential new members whom they believe to be a good “fit” for the group, to join their organization. Engaging in this practice is called the “mutual selection process” (Tollefson, 2009), wherein both the sorority and PNM select one another and are matched through a preferential bidding system (NPC, 2016, p. 198).

Recruitment culminates in “Bid Day,” or the day where PNM’s become new members, and are welcomed into the sorority community on their campus (NPC, 2016). The PNM, once she accepts her bid to membership, then becomes a new member. Women may only be a member of one sorority (NPC, 2014a); however this stipulation does not actually begin until she is initiated into said sorority at the close of the new member education process. Should the new member elect not to be initiated and withdraw from the chapter to which she was matched, she is still “bound” (NPC, 2014a) or obligated to the matched sorority until the start of the recruitment process the following year.

**The Recruitment Counselor**

Recruitment counselors are current, initiated sorority women with a unique opportunity to serve in a peer-leadership role in the sorority recruitment process. This
position is also referred to as a “Rho Gamma,” “Pi Chi,” or “Sigma Rho Gamma,” depending on the campus’ name for this position and the requisite Greek letters attributed to it (NPC, 2014a). The sorority recruitment counselor is responsible for guiding and leading potential new members through the sorority recruitment process. She provides objective and impartial advice to potential new members (PNMs) in support of each joining a sorority.

The NPC (2016) describes recruitment counseling as “a positive step forward toward making the recruitment process better understood by participants” (p. 121). Characteristics necessary of a recruitment counselor are that she is an undergraduate chapter member in good standing with her sorority. She is one who is seen as dependable, responsible, available, sensitive, and perceptive (NPC, 2016). She is an experienced sorority woman who possesses good listening skills and the ability to keep important information confidential, particularly from her own chapter members, throughout the sorority recruitment process. The information a recruitment counselor is privy to often includes specific details of her group members. Recruitment counselors are charged with a number of duties specific to enhancing the experience of potential new members. They provide support, friendship, and personal guidance; are available to answer questions in a neutral, unbiased fashion; promote an understanding and explanation of key terms and processes; and offer an understanding of the benefits of joining a sorority, specifically emphasizing the ideals and goals of all sorority chapters (NPC, 2014a). Each counselor represents the sorority experience on her campus and
seeks to guide the PNMs through what can be considered a stressful, and sometimes fearful, process (Chapman et al., 2008).

**Selection**

Recruiting and selecting recruitment counselors is a very important component in preparation for sorority recruitment (NPC, 2014a). Typically chosen in the semester prior to the start of the sorority recruitment process, recruitment counselors are often selected through an application and interview process, dependent upon the number of interested sorority women. Selection is conducted by the university’s Panhellenic Council, in concert with guidance and assistance from the university’s sorority advisor. The individual university’s Panhellenic Council decides supplemental requirements for the recruitment counselor position. According to the NPC (2014a), it is ideal (although not required) to have at least one representative from each sorority on the campus to serve as a recruitment counselor. Furthermore, they suggest that the total number of recruitment counselors selected should be based on the type of recruitment style instituted on the campus, in addition to how many PNMs actually participate in the process. NPC recommends that a recruitment counselor have between 10 and 12 PNMs in their group to ensure “adequate one-on-one attention to each [potential new member, PNM]” (NPC, 2014a, p. 14).

**Training**

Recruitment counselor training should be designed to create a sense of camaraderie between the counselors and foster a sense of positive Panhellenic feelings and spirit, as well as a full understanding of their responsibilities to their university’s
Panhellenic Council and PNMs participating in the sorority recruitment process (NPC, 2014a, 2016). An undergraduate woman, who is a member of the university’s Panhellenic Council, typically leads training. Her intention is to provide a better understanding of the individual sororities as well as sorority life as a whole, on the campus (NPC, 2014a). Recruitment counselor training consists of several concepts important to executing this role: leadership skill development, ethical behavior, operational aspects of the recruitment process, basic-level counseling skill development, and recruitment logistics (NPC, 2014a). Frequently, role-play scenarios are used to educate recruitment counselors on the most common situations that could arise while serving in this capacity.

As part of recruitment logistics education, recruitment counselors are educated on specific policies and procedures unique to that particular campus’ sorority recruitment process, including the schedule of each day’s events, in concert with the relevant rules and procedures specific to the university’s sorority recruitment program. Through training, it is intended that recruitment counselors find their leadership voice (NPC, 2014a). According to NPC (2014a), the goal of training and educating recruitment counselors so each is a well-prepared, impartial representative of sorority life. From training, the recruitment counselors are then charged with using their newly acquired knowledge and skills to lead PNMs in small groups, through the process each day.

**Peer Education**

The use of peer education dates back to 1888, when at institutions such as Harvard University and Boston College, undergraduates assisted one another with the
transition to collegiate life (Ganser & Kennedy, 2012). The widespread use of the peer educator model took hold in the mid-19th century, primarily in the areas of new student orientation and residence life. Comparable to the orientation leader role, the recruitment counselor is similar in that it supports students as they engage in new situations and navigate transition. More specifically, the recruitment counselor assists new members in making the decision to (or not to) join a sorority and assist in the participants’ transition into their sorority membership. The first peer contact able to provide accurate sorority-related information for potential new members is the recruitment counselor. She is responsible for fostering relationships, communicating cultural norms, and modeling the expectations that come with sorority membership. Recruitment counselors set the tone for the recruitment process through the use of their own unique experiences possess the ability to relate to the potential new members by sharing their stories of participation in recruitment and of sorority affiliation (Ganser & Kennedy, 2012). The recruitment counselor’s close proximity in age allows opportunity for participants to explore the realities of sorority membership through authentic, honest conversations (Cuseo, 1991) with their recruitment counselor.

**Transition**

As individuals move through their life, they continually experience transition, resulting in new networks of relationships, behaviors, and self-perceptions (Schlossberg, 1981). Transition is a multidisciplinary construct situated within a developmental framework and is indicative of a fundamental process in human and physical environments (Anderson et al., 2012; Burns, 2010). It is a basic way of perceiving and
framing experiences (Burns, 2010). Transition is sometimes identified as a change, with varying degrees of profound social effect (Turner, 1978). Levinson (1986) described transition as turning points or “a period between two periods of stability” (cited in Anderson et al., 2012, p. 39).

Within this study, Bridges’ (2004) and Schlossberg’s (1981) works provide the framework for understanding the experiences of becoming a recruitment counselor. This perspective is pertinent to this study because it highlights the ways in which transition involves interpretations of experiences and the impact of such on the individuals who are experiencing them.

**Transition According to Bridges**

To Bridges (2004), transition is different from change. In a 2012 article by Nuss and Schroeder, they cited Bridges’ observation that change is situational, in that it is external to the individual, wherein transition is actually the internal psychological process the individual encounters in order to come to terms with the new situation in which he or she is placed. Change is not necessarily indicative of transition occurring; however, transition is the mechanism by which change and transformation can occur for individuals. In fact, according to Nicholson (1987), “change, through the core mechanism of transition, is the norm and stable equilibrium, the exception” (as cited in Anderson et al., 2012, p. 168). Bridges (2004) presented a process of transition that has three phases: endings, the neutral zone, and beginnings. While it is true that we are socialized to start at the beginning (i.e., of a task, of a book, of a job, etc.), Bridges (2004) makes the case that the starting point for a transition is not actually the outcome, but the
realization of leaving the old situation behind, or in other words, the situation comes to an end. Bridges called this an ending. “Transition itself begins with letting go of something that you have believed or assumed, some way you’ve always been or seen yourself, some outlook on the world or attitude toward others” (Bridges, 2004, p. 129).

There are five aspects of a natural ending experience: disengagement, dismantling, disidentification, disenchantment, and disorientation. While an individual in transition could experience each attribute, not everyone experiencing transition will experience all five. Some might experience more than one at a time, and an individual may not experience them in any sort of sequential order (Bridges, 2004).

Disengagement describes the ways in which an individual separates himself or herself from former roles and routines (e.g., activities, relationships, settings) that were at one time important or relevant (Bridges, 2004). Disengagement can be the start of the ending process of a transition; one that breaks up old cue systems that would at one time reinforce old roles and patterns of behavior (Bridges, 2004).

While disengagement involves discontinuing the habits and behaviors of a previous experience, dismantling is taking apart that old cue system, one piece at a time. This cognitive process is the start of thinking of one’s self as an “I” instead of a “we” (Bridges, 2004), wherein the individual slowly dismantles or unpacks her relationships or identity that is lost.

Disidentification describes the loss of the ways that an individual identifies herself or himself. According to Bridges (2004), most individuals in transition experience not being quite sure of who they are, sometimes causing a sense of panic.
Disidentification is the inner side of the disengagement process, and is significant because there is a “need to loosen the bonds of the person we think we are so that we can go through a transition toward a new identity” (Bridges, 2004, p. 118).

Disenchantment is actually a recurrent experience throughout one’s lifetime, an often-occurring part of a transition wherein the individual discovers that in some sense, his or her world is no longer real (Bridges, 2004). Things are not as one intends, knows, or perceives. A person experiencing disenchantment may be beginning their ending phase as, according to Bridges (2004), this is the signal that things are moving into transition. Disenchantment demonstrates that reality has many layers, each appropriate to one’s spiritual and intellectual development at a given phase. Further, the disenchantment phase signals the need for an individual to look further into what they thought to be their reality, in order to see and to understand what is really occurring (Bridges, 2004).

Last, but not in any particular order is, disorientation. It is when an individual recognizes the lost, confused feelings that deepens as he or she becomes disengaged, disidentified, and disenchanted (Bridges, 2004). Individuals experiencing disorientation often have lost their motive power. Disorientation is uncomfortable, often a time of confusion and emptiness for individuals, where things he or she once valued no longer invoke the same feelings (Bridges, 2004). In addition, disorientation is an upheaval in an individual’s appreciation or understanding of time and space. Important to note, of all of these concepts (disengagement, dismantling, disidentification, disenchantment, and disorientation), disengagement is the only one which refers to an external process. The
remaining four refer to internal processes that an individual can experience, and according to Bridges (2004), the internal ending is what in fact initiates a transition. Many are reluctant to go into transition because they are resistant to let go of an identity, relationship, job, or own reality. However, in order to more forward, and find and experience the new, the individual must first deal with a time of nothingness. When the individual is ready, she moves on from an ending into a neutral zone. The neutral zone is described as a time of emptiness and nothingness where “a new sense of self” is able to form (Bridges, 2004, p. 135). This emptiness is an “attentive inactivity and ritualized routine” (Bridges, 2004, p. 135). One of the first functions of the neutral zone is to surrender, or to give in to the emptiness and stop trying to fight it. This is the opportunity to embrace emptiness and surrender to what the neutral zone is meant to provide. The second function of the neutral zone is a process of disintegration and reintegration as a source of renewal. This neutral zone is one of self-renewal, brought forth only when one stops and reflects upon what is and is not working. Finally, the neutral zone is a place of perspective, a place where an individual can reflect on the journey between the stages of transition. This is where preparation for the next stage, beginnings, is primarily evident. Bridges (2004) articulates that the individual must embrace their time within this experience in order to understand why one is experiencing transition; otherwise, the neutral zone can be a dead end. In addition, an individual should not try to speed up the process the neutral zone is introducing, nor should he or she try to put things back to the way they were before the transition began, as it would be impossible. Once new knowledge is gained, as is the case for a neutral zone, an
individual’s experience cannot simply go away (Bridges, 2004). The neutral zone is indeed the place between the old life and the new.

Beginnings, according to Bridges (2004), are what an individual experiences only when the ending and time of neutrality have finished and individuals are able to “launch themselves anew, changed and renewed” (p. 157). Beginnings take shape when an individual has internally realigned themselves (rather than relying on external shifts), and becomes motivated. This inner realignment must be an understanding of what drives resolve and casts doubt on an individual’s plans (Bridges, 2004). Beginnings are psychological phenomena in which individuals are able to express new identity and individuals make an emotional commitment, after feeling lost, uncertain, and confused in the neutral zone, to do things in a new way and see themselves as new people (Bridges, 2009). What is key to understanding beginnings is knowing that an individual finds herself in new situations, possessing new values and understandings of their experiences, in possession of new attitudes, and encompassing new identities (Bridges, 2009). Beginnings signify that the ending is real. Because transition is an organic process, beginnings, as well as endings, and the time in the neutral zone wilderness, cannot be forced. Beginnings can be encouraged, cultivated, and supported, however, by what Bridges (2009) describes as the four Ps: purpose, picture, plan, and part. In order to make the new beginning come to fruition, individuals should describe the purpose behind the outcome they seek, picture how that outcome will look, lay out a step-by-step plan for executing the outcome, and finally, provide each person a part to play, both in planning for and contributing to the outcome (Bridges, 2009).
Endings lead to the neutral zone, which in turn, becomes a new beginning. Bridges’ (2004, 2009) model of transition is, as he describes, a process, rather than phases, because individuals who are encountering transition may experience the phases separately, in disparate order, or may experience them all at the same time. However, the individual will experience all three, as the transition process is not complete without them.

Transition According to Schlossberg

An individual’s ability to adapt to transition differs based upon the individual, and at its core, Schlossberg’s (1981) approach seeks to elaborate a strategy that details the tremendously complex reality, which comes with and defines the human ability to cope with change in life. Derived from various theoretical approaches to adult development, Schlossberg (1981) attempted to account for a diversity of experiences that could explain why it is humans experience transition in dissimilar ways (Schell, 1995). Part of this examination includes determining what constitutes a transition for an individual, as well as what different forms of transition are, the processes of transition encountered, and factors that influence transition (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010).

Schlossberg used the term transition broadly to describing not only large-scale, life-altering events, but the variety of subtle changes individuals may also encounter. The primary focus of the Schlossberg transition model is on the development of skills and resources (also referred to as assets and liabilities) for meeting and successfully navigating transition, considered a vehicle for “analyzing human adaptation to transition” (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 2).
While the individual experiencing transition and the transitions themselves are multiple and varied, Schlossberg’s (1981) model of transition provides a systematic and stable approach for evaluation. Adaptation to transition is contingent upon the interaction of the following factors, aptly identified as approaching transitions, taking stock of coping resources, and taking charge: strengthening resources (Anderson et al., 2012).

Approaching transitions represents the nature of the transition and identifies how best to approach it. This includes the characteristics of the transition (type), the individual’s appraisal of the transition (perspective), the characteristics of the environment pre- and post-transition, including personal characteristics, relationship to the event or non-event, and what role(s) it affects (context), and the degree to which a transition alters an individual’s daily life (impact; Anderson et al., 2012; Evans, Forney, Guido, DiBrito, 2010; Schlossberg, 1981). While described separately, these components interact with one another in order to influence adaptation to a specific transition (Schlossberg, 1981). Schlossberg identified three primary types of transitions: anticipated, unanticipated, and non-event. Anticipated transitions are those scheduled, expected events that are likely to occur and can be planned for and rehearsed. Unanticipated transitions, however, are nonscheduled events that occur unpredictably. Non-event transitions are those events or experiences expected, but fail to come to fruition for the individual, causing alteration of his or her life (Anderson et al., 2012; Burns, 2010; Schlossberg, 1981).

Transitions may be gradual or sudden; temporary, permanent, or indefinite; perceived as positive or negative; and may be macro or micro in scope, all of which can
produce stress (Schell, 1995). Similarly described by Bridges (2004), Schlossberg (1981) also denoted that individuals may also encounter multiple transitions simultaneously, which could also compound such stress. Reaction to transition varies, dependent on where in a given transition the individual finds herself. These reactions are also dynamic, in relation to whether the individual is moving into, through, or out of the experience (Anderson et al., 2012).

Taking stock of coping resources when encountering transitions introduces the notion of the “4 S System” (Anderson et al., 2012). This system identifies potential resources for assisting an individual in coping or managing the transition. These four factors—situation, self, support, and strategies—influence the quality of the transition, as well as strengths and weaknesses within each of the four areas, which can either enable or deter a successful transition (Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, & Harris, 2011). Situation describes what is happening in a transition; self describes to whom the experience is occurring; support describes what help is available for navigating a transition or multiple transitions; and strategies describe how an individual copes with the transition (Anderson et al., 2012). Because individuals differ in their experience of and reaction to transition, evaluating resources available in each of these four areas may provide understanding of how and why individuals may experience similar transitions differently (Kraus, 2012; Swain, 1991). All four factors are appraised on a ratio of assets to liabilities “and allows for changes in the ratio as an individual’s situation changes” (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 63). This approach only partially answers the question of why different individuals react differently to the same type of transition or why the same person reacts differently at
different times. It could very well be that the balance between assets and liabilities has shifted. In some cases, assets outweigh liabilities. When that is the case, adjustment may come easier to the individual in transition. When the opposite is true—liabilities outweighing assets—assimilation can be respectively more difficult (Anderson et al., 2012).

As previously mentioned, individuals vary in their sensitivity to transition, and as such, their reactions and understandings of such follow suit. Within the notion of taking stock of coping resources, individuals engage in two types of appraisals: primary appraisal, which is their perception of the transition itself, and secondary appraisal, which is in the assessment of resources for the individual’s ability to cope (Anderson et al., 2012). The results of this secondary appraisal are what influence the individual’s selection of coping mechanisms (Anderson et al., 2012). Individuals will constantly assess their transitions and resources for coping, as the transition process consists of reactions over a period. As reactions change, an individual’s perspective can shift from feeling as though the transition is taking forever to thinking that this too, shall pass.

Finally, Taking Charge: Strengthening Resources is a demonstration of the use of the new strategies. Although some transitions may be out of the control for the individual, there are ways to manage them, which is through the 4 S system (Anderson et al., 2012).

This model for analyzing adaptation to transitions is derived from the work of a variety of scholars under the premise that as an individual moves through his or her life, he or she will continually experience change and transition (Schell, 1995). This is often
what causes new networks of relationships, new behaviors, and new perceptions, as well as creates a way to comprehend change that individuals may experience during the transition into, movement through, and movement out of a given experience (Schell, 1995; Schlossberg, 1981). In order for an individual to make meaning of a transition, it is important to understand the type, context, and impact of the transition (Kraus, 2012). Whether a transition is perceived as a period of crisis, a developmental adjustment, or that the same person may react differently to different types of change and/or the same type of change occurring at a different time, each presents unique challenges in concert with opportunities for individual growth and development (Anderson et al., 2012; Bridges, 2004). Moving through transition requires individuals to let go of aspects of their self, their former roles, and to learn and take on new roles (Anderson et al., 2012).

**Role Transition**

According to Sokol and Louis (1984), transition and adaptation literature provides a perspective of role transition, specifically that role transitions are temporal, or of short duration, in nature. In fact, an integrative definition of role transition, encompassing both perspectives, might sound like this—“a role transition is an event or nonevent resulting in changes in individual psychosocial assumptions concerning oneself or one's organizational environment, social environment, or open's relations to one's environment” (Sokol & Louis, 1984, p. 83). Both contextualize role transition as a natural occurring part of an individual's life.
Within role transitions, however, several fundamental components and theories that support what an individual experiences or inhabits, each of which are described in the sections that follow.

**Role**

The idea of a social role was not only developed, but in use long before the creation of the social sciences (Ebaugh, 1988). Writers, playwrights, and the like have noticed and recorded individuals’ behaviors are often dictated by the part one is assigned to play within society (Ebaugh, 1988; E. J. Thomas & Biddle, 1979). The term role became analogous with dramaturgical literature as a way of describing parts individuals portray at any point within his or her life, similar to that of an actor. Ebaugh (1988) vividly described roles in relation to theatrical performances,

> Just as players have clearly defined parts to play, so actors in society occupy specific positions; just as players follow a written script, so actors must follow normative scripts provided by their culture; just as players react to each other on stage, so individuals in society respond to one another and adjust their behavior to reactions of others; just as players interpret a part, so people with various roles in society have their own individualized interpretations, within limited bounds, of how rules are to be actualized. (p. 16)

Both theatre and behavioral science express perspectives on social interaction using role as the primary term. The roles individuals enact in their day-to-day life are similar to acting in a theatre, with all of its varying costumes, scenarios, and language (E. J. Thomas & Biddle, 1979). Turner (1979) described role as a perspective on human
behavior, or a “comprehensive pattern for behavior and attitude, constituting a socially identified part in a social interaction, and capable of being enacted recognizably by different individuals” (p. 124). While role and role theory’s origins in dramaturgical literature are more than simply descriptive metaphors for an individual’s behaviors, the idea of role captures the activities, attitudes, and expectations that shape an individual’s social identity (E. J. Thomas & Biddle, 1979). Role defines how an individual behaves in a particular social situation and how those behaviors could be perceived by others (Ashforth, 2001; Brookes, Davidson, Daly, & Halcomb, 2007; E. J. Thomas & Biddle, 1979). Roles are embedded within social systems and enacted based on constrained and filtered institutionalized structures (Ashforth, 2001). Roles are a basic unit of socialization, or in other words, a social role (Goffman, 1961). Social roles are those behaviors that refer to model expectations of a given position or status within a social system and are based on the interpretation of the role’s responsibilities by the role occupant as deemed relevant and appropriate in everyday life (Allen & van de Vliert, 1984). “It is through roles that tasks in society are allocated and arrangements [are] made to enforce [the role’s] performance” (Goffman, 1961, p. 87). Behaviors of those who inhabit a social role have less to do with role occupancy and more to do with the responsibilities assigned to said role (Allen & van de Vliert, 1984).

**Role Theory**

“The field of role consists of a body of knowledge, theory, characteristic research endeavor, and domain of study, in addition to a particular perspective and language” (E. J. Thomas & Biddle, 1979, p. 3). Role theory addresses specific aspects of social
behavior, drawing from three distinct fields of study: psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Hardy & Hardy, 1988). While a wealth of research exists predating what is now called role theory, publications by noted social theorists began to formally create this notion of a role theory in the 1930s (Clifford, 1996; Hardy & Hardy, 1988). The work of preeminent scholars in psychology (Moreno), sociology (Mead), and anthropology (Park & Linton), while different, all seek to understand, describe, and explain the social world (Hardy & Hardy, 1988). According to E. J. Thomas and Biddle (1979), role theory is not so much a “universally recognized specialization” (p. 3), but a body of knowledge termed for perspectives on and interpretation of social context (Hardy & Hardy, 1988). Role theory is derived from two major theoretical perspectives, the structural-functional approach and symbolic interactionism perspective, each of which has a goal of understanding and explaining social order, with role as its basic construct (Ashforth, 2001; Hardy & Hardy, 1988). The two approaches are actually complementary of one another.

The structural-functional or social-structural approach views social roles “as sets of behavioral expectations associated with given positions in the social structure” (Ebaugh, 1988, p. 18). In this approach, roles are linked to structural positions, and therefore the self is linked to playing multiple roles within the boundaries prescribed by those positions (Hardy & Hardy, 1988). This perspective focuses on the “bigger picture,” such as society, social systems, and the social structure, as well as other patterned behaviors that develop over time (Hardy & Hardy, 1988). The work of Robert E. Park, influenced by theorist George Herbert Mead’s proposal that individuals acting together
can change the goals of groups and thus, shape society, actually identified that the self emerges through the demonstration of multiple roles, structural-functional perspective identifies the importance of structure to role (Hardy & Hardy, 1988). Ebaugh (1988) articulated that the structural-functional approach is the process of role taking; the action of the role occupant taking on expectations found within an established system and thus internalizing those expectations. Further, Ebaugh (1988) shared that role socialization in the structural-functional perspective includes learning the existing patterned resolutions that manage and minimize the eventual role conflict that can occur within one’s role set.

Symbolic interactionism is derived from the work of George Mead (1934), who focused on the mind, self, and an understanding of each within the constructs of groups and society (Hardy & Hardy, 1988). Humans don’t simply or passively respond to their environments, they interact with it (Charon, 2001). According to Charon, “to understand the human being, we need to study interaction, and interaction of human beings relies heavily on the use of symbols” (p. 24). However, contrary to the structural-functional perspective, symbolic interactionism grew to focus primarily on the social interaction wherein individuals cooperate to achieve a goal or outcome; with particular interest in the meaning that both symbols and behaviors or actions have for role occupants. For Mead and those who followed, how individuals negotiated new meaning in order to discover and enact a role was of great importance (Ebaugh, 1988; Hardy & Hardy, 1988). Symbolic interactionism is seen as roles making “constant, creative modifications as situations change” (Ebaugh, 1988, p. 18). While individuals are constrained by structural
conditions that are largely generated by others, roles are created and redefined as individuals interpret and assume them, hence making their experience (Ebaugh, 1988).

Communication is central to symbolic interactionism, in that individuals use both verbal and non-verbal actions, including speech, gestures, body language, and even dress to convey their role occupancy (Arthur, 1997; Hardy & Conway, 1988). Symbolic self-completion, wherein individuals define themselves in terms of the roles (e.g., athlete, mother, father, etc.) they possess, is an important construct within symbolic interactionism (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Theorists and researchers postulate those who are less secure in the roles they occupy use symbols to reinforce perceptions they are able to perform in the role adequately (Schouten, 1991; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Arthur (1997) examined sorority members’ adherence to idealized images in order to investigate the idea of symbolic self-completion. People who feel insecure in role performance (i.e., member of a sorority) use consumer products to symbolize a specific identity or role (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Dress is one way symbolic boundaries were established and communicated to those outside of the organization (Arthur, 1997). When an individual feels incomplete, she may engage in self-symbolization, through use of visual symbols to reduce the internal tension that comes with status insecurity, to foster a sense of self-completion (Arthur, 1997). When those symbols are then recognized by the role set, the individual’s identity is validated. The sororities used idealized images, such as items of clothing, to indicate organizational commitment and the appropriate identities and roles for members. She then feels complete when her identity is affirmed (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Arthur (1997) shared that the degree
to which participants adopted the idealized images constructed in everyday activities of
the sorority exemplified the salience, adequacy, and embracing of the sorority member
role. In other words, if membership in the organization was important to the participant,
she not only wanted to be a member, she wanted to look like she was a member as well.
Therefore, the sorority women used appearance to demonstrate their organizational
embeddedness and commitment to associated roles (Arthur, 1997).

**Social Identity**

In order to understand the intersection of role and role transition, one must first
understand the self is both a unique individual, as well as constructed within social
context, facilitating the impact of the social environment on individuals’ thoughts and
behaviors (Ashforth, 2001). While the concept of self includes all aspects of an
individual, his or her social identity is limited to those aspects of self that are located in
their social ecology—the public or social self (Allen & van de Vliert, 1984). Social roles
are, in fact, a major determinant of an individual’s conception of self as well as social
identity. Researchers’ share that individuals work to construct positively valued
self-concepts and this self-concept is comprised of two identities: the personal, or
attributes such as disposition, abilities; and the social, or those salient characteristics of
groups to which they belong (Ashforth, 2001; Biernat, Vescio, & Green, 1996).

Social psychologist Henry Tajfel first developed social identity theory in the
1970s. Also known as the social identity approach, this theory is defined as a “social
psychological analysis of the role of self-conception in group membership, group
process, and intergroup relations,” highlighting a number of interrelated constructs
focusing on “social-cognitive, motivational, social interactive and macrosocial facets of group life” (Hogg, 2006, p. 111). Derived from European social psychological traditions, Tajfel (1972) shared that social identity is “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (as cited in Hogg, 2006, p. 134). Ashforth (2001) articulated that social identification is the perception of belonging to a social category or role. This theory or approach is one of the most widely accepted mainstream general theories outlining and detailing the relationship between individual and group (Hogg, 2006). Social identity theory posits that important characteristics of a person’s identity are a result of their membership in specific groups (Warber, Taylor & Makstaller, 2011). Individuals categorize themselves and others to create order and locate themselves within the social environment (Ashforth, 2001). Group membership enables participants to differentiate and receive positive perceptions of their group through intergroup comparisons (Warber et al., 2011).

**Self-Categorization Theory**

Researchers articulate that individuals have a tendency to classify or organize themselves into various social categories (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Considered the cognitive dimension of the social identity theory, self-categorization is the underpinning of social identification and the process that explains how individuals identify with different groups (Hogg, 2006; Warber et al., 2011). If a group membership is salient or prominent in one’s social identity, social classifications serve two functions. First, social classification enables individuals to cognitively separate and systematically define others
in the surrounding social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Second, social classification enables the individual to define herself within that social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). According to Turner and Tajfel (1986), individuals define themselves as members of a category relative to other categories. The act of categorizing an individual as a group member transforms how others view them (Hogg, 2006). This individual is seen not as a unique being any longer, but rather as the “prototypical,” or possessing characteristics of the category or role representing the ideal attributes and, as such, is depersonalized (Hogg, 2006). In fact, individuals who are members of groups tend to classify themselves as “us” and “them,” or in-group (us) and out-group (them); of which positive perceptions of the group, referred to as “prototypes” are often assigned to the in-group, while negative perceptions, referred to as “stereotypes” are often assigned to the out-group in order to create differentiation between the groups.

**Group**

Social identity theory describes the term “group” cognitively, defined in terms of an individual’s personal conception as a member (Hogg, 2006). A group is further defined as “a collection of people sharing the same social identity” and that these social groups are in competition with one another “to be distinctive in evaluatively positive ways” (Tajfel, 1972, p. 292). Groups are not the same as one another; in fact, they vary in a wide array of characteristics, and are rarely homogenous in their makeup. One broad distinction is between what are referred to as similarity-based categorical groups (also known as common identity groups) and interaction-based dynamic groups (also known as common-bond groups; Hogg, 2006). The first describes those groups with a basis on
attachment to the group; the latter describes groups based on the attachment among its members, and while both capture the differences between the nature of the groups’ dynamic, the underlying premise is still that identification drives what is considered “groupness” (Hogg, 2006).

**Role Transition**

Throughout the course of an individual’s life, he or she will perform a variety of social roles, and further, will move from one role to another as a result (Allen & van de Vliert, 1984; Boyanowsky, 1984). The most common role transitions are those which are considered to be intraorganizational, or entry (or reentry) into an organization (Ashforth, 2001). According to Ashforth, by studying the social psychology of role transition, one can be familiar with and understand how roles and identities are socially constructed and shaped within a dynamic environment. Further, the study of role transitions helps to know more about “how individuals struggle to create coherent and more or less stable definitions of themselves through the roles they play in organizational life—and in so doing, find meaning and purpose” (Ashforth, 2001, p. 10). Ashforth relied heavily on the work of Lewin’s (1951) field theory to underpin his approach to macro role transition. Lewin (1951, p. 199) pointed out that various social states are not static, rather they are “quasi-stationary” in that they are more or less held in play by a set of finely counterbalanced forces (Ashforth, 2001). When forces begin to shift, a role transition begins to occur, resulting in the unfreezing, or change in equilibrium. When the new equilibrium occurs as a result of the forces again becoming counterbalanced, then it means that a freezing has occurred. In between those two states, it is stated that
movement, or liminality, has occurred (Ashforth, 2001). Unfreezing, movement, and freezing are tenets which lend themselves to the notion that role transition is a movement across boundaries, described as spatial, temporal markers which define positions and their context (Ashforth, 2001).

Burr (1972) studied the ease in which a role transition could occur; to which he defined ease as “the degree to which there is freedom from difficulty and the availability of resources to either begin or stop a role in a social system” (p. 407). He suggested several theoretical propositions that could aid in ease of role transitions. First, Burr (1972) summarized the work of Cottrell (1942), Merton (1968), and Deutscher (1962), sharing that anticipatory socialization, or the learning of norms of role before enacting that role, aids an individual in making an easier transition from role to role. Burr continued with his theoretical propositions by suggesting that role clarity, or the degree to which there are explicit instructions for expected behavior when occupying the role, is beneficial to know more about as well. Burr also identified several other challenges to role transitions that should be considered, including role conflict, or the presence of incompatible expectations for a social role, as well as role strain, which he depicts as the stress generated when an individual is unable to comply or has difficulty in meeting the expectations of a role (Burr, 1972). Finally, Burr also detailed role incompatibility, or the degree to which the demands of one role are incompatible with other roles the individual is simultaneously occupying, in his research on the role transition process. Figure 1 depicts the recruitment counselor experience within the context of this study’s theoretical frameworks.
Short-Term Role Enactments

A temporary role identity, one in which the individual “knowingly adopts for a relatively short period of time,” is also referred to as a short-term role enactment (Ashforth, 2001, p. 42). In a qualitative study of IT professionals, Dr. Line Dube, professor of management information systems, looks in-depth at “intrafirm temporary role transitions” (2014, p. 17). Dube engaged in interviews with information technology professionals as they transitioned out of successful short-term, temporary projects and returned to their functional unit positions. The impetus for such a study is to refute the assumption that individuals navigate effortlessly between time-limited projects and
functional work environments (Dube, 2014). According to her research, because employment environments are becoming increasingly more fluid, in terms of employees moving from project to project or from functional unit to project and back again, they are finding themselves in a constant state of transition (Dube, 2014). An individual must be more inclined to be, and capable of, adapting to rapid change, which is challenging in that it can lead to counterproductive outcomes of stress, dissatisfaction, anxiety, frustration, and difficulty in building and retaining a trained workforce (Dube, 2014). Further, Dube shared individuals who are experiencing the transition often feel inadequate, resentful, and angry, all based on the magnitude of their particular transition experience.

According to project management literature, transitions are an inherent part of the project management life cycle. Countless resources and research are available with regards to anticipatory socialization and building team cohesion in these types of roles, but very little guidance is provided for what Dube described as “the last phase of the project—project closure” (p. 19). In fact, less is known about the specific challenges a transitioning individual may encounter as he or she exits the temporary role, specifically after experiencing a short-term successful project, and reenters the role once held (i.e., the functional unit role; Dube, 2014).

**Disassociation and Disaffiliation**

The process of transitioning from sorority member to recruitment counselor involves disassociating (NPC, 2014a, 2016). By disassociating, the recruitment counselor temporarily removes herself from her own sorority membership, setting it aside in order to embrace a new, unfamiliar, and impermanent role. The NPC (2016) does not
specifically define disassociation. However, they do stipulate that recruitment counselors on campuses with NPC groups “should be completely disassociated from their respective NPC chapters for the period immediately preceding recruitment (not to exceed 30 days) and during recruitment to ensure that their actions and decisions support the welfare and best interests of the Panhellenic community” (p. 51). Many Panhellenic communities, including the one in this study, interpret disassociation as a means to guard against undue influence on a PNM’s experience or decisions regarding sorority life. The recruitment counselor’s role as a guide for women interested in sorority life places them in a position to have a certain amount of influence over an important and personal decision. It is assumed that by creating distance and temporarily stepping away from the sorority, its activities, members, and preparation for the recruitment process, the recruitment counselor is equipped to provide fair and balanced advice. She is less likely to advocate for her own organization, and is positioned to support a PNM’s decision to join any one of the sororities on the campus.

One discrepancy with the requirement of disassociation is what to call it. Often, the terms disassociation and disaffiliation are used interchangeably to describe taking a temporary step back from the sorority member role. In a personal communication July 2, 2012, Julie Johnson, NPC College Panhellenics Chairwoman at the time, actually defined disassociation as disaffiliation, stating,

Disaffiliation . . . [indicates that] all contact with one’s member group is removed or severely limited. Campus Panhellenics . . . set their own criteria but should include communication (including electronic communication) with members of
one’s chapter; participation in chapter activities (i.e., meetings, recruitment practices, social functions, wearing of sorority insignia (letters); removal of other materials that promote [one’s] own sorority membership (i.e., car decals, stickers, key chains, bags, etc.); and not promoting or trying to sway the opinions of the [potential new members] to one’s own group. On campuses that involve chapter housing, this also would include not being able to visit or live in the chapter facility during recruitment or eat meals at [one’s] own chapter facility.

In literature related to both transition and role transition, researchers indicate that to disassociate from a role means to create distance between oneself and that role (Sayles, 1984), or disengage from said role (Ebaugh, 1988). Disassociation means an individual separates from a role by giving cues that suggest that the individual is not the role, affectively creating role distance (Sayles, 1984). Disaffiliation, however, represents a permanent dissolution or separation from a role or specific membership, wherein an individual disidentifies, or ceases to think of himself or herself in the former role (Bridges, 2004). This is most evident in research literature related to religious affiliation.

Disaffiliation is also described as a change in either an individual role-related activity or in individual symbolic connectedness, wherein an individual no longer identifies with his or her affiliation in a group or organization, and thus is said to have left, terminating his or her membership (Bromley, 1991). Bromley spoke to this with regard to religious membership, indicating the notion of disaffiliation has many facets to it—from termination of organizational membership to the cognitive and emotional disidentification that occurs in an individual who no longer accepts the belief system or
emotional ties which bind organizational members together (Ebaugh, 1991). This disidentification is interpreted as a process consisting of several stages that involve individuals resigning their membership roles and completely exiting the organization (Bridges, 2004; Bromley, 1991; Ebaugh, 1988).

In Witkowsky’s (2010) study, she too, used the term disaffiliation to describe “the sacrifice of chapter affiliation expression as well as sorority friendships” (p. 54). This study of sorority recruitment counselors looks at the experiences of 15 recruitment counselors at a small, Midwestern university as they serve in this role during the institution’s annual sorority recruitment process. While several important themes emerged, two were of particular interest to the present study. These were “challenges with disaffiliation” and “struggling between neutrality and loyalty” (Witkowsky, 2010, p. 53). Although participants were aware of the requirements of the role prior to applying and being selected, they still indicated this limited period away from sorority was challenging because it required the women to sacrifice friendships with sorority sisters and step outside of the social support network forged through membership in their particular sorority. Study participants also indicated that maintaining neutrality between and among sororities on the campus was also particularly difficult, as some of them found it rather difficult to portray an unbiased, impartial, and objective outlook on sorority life as a whole and among all the sorority organizations on the campus. Participants further shared experiences and stories of conflict and change in their identities as sorority women, in relationships (with their fellow sorority sisters as well as those also serving as recruitment counselors), and in the meaningful involvement they
once felt within the sorority chapter. Witkowsky (2010) shared the following account of related behavior in the recruitment counselors:

They struggled between the need to be neutral in order to work with the [potential new members] through their decision-making process without fear of knowing which chapter their recruitment counselor belonged to and their bonds of sisterhood and previously pledged, life-long membership to their chapter. (p. 54)

Each woman interested in becoming a recruitment counselor intends to disassociate if selected, and knows it is for a limited period. Each applicant is aware of the requirements of the role and from what she is being asked to step away or give up as a result of selection as a recruitment counselor; however, she often does not understand the experience of what it truly means to be disassociated. The NPC (2014a) acknowledges that it is difficult for recruitment counselors to be away from their sorority sisters for an extended period of time, as well as for each of them to “pretend each knows little about her own sorority” (p. 34). NPC (2014a) suggests that when discussing disassociation with recruitment counselors, it should be emphasized how critical the recruitment counselor is to the betterment of the entire Panhellenic community and that what she is sacrificing makes a difference in assisting potential new members in joining a sorority.

This research intends to paint a more nuanced picture of the role of disassociation and its effect with regard to sorority recruitment counselor’s identity as sorority members and their individual role within and absent of the sorority as they move through the experience. Arthur (1997) described a sorority as an example of Coser’s (1974) notion of a “greedy institution,” in that as a requirement for membership, one must demonstrate
exclusive and undivided loyalty. According to Coser (1974), member identities and roles are based symbolically within a restricted role-set of that particular organization. What makes a sorority an example of “greedy” is the way in which idealized images and symbols are used to indicate commitment to both the organization and construction of an appropriate identity and role (Arthur, 1997). In a sorority, a commitment is required which is based on giving up some individualism in favor of prescribed group images, often demonstrated and express through dress (Arthur, 1997). When part of a greedy institution, conflicts arise because of expectations from both inside and outside of the organization, which cause the individual to relinquish some of his or her relationships (Coser, 1974). Therefore, having to disassociate lends to the notion of the recruitment counselor not being fully committed to the sorority, or a true sister. As she transitions through the recruitment counselor experience, she is essentially cutting ties with her chapter in order to assist the entire sorority community instead of her own individual group, to gain new members. When joining a sorority, membership is considered lifelong and withdrawing for membership for any other reason than graduation is seen as almost taboo (NPC, 2016). Even as a graduate of the institution and the sorority, one is still an alumna member. Such strong relationships make disassociation and serving as a recruitment counselor all that more complicated.

Themes identified within Witkowsky’s (2010) study of recruitment counselors were the starting point for developing questions for individual interviews. Whereas Schlossberg (1981) articulates that a transition is only a transition if the individual who experiences one recognizes it as such, Ashforth (2001), on the other hand, shares that
individuals are in a constant state of becoming; moving between and through various roles and their attached identities and relationships. Capturing the experiences of recruitment counselors as they navigate the temporary absence from their sorority’s functions and friendships is necessary to understanding why disassociation is a requirement of serving as a recruitment counselor, the results of which could be a demonstration of the importance of sorority in the lives of undergraduate members choosing to join.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH DESIGN

I was privileged to serve as a Panhellenic recruitment counselor. At the end of formal recruitment week . . . I asked the women to guess my chapter affiliation. None guessed correctly. My job was done. I had effectively helped each woman find the right sorority home without divulging my affiliation. (Tollefson, 2009, pp. 2-3)

The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe the perspectives of the sorority recruitment counselor as she negotiates disassociating from her sorority for a finite period. Using a qualitative lens, I sought to describe each participant’s experiences of serving as a recruitment counselor as she moves into, through, and on from this role, returning to her sorority membership. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the design for this study, including a depiction of the methodology used for examining the participants’ experiences, a characterization of the setting and sample population, and positionality of the researcher. This chapter concludes with an explanation of data collection techniques, the data analysis procedure, and finally, measures taken for quality and trustworthiness.

Methodology

An individual often utilizes qualitative research to explore and understand meaning attributed to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research is described as holistic, reflexive, and process-driven; focused on the interplay of theory and methods, as well as the relationship between the researcher and the researched
According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3) and as such, meaning is socially constructed by those individuals through their interactions with their world (Merriam, 2002). Through the use of qualitative inquiry, a researcher is provided the opportunity to explore and represent those experiences and views (Yin, 2011).

This study is situated within an interpretive paradigm in order to highlight participants’ experiences. According to Merriam (2009), basic qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning a particular phenomenon has for those involved. This approach draws from both symbolic interactionism and phenomenology (Merriam, 2009). Symbolic interactionism places distinct emphasis on the importance and influence of symbols and shared meanings, which are derived from shared interactions and considered fundamental to understanding human behavior (Patton, 1990). Phenomenology, in turn, focuses on an experience itself. It is “how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness” (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). Phenomenology is an underpinning in many approaches to qualitative research, and what makes this approach unique is while the focus of the research is on the lived experience, within that lived experience are essences, or core meanings, which are understood by participants (Patton, 1990). Phenomenology calls for those essences to be bracketed, analyzed, and compared to one another, in search of the basis of a specific phenomenon.

Basic qualitative research has three key focuses: (a) how people interpret their experiences; (b) how those individuals construct their worlds; and (c) what meanings said
individuals attribute to those experiences (Merriam, 2009). Because the overall purpose is to understand how individuals make sense of and interpret their experiences, this study focuses on how participants make sense of and convey their experiences as a disassociated sorority member and as a recruitment counselor.

**Sample and Study Participants**

“Once the general problem has been identified, the task becomes to select the unit of analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 76). This is the who, what, when, and where of the research. In this study, I employed purposeful sampling because I am seeking to “discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Research must represent the participants’ experiences specific to serving as a recruitment counselor and disassociation in such a way that through detail and depth, readers are able to connect and learn how those experiences are comprised; deepening their own understanding and knowledge of the reflected issues (Seidman, 2013). Therefore, those recruited and selected for this study are the most appropriate sample because they occupied the role of sorority recruitment counselor. These are the women best able to provide the most reliable information to address the research question because this is their lived experience (Marshall, 1996; Sanders, 1982). Patton (2002) described these participants as information-rich cases or those that one “can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (p. 230, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 77).

Each of the women in this study is enrolled as a full-time undergraduate at Midwest University. They are traditionally aged college students (between 18 and 22
years of age), and all are Caucasian. Each participant has been a member of her sorority for one year or longer and experienced the sorority recruitment process in some way, either as a potential new member (PNM) or active member (or both).

The sample size for this research was a conscious choice, based on the number of eligible participants. Ten women on this campus are eligible for participation. The sample includes the nine women selected to serve as recruitment counselors for the year’s sorority recruitment process, and one Panhellenic Council Officer asked to serve as a recruitment counselor. Although Panhellenic Officers are also required to disassociate for the recruitment process as well, their responsibilities differ from those of the recruitment counselor, and they were not recruited for this study. For the purpose of this study, the Panhellenic Officer is considered a recruitment counselor only. While the intention was for all eligible women to participate in the study, the initial sample size was eight participants. Two of the recruitment counselors declined to participate.

To recruit participants, I was in contact with the fraternity and sorority life professional on this campus. She provided the names and email addresses of each potential participant. She sent an email to all of the recruitment counselors, endorsing and providing an introduction to the study. She also informed them that I would be in contact, by email, with each of them. I recruited each woman to participate in the study by an email sent to her university email account (Appendix B). This initial email articulated the purpose for the study, explained who I am as a researcher and professional in the field of fraternity and sorority life, outlined the scope and timeline for the study, and provided information outlining what was requested of them. I included my contact
information both at home and at my office. I emailed each potential participant individually, two weeks in advance of the first meeting time, scheduled for the end of the first week of classes in September in 2014. I also included the informed consent document so that each woman had opportunity to understand her options for participation, which included the ability to decline to participate and/or withdraw from the study at any time.

Each woman served as a Pi Chi, or recruitment counselor, for sorority recruitment in the fall of 2014. Table 1 is overview of each participant, including some background information related to being a recruitment counselor. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the research participants, individuals are identified by their selected pseudonym and identifying characteristics of their sorority membership are changed.

**Positionality: Researcher as Instrument**

The design of this study and the focus of the research questions are not only grounded in literature, but are primarily derived from my own experiences as both a recruitment counselor, and later, as advisor for recruitment counselors. Within qualitative research, because the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009), it is essential to acknowledge the positionality of the researcher within a study, so as to better be able to identify and monitor one’s subjectivities in relation to the data. The ability to put aside personal feelings, thoughts, notions, and preconceptions is the function of being reflexive, or realizing that one is part of the social world under study (Ahren, 1999). Before outlining the methods and approaches to data collection and analysis, I would like to describe how I am situated
### Table 1

*Description of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Annie</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Kate</th>
<th>Katherine</th>
<th>Marie</th>
<th>Maura</th>
<th>Natalie</th>
<th>Rebecca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year in School</strong></td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sorority Affiliation</strong></td>
<td>Sorority C</td>
<td>Sorority G</td>
<td>Sorority D</td>
<td>Sorority D</td>
<td>Sorority K</td>
<td>Sorority C</td>
<td>Sorority C</td>
<td>Sorority T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># of interviews participated</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which interviews participated</strong></td>
<td>First, Second</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>First, Second</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joined a sorority as a first year student</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engaged in “intentional single preference”</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participated in Formal Recruitment</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participated in Informal Recruitment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Did not match with first choice sorority</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 1 (continued)

*Description of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lives/Lived on the floor @ some point during sorority experience</th>
<th>Annie</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Kate</th>
<th>Katherine</th>
<th>Marie</th>
<th>Maura</th>
<th>Natalie</th>
<th>Rebecca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently lives with sorority sisters</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Counselor’s Pi Chi was a member of her sorority</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Counselor guessed her own Pi Chi’s affiliation</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Counselor’s affiliation was guessed correctly during recruitment</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
within the research conducted. Because of this, my position as the researcher potentially influences the study in several ways. I considered what factors prompted women to become recruitment counselors and what kinds of experiences they were having while serving, inherently comparing to see if the experiences they describe were similar to my own. Of particular interest was why some of the recruitment counselors decided to remain somewhat withdrawn from their sorority although no longer officially disassociated. In some cases, they would discontinue membership in sorority all together. The comparison has potential to lead to pre- and misconceptions regarding what I might encounter in interviewing study participants. Because no qualitative researcher is ever able to be completely objective, subjective awareness is beneficial to a stronger understanding of the study’s focus (Ahren, 1999). Preconceptions provide researchers agency to identify situations or notions that enable them to be aware of themes in common with the experience under examination (Ahren, 1999).

In the spring of 1997, I chose to participate in recruitment and join a sorority during my first year in college. I, too, was a student at a small, private, religious-affiliated college in the Midwest, which at that time enrolled approximately 1,800 undergraduate students. Sorority life was (and still is) regarded as a vibrant, popular, and dynamic part of campus life, wherein roughly 30-34% of the female population were members of sororities. Upon joining a sorority, I immediately began to get involved in the Panhellenic community, first serving as a recruitment counselor, or “Rho Chi.”

Throughout the three and a half years I was an active member (women could join a sorority after completion of their first semester), I found myself repeatedly volunteering
to be a counselor. Each time I served, I felt as though this was how I was contributing to the community, and in my own small way, our campus, for I was introducing sorority to women who might join. However, as each recruitment process came to a close, I returned to sorority membership feeling lost and disconnected. While I did have to disassociate for an entire semester, at the time I was experiencing these feelings I could not explain why I felt different about sorority.

Upon graduation from college, I moved on to graduate school for a degree in higher education administration and student personnel, at a large, public institution, a distinct change from where I attended as an undergraduate. I served as a graduate assistant in this university’s Office for Fraternity & Sorority Life, where I was an advisor to their Panhellenic Council. The graduate assistantship allowed the chance to both advise the recruitment counselors program as well as supervise the sorority recruitment process. Throughout the time I advised, I repeatedly noticed that the recruitment counselors were experiencing the same things I felt when it came to returning to their sorority at the close of recruitment. They told stories of feeling lost and “out of sync,” and it felt as though, to them, the sorority they were returning to was not the same one they once joined. This anecdotal evidence provided from former students, in concert with personal experiences, provided the basis for the research questions.

**Data Collection and Management**

Interviewing is a common form of data collection in qualitative approaches to research. Use of the interview as the primary instrument for data collection “assumes that individuals have unique and important knowledge about the social world that is
ascertainable through verbal communication” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 119), and it is through interviews that qualitative researchers are able to investigate a variety of human experiences in an attempt to unfold the meaning of the subjects’ lived worlds (Kvale, 2006). The practice of interviewing gives voice to common people, enabling them to freely share their life in their own words (Kvale, 2006). In order to fully explore a given topic, qualitative researchers interview a varied number of individuals who possess the relevant experiences through the process of asking specific questions, listening and recording their answers, and then asking more questions for clarification; concerning themselves with the depth of the experience of the interviewee, rather than breadth (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Conducting interviews with those who are able to speak to what is of interest to the research topic allows the researcher to reconstruct events they have not themselves experienced personally, and by engaging in this dialogue with a number of participants is able to paint a more vivid, comprehensive picture of a given experience (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In other words, the in-depth interview allows individuals to “reconstruct their experience actively within the context of their lives” (Seidman, 2013, p. 13).

The interview is a type of conversation that encourages free-flowing discourse, and provides for the introduction of new knowledge not necessarily thought of or directly addressed by the interviewer. With this in mind, the degree of structure to an interview setting dictates the control the research imposes. Through building rapport and active listening, a researcher is able to assist a participant in fleshing out what it is they, the participants, find to be critical and poignant to their stories.
The in-depth interview specifically is an exercise in meaning-making for all involved. It is often considered to be a partnership between the researcher and the participant (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006), allowing for said participants to share fluidly, at great length, and with striking and expressive detail (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Using questions, prompts, and probes, interviewees are encouraged to share their story and construct knowledge through the relaying of their personal experiences and perspectives. Collecting data in this manner allows for subjects under study to reconstruct events using their own language and description (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Because I seek to describe the recruitment counselors’ experiences serving in this role, specifically as she navigates disassociation from her sorority, the responsive interview technique (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) is the way in which interviews were conducted. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), “the essence of responsive interviewing is picking people to talk to who are knowledgeable, listening to what they have to say, and asking new questions based on the answers they provide” (p. 5). The responsive interview technique provides researchers the ability to somewhat set the stage for conversation, leaving flexibility for each participant to drive what is discussed. With this interview technique, I am able to begin with questions that are considered “tour questions” or those which provide the opportunity for the participant and researcher to build rapport and start a conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). From here, the initial questions (found in Appendices D, E, and F) are meant to paint a detailed picture of the recruitment counselor experience, specifically how it feels to be disaffiliated from her sorority, as described by the sorority recruitment counselor herself.
Interview Procedures

Seidman (2013) provided a structure for in-depth interviewing that draws from phenomenology. This interview technique involves engaging in a series of three interviews, conducted on three separate occasions. Each consists of the interviewer’s use of open-ended questions, enabling the respondent to reconstruct her experience as she shares those experiences in what is considered similar to an extended conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2013). Using this three-series approach, each participant in this study was offered the chance to interview three times on separate occasions. This is in line with the notion of transition, because the only way to truly understand individuals in a transition is to study them at various points in time of an experience (Anderson et al., 2012).

The first interview, called the “Focused Life History Interview” (Seidman, 2013), occurred in early September. This first interview is representative of the “moving into” phase of transition, as outlined by Schlossberg (1981). This was approximately three weeks before sorority recruitment started, and at the close of the first week of classes. I began with a brief introduction to the study and explanation of informed consent. I asked each participant to share experiences of sorority life up to that point, including their recruitment process and joining a sorority. During the Focused Life Interview, participants described their experiences and placed them within context. According to Seidman (2013), researchers are able to learn more about participants as they “reconstruct and narrate a range of constitutive events in their past” that set the stage for their participation as recruitment counselors (p. 21). The premise behind this first interview
was to establish rapport and trust, and for the participant to describe her initial experience with sorority life, including initially joining a sorority, encounters with her own Pi Chi when she, herself was a PNM, and the decision to become a recruitment counselor. This was to bring them to the point when the interview takes place (Seidman, 2013). Eight recruitment counselors engaged in the Focused Life History interviews.

The second interview, called the Contemporary Experience Interview (Seidman, 2013), focused on the concrete details that construct the recruitment counselors’ current experiences. This is representative of the “moving through” stage of transition (Schlossberg, 1981). Because the length of the recruitment process is so compact, it was not possible to interview the participants during the process without being disruptive; therefore, this group of interviews took place two days following Bid Day, that same September. The questions asked in the second interview were designed to compel participants to share aspects of the recruitment process as it unfolded, describing their experiences within the context of their role as a recruitment counselor. This interview enabled the recruitment counselor to share more about the PNMs she was guiding through the recruitment process, with her Pi Chi partner and fellow recruitment counselors, and current relationships with her sorority sisters. Seven of the initial eight women participated in these interviews, as one participant elected to withdraw from the study. Each talked about what the Pi Chi experience was truly like for each of them, and meaningfully reflected on what the role felt like, explained what they actually “performed” as recruitment counselors, and told stories of their most memorable and trying situations.
The third and final interview, the “Reflection on the Meaning Interview” (Seidman, 2013), occurred in October, approximately one month after the conclusion of sorority recruitment, when the recruitment counselor was settling back into her sorority membership. Representative of the “moving on from” experience of transition (Schlossberg, 1981), five participants (four in person, one by email due to illness) provided their reflection on the experience as a recruitment counselor. In this interview, participants shared about the overall meaning their experience as recruitment counselors had for them, which was more than simple satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the role. This interview prompts participants to address emotional and intellectual connections made (Seidman, 2013). Recruitment counselors made connections between their experience in this role and the experience of disassociation. Further, I was able to learn more about how their expectations of this role both were and were not met. The full interview process is depicted in Figure 2.

Each participant was interviewed on campus at Midwest University, in the fraternity and sorority life office. I selected this space because it was a location comfortable and familiar to each participant. The university’s Panhellenic Council uses this space to conduct meetings, and is both accessible and private for the purposes of interviewing.

Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes. I was able to gain answers to questions and have conversation that drew deep, rich descriptions of each person’s experiences. All interviews were audio recorded.
**Figure 2.** The interview process

**Responsive Interview Technique**

For each of the three interviews, the responsive interview technique was employed (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In order to use the responsive interview technique, main questions, prompts, and follow-up questions with the initial research question in mind were cultivated (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Main questions account for the research question and frame the semi-structured interviews. These questions were determined prior to the start of each interview, using the limited literature available as a guide.
Follow-up questions then enabled the chance for me to obtain further detail and allowed the participant to expand on her answer (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). During the course of each interview, I asked all types of questions to elicit richer, detailed responses.

**Informed Consent**

Each time I met with a participant, I provided a copy of the informed consent document for her to sign (Appendix C). At our first meeting, each participant selected a pseudonym for herself, which she is referred to throughout the remainder of the study. The informed consent documents are the only evidence link between gathered data and participant. Any mention of the site or the participants themselves was changed or omitted from the transcriptions in analysis.

The digital audio-files of interviews are stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer for transcription. Digital audio files were transcribed by the Bureau of Research and Evaluation at Kent State University, and emailed directly to me on via my Kent State email account. Each transcript is password protected both in the email and on the computer. Audio recordings will be deleted two years following the completion, submission, and approval of this dissertation. All informed consent documents were submitted to my dissertation director, and are separate from the data, and dissertation.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis in qualitative research involves making sense of collected data, moving deeper into understanding and representing that data, and making an interpretation of larger meaning from it (Creswell, 2009). Data analysis in qualitative
research is an iterative process occurring in five phases. According to Yin (2011), these phases, or cycles, include compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. Cycles are in no way linear; rather each may lead back and forth until coming to a conclusion. This five-cycle approach, considered a general framework applicable to many qualitative research methodologies, is applied to analysis in this study, as a general inductive approach (Creswell, 2009; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; D. R. Thomas, 2006; Turner, 2006; Yin, 2011). Employing a general inductive approach to data analysis, specifically as defined by D. R. Thomas (2006), provides a “systematic procedure for analyzing qualitative data in which the analysis is likely to be guided by specific evaluation outcomes” (p. 238), which in this study is the posed research question. A generalized inductive approach to data analysis’ primary purpose is to allow for findings to emerge from the “frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data” while not being limited or forced into decisions prescribed by “structured methodologies” (Turner, 2006, p. 238).

**Compiling**

Yin (2011) described compiling the data as an “essential prelude to the analysis of any qualitative data” (p. 182). D. R. Thomas (2006) referred to this preparation as “data cleaning” (p. 241), wherein the researcher formats the raw data files into a common format. In this study, there were 20 interviews total. Each interview is a separate record. Table 2 depicts the interviews, by participant.
Table 2

*Interview Participation by Participant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interview #1</th>
<th>Interview #2</th>
<th>Interview #3</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Annie</td>
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<td>No show</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
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<td>Kate</td>
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<td>Katherine</td>
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<td>Natalie</td>
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<td>Rebecca</td>
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To organize and prepare the data for analysis, each interview was transcribed and a text file created. I began analysis with a close reading of each transcript, listening to the audio recording at the same time. This provided me the ability to familiarize myself with the collected data and gain a deep understanding of the participants’ described experiences. Inductive coding begins with close reading of the text and allows a researcher to become intimately familiar with content (D. R. Thomas, 2006). During close reading, I removed filler words (i.e., um; you know), and changed identifying details such as participants’ names, sorority affiliations, and any attributions to the university. During close reading, I also paid special attention to participants’ language choices. Language use is important in this study; the women selected their words
intentionally, based on their training. Sorority life also has a unique use of particular terms as well.

**Disassembling**

This next phase began when data were properly organized and prepared for immersion. In other words, this was when I really began to look at what was present in the data. According to Yin (2011), disassembling is when critical decisions are made with regard to whether or not to code, and how much of the data to code. Codes are meaningful interpretations and deeper reflections of the data derived from the theoretical framework and the research questions. Codes serve as a sort of shorthand that enables easier retrieval of specific pieces of data, as well as assist in systematic analysis (Merriam, 2009; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Qualitative researchers can disassemble the data in many ways, including coding some parts of the data, and choosing not to code others (Yin, 2011).

In this study, I employed coding in two cycles (Saldana, 2013). First Cycle Coding were processes that guided the process when I began to code, consisting of a fairly simple and direct first look, deriving codes from segments of collected data (Saldana, 2013). Second Cycle Coding followed First Cycle Coding, and delved deeper into making sense of and extending the First Cycle Coding. Second Cycle Coding is the analytic, classifying, and prioritizing process employed in coding. When coding in either cycle, it was important for me to remember that codes should relate to one another, creating a coherent “belonging,” or conceptual web to follow, and should move methodically to a higher conceptual level (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011).
The First Cycle Coding processes that seemed most appropriate for this study are Initial Coding (also referred to as Open Coding) and In Vivo Coding (also referred to as Literal Coding or Verbatim Coding; Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2013), because both take the research question into consideration.

Initial Coding is not necessarily formulaic, but rather works in tandem with other approaches and is a starting point to provide analytic leads for further exploration (Saldana, 2013). In the process of Initial Coding, each passage of the interview transcript is reviewed, and segments of the text are labeled with an adequate code (Boeije, 2002). This provides the opportunity to develop categories and attribute the appropriate code to each category or theme. This process was repeated for all interview transcripts.

In addition to Initial Codes, which are provisional, tentative, and were adjusted as analysis progresses, I used In Vivo Coding at the same time. In Vivo Codes use participants’ own language, words, and phrases, enabling the ability to honor their voices (Saldana, 2013). According to D. R. Thomas (2006), codes are derived from actual phrases and meanings from participants that are found in specific segments of text, and In Vivo Coding is how to provide that evidence. Because the sorority experience has an expansive, unique vocabulary, use of In Vivo Coding allowed the ability to interpret the data while staying true to language.

Reassembling

The reassembling phase began as broader patterns in the data become evident and themes started to take shape. According to Yin (2011), during the disassembling cycle, patterns and broader themes may emerge, and reassembling data is noting those patterns.
This meant, “playing with the data” (Yin, 2011) or considering data under “different arrangements or themes and then altering and re-altering the arrangements and themes until something emerges that seems satisfactory” (Yin, 2011, p. 191). Because the phases of data analysis are not linear, disassembling and reassembling the data, using Second Cycle Coding methods, occurred. These are how everything fits together. The goal was “to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization” from the First Cycle Codes (Saldana, 2013, p. 207). Using Second Cycle Coding, I was able to discern which codes were dominant ones, and reorganize data sets in order to streamline.

I engaged in Pattern Coding, which, according to Miles et al. (2014), are explanatory codes “that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation” (p. 86). This pulls together information from the First Cycle into more meaningful units for analysis. Pattern Codes, built from In Vivo Codes, allowed for further examination of social networks and human relationships (Saldana, 2013), which is truly at the center of this study. Pattern Codes were mapped and those “promising codes” provide clarification and aiding in validity.

Each of the interviews was coded in the order in which it was conducted. Therefore, all of the first interviews were First Cycle coded, followed by the second series of interviews, then the third, before moving on to Second Cycle coding of each interview. Codes were first clustered into themes, looking for Patterns. Pattern Codes are considered a primarily interpretive act, and lead to the fourth cycle of Yin’s (2011) five-cycle data analysis process: interpreting.
Interpreting

This phase gives meaning to reassembled data. This cycle is where findings brought the whole analysis together in a comprehensive way. It is the primary basis for the study.

While there is no uniform definition of a comprehensive interpretation per se, there are five attributes for consideration in order for interpretation to be considered as “good” (Yin, 2011). This includes completeness, fairness, empirical accuracy, value-added, and credibility (Yin, 2011, p. 207). The interpretation of the data in this study is thorough, participant-centered, and identifies main themes and categories that are the basis of the study. The importance of interpretation is to have an idea of how an “empirically-based interpretation” has emerged and be able to convey that interpretation to others. Peer review aided in the search for interpretation, because how others viewed and interpreted this study’s information was helpful feedback. Yin (2011) further articulated that interpreting can be conducted in one (or more) of three distinct ways: describing, describing plus a call to action, and explaining. Describing, while a seemingly obvious choice for a qualitative study, is what may be the most appropriate way to share the experiences of recruitment counselors, in relation to their disassociation and transition through the experience.

It is my belief that analysis provides enough evidence to represent a qualitative narrative that includes researcher interpretation in concert with direct quotes from participants telling the story of transitioning into, through, and out of the sorority recruitment counselor experience while navigating disassociation.
Concluding

The fifth cycle in Yin’s (2011) approach is the concluding phase. All studies should have firm, albeit preliminary, interpretations, and concluding is what connects the study’s main data to empirical findings with some kind of overarching statement about the study’s merits. This is where those lessons learned or practical implications for the study are shared. Concluding provides an opportunity to confirm past information, such as data provided in previous studies, or the demonstration of divergence from previous research, suggesting new questions for furthering the discussion (Creswell, 2009).

Through analysis of 19 interview transcripts, several themes emerged supporting two main categories that represent the research question: (a) the recruitment counselor experience and (b) negotiating disassociation. Chapter 5 describes the themes and categories in depth.

Quality Measures

“Without rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility” (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spires, 2002, p. 14). There are a variety of strategies to employ to ensure the validity, reliability, trustworthiness, and credibility of a qualitative study.

Qualitative validity is checking for accuracy of findings through employment of particular procedures (Creswell, 2009) as well as accurately representing the participants’ realities of their experiences (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Therefore, I consulted the participants themselves, engaging in member checking, a process that provided the chance for the recruitment counselors to validate data, analysis, interpretation, and
conclusions made in the study (Bradbury-Jones, Irvine, & Sambrook, 2010). Member checking shifts the procedures of establishing validity in a study from the researcher to the participant (Creswell & Miller, 2000), providing participants agency to correct or challenge perceived misunderstandings, to present additional information and/or clarifications, and to confirm the data provided made sense. Further, by engaging participants in member checking, I was able to determine whether or not the overall account is accurate and realistic (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2010; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

I sent each participant copies of each of her interview transcripts for her to make amendments to, and to seek out her additions or corrections prior to the start of the coding process. Through engagement of each participant in follow-up, I hoped to ensure her feelings, attitudes, and reflections were appropriately represented. Each woman declined to add or comment on her interviews.

Qualitative reliability is the ability to retrace a researcher’s steps in order to determine the approach is consistent across researchers and situations (Creswell, 2009). Because building a strong, good explanation is not an easy process, assistance is needed. I engaged in peer review, wherein I gained assistance from two informed colleague who knew both the subject matter and the design of the study, to engage in a dialogue with regard to this study. Peer review enabled an “explanation building process” where I was able to see gaps or incomplete thoughts in explanatory interpretation. Further, peer review provided me the chance to tell the story of my research, because the more I interact with others, the more likely I am able to create insightful interpretive frameworks for this study (Yin, 2011).
Finally, I conducted a decision trail (Koch, 1994). The decision trail, also referred to as an inquiry audit, enabled me to authenticate the theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices made. The reader may not share the researcher’s interpretation of the data; however, a study is considered reliable, trustworthy, or credible when the readers are “able to follow the way in which the author came to it” (Koch, 1994, p. 92). Chapter 4 outlines the analytic choices made.

**Summary**

The role of the sorority recruitment counselor is identified by the NPC (2014a, 2016) as being an important part of the sorority recruitment process, yet, little to no evidence of why the guideline of disassociation is in place. In addition, the need for such a guideline or a direct definition is not provided in any of the literature or training materials. This study is meant to begin to fill that gap, in the hopes of informing practice for those involved in the process. Through use of a basic qualitative research approach, this study intended to provide a rich, detailed description of factors imperative to the sorority recruitment counselor’s experience of disassociating from her sorority as she transitions through this role, in order to affect future policies and practices related to recruitment, interactions with potential new members, and the role itself. The forthcoming chapters detail the data analysis process as well as concluding remarks regarding the study’s findings, providing critical feedback, and formulating questions to be answered in future research (Yin, 2011).
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

It’s really cool . . . I definitely would recommend it. It’s a different kind of stress.
Overall, I loved the experience. It was definitely one of the best decisions I’ve made since I joined Greek Life for sure and I won’t ever doubt that. (Rebecca, interview #2)

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the perspectives of the sorority recruitment counselor as she negotiates disassociating from her sorority for a finite period. The research question posed asked participants to describe their experiences as recruitment counselors, specifically as they negotiate disassociation throughout the entirety of the transition into, through, and then out of this role. To address this research question, an interpretive, qualitative approach was employed.

Analysis of the data produced themes surrounding two major categories—the recruitment counselor experience, and the experiences related to disassociating from their sorority. This chapter provides an account of both, using the participants’ own words and descriptions. The portrayal provided is a depiction of the themes that emerged from each of their responses.

From these interviews, two overarching, main categories were elicited, representing the research question: the recruitment counselor experience, and the experience of negotiating disassociation. These categories, and their corresponding themes and subthemes, are described throughout the remainder of this chapter. Figure 3 depicts the first category, the recruitment counselor experience.
Description of Category #1: The Recruitment Counselor Experience

The recruitment counselors unanimously agreed they had positive experiences while occupying this role. Natalie, Kate, Rebecca, Katherine, Maura, and Annie all shared they enjoyed being a recruitment counselor. Kate shared, “I loved it and would do it all over again.” Rebecca emphasized that, “one hundred percent, I would not go back and do anything different. I love that I chose to be a Pi Chi right off the bat [in her undergraduate sorority experience].” Katherine’s experience was so positive, she revealed she “would do it again in a heartbeat,” and “I wish I did it every year.”
Fit

Annie shared that she loved the notion of helping other girls “find their sorority,” whereas Jane referred to it as “finding their place.” Several of the remaining participants referred to it, in one way or another, as “finding their home.” When asked about her recruitment experience, Katherine, who did not participate in the same type of sorority recruitment process as the other recruitment counselors had, explained how she chose to join her chapter. “[A] lot of girls that are in my scholarship program so it just kind of seemed like the best fit for me,” she shared. Through Katherine’s story, I learned of many instances of why her sorority was a good fit for her. “It’s made me stand up, willing to stand up for myself which is nice. And, I realize how important I am.”

Kate provided a detailed explanation about the fit she felt for her sorority, even though she did not initially think that would ever happen. She matched with a sorority that was not her first choice.

Once I started interacting with the girls I just found out that I could completely be myself and nothing was going to change that. So, I mean, some of my best friends are in Sorority D so it’s been a wonderful experience.

Rebecca also joined her second choice chapter, something that resonated throughout her interviews. She spoke about how stereotypes influenced the reason she was initially upset and biased about the sorority she ended up matching to and joining. The fit came months later, through new member education and learning that those preconceived notions she had were in fact, not true.
Once they began in their roles as Pi Chis, each of them emphasized the importance of building PNM group camaraderie prior to the start of the recruitment process. Both Rebecca and Kate expressed that making an effort to meet everyone in their Pi Chi Group was a top priority. Each stressed how important it was to reach out to their PNM group members ahead of time in order to know their names and to have ability to put a name with a face. Annie described it as, “so the first day when they have a question, you can say ‘you’re Allison, I remember you . . . I met you last week.’” The Pi Chis wanted to build relationships with PNMs and really help them through the process.

Kate spoke highly of the way in which her Pi Chi partner explained sorority membership.

She was very good at kind of stressing that it’s like about finding where you fit best . . . don’t be concerned with what everybody else is affiliated with because once you find your home it’s not like you’re stuck with [sorority]; we can be friends with each other and that’s what’s nice to hear because I do have good friends in other chapters. (Kate)

Kate asserted that she and her partner repeatedly emphasized these views with their PNM group; “you need to find what sorority fits you best.”

In Maura’s experience, she counseled a PNM choosing between two sororities—one with which she was comfortable and one she wanted to emulate. Maura spoke about the advice she received from her own Pi Chi when she, herself, participated in recruitment: “choose the sorority that you’re most comfortable in.” Maura advised her
PNM in much the same way, encouraging the PNM to select the sorority where she felt most comfortable, adding,

Joining a sorority isn’t about changing yourself or trying to be someone different. It’s about what you can add or how you can benefit the chapter. Obviously, if you’re comfortable, you’ll be more willing to benefit or add, rather than constantly trying to meet their standards or change.

Even though this meant the PNM did not choose to join Maura’s chapter, it did not bother Maura at all because she knew that she could remain friends with the PNM, and would still have a connection to her because of serving as her Pi Chi. “It’s not like [joining] another sorority is the end of the world.”

Sorority D may not be my home, but it is someone’s. I care about members in all the sororities. Each chapter at Midwest University is so special. I think we showed the PNMs we’re truly open [and] wanted them to find their home.

(Rebecca)

Rebecca shared, continuing, “this weekend is their weekend. It’s not about us, what sorority the Pi Chis are in; it’s about the PNM finding her home.” Rebecca shares that she must have reiterated this sentiment “50 or 60 times throughout the weekend,” to her group. Saying this allowed her space to revisit why she had initially joined a sorority. “[I feel at] home in [my] sorority, but I also feel like I have this home in the [greater University’s] Greek Life. It’s really cool! It really opened my eyes.”

In some cases, however, the Pi Chis were reminded that not all women are the right fit for every sorority, or for sorority life, in general. “I wouldn’t want anyone or
everyone to join.” Maura explained. “Obviously, everyone thinks, I think, ‘my sorority is the best one,’ naturally. But I know it’s not a fit for everyone.” Jane concurs, in response to PNM eliminating her sorority as one of the PNM’s options, “definitely not [Sorority G],” “that’s okay—my sorority isn’t, like, for everyone.”

**Relationships**

Relationships are a foundational element of sorority life. Witkowsky (2010) indicated that “sorority members are well-known for devoting a large amount of time to chapter activities, as well as developing high quality connections within their sisterhood” (p. 50). An abundance of interconnected relationships comprised these recruitment counselors' experience. Each spoke, at length, about relationships developed with PNM’s, with their recruitment counselor partner, and the other women serving as recruitment counselors as well. Further, they discuss the relationships with their own sorority sisters as they transitioned through this role.

**Relationships with PNM’s.** Rebecca shared that she genuinely loved her group—believed wholeheartedly that each PNM in her group “fit somewhere.” She and her partner had the “best group” with the “best Pi Chis.” Jane shared that while the overall Pi Chi experience, for her varied based on the day, but she found it exciting to connect with the potential new members. Some were even quite possessive of their group members, calling them “my little PNM’s.”

Some of the Pi Chis developed “rush crushes,” or strong relationships with those who they saw as particularly ideal members for their own sororities (not sorority life as a whole). Jane and Natalie both spoke to having a “rush crush” in their respective groups.
In Natalie’s case, the “rush crush” ended up joining her sorority, which Natalie described as tremendously exciting.

Kate’s relationship with one of her PNM, “Susie,” was a situation that she spent considerable time reflecting on in our interviews. After the second round of sorority recruitment, Susie was only matched with her fourth choice sorority. This caused Susie to be rather upset, which Kate describes in detail how she calmed Susie for about 45 minutes. Susie did not want to attend this event, but Kate convinced her to try it. Susie did attend, and at the end shared with Kate that she had indeed enjoyed the recruitment event with this particular sorority; however, she was still hurt because of only matching with one sorority, and it not being any of her top choices. Susie then returned to her room to do homework, knowing she had to return to finish sorority recruitment and sign a Membership Recruitment Acceptance Binding Agreement (MRABA). However, when the time came to sign the MRABA, Susie sent a text to Kate indicating that she just could not do it; she could not sign the card. “I can’t do it,” Susie says, via text to Kate, who was in the midst of assisting other group members in signing their own MRABAs. “I’m confused, and I have stuff going on at home,” she continued. Kate felt that the outside factors, coupled with what Kate described as “the fact that her self-confidence was destroyed,” led Susie to just give up and not sign the MRABA. Kate was frustrated because Susie indicated she had enjoyed the event, and had many friends in this particular chapter. “How do you not see yourself with the rest of these girls? Kate said to me in her interview of her feelings toward Susie. “We’re all in the same scholarship program, we all share the same interests.” Kate continued to ask Susie, “Are you sure?
Are you sure you want to do this?” referring to withdrawing from recruitment. Susie did end up withdrawing from recruitment. Kate told me later in that same interview that Susie “would have been my rush crush if I hadn’t been a [recruitment] counselor.”

**Relationships with Pi Chi Partner.** Katherine and her partner got along “awesome.” In fact, they still text and keep in contact with one another now that the process has concluded, although she did describe herself as more approachable than her partner. “I’m so loud and I feel like I can talk to anyone. I didn’t have any issues with my girls. [They] would come to me more so than my partner. I make myself available.”

Rebecca and her partner worked to build their relationship. They met three to four times a week in order to make an effort to work together, each time working through what they were going to do with their Pi Chi Group. In fact, Rebecca indicated that after recruitment came to a close, she missed seeing her partner every day. She was inspired by her Pi Chi partner, and described her as a role model, and someone who she learned from with respect to how she treated others.

Natalie described her partnership as a good dynamic. They fed off of each other to attempt to hold unbiased conversation. “We didn’t want to sway them,” Natalie shared as she detailed her relationship with her partner. They engaged in member-checking in a sense, where they listened to one another as they practiced what to say to PNMs, listening for bias in what and how advice was provided. Further, Natalie indicated she appreciated her partner’s seasoned advice, and found her to be someone who possessed a lot of wisdom.

Annie shared that she actually did not get along well with her Pi Chi Partner.
Um, I found it very hard to work with my partner . . . we took like, different
[personality] assessments . . . I know it’s a good thing that opposites usually work
well together ‘cause they have different strengths and weaknesses . . . my partner
[is] completely opposite and even though it should have been like, easy for us to
bounce off [of] each other, I found it really hard to like, work with her.

Maura was one of two of the Pi Chis who knew of her partner prior to the start of
the experience, although she would not categorize that as friendship. “I wouldn’t say it’s
going to be like a life-long friend or anything,” she shared in her assessment of their
relationship. Jane, Maura’s Pi Chi partner, concurred.

I hadn’t really known my own partner because she was abroad last semester. I
knew who she was—we had classes . . . but I wasn’t friends with her. So, when I
met her, we like just jumped right in to things because she hadn’t been here.

Kate knew her Pi Chi partner prior to the start of the experience as well,
Describing them as friends. Kate expressed “[m]y partner and I worked very well
together . . . it was nice to be with her and kind of go through the whole experience [with
her].”

**Relationships with the other recruitment counselors.** The Pi Chis spent time
together at the Midwest University House, a space reserved to provide housing
throughout recruitment for those Pi Chis who lived on the sorority floor. The full Pi Chi
staff and Panhellenic officers were required to spend time there on the first night of
recruitment. All Pi Chis interviewed indicated that their time spent together assisted in
feelings of support during the recruitment process, particularly as it related to delivering
bad news to PNMs. The recruitment counselors shared stories, advice, or simply discussed the day’s events as a sort of recap. “It was kind of nice because we all went to the Midwest University House . . . everyone was there and so they all kind of helped us construct something to say,” Jane shared with me. Jane, who with her Pi Chi Partner, had to make two phone calls during the weekend to release PNMs from the sorority recruitment found it “kind of nice, in that way to be able to work through it all together [to] make sure it’s all going to be okay.” At the Midwest University House, Jane found it “kind of nice to have people to share your experience—work up to giving the calls; worked through how to put things,” providing support to one another, a role Katherine saw herself filling. Katherine felt she was able to be an emotional support system for the Pi Chis who had to make telephone calls to PNMs released from the sorority recruitment process, and was happy to serve in that capacity. Once the Pi Chis who made those telephone calls to release women from the process had completed, the other recruitment counselors’ reactions were ones of support, “how was it? Are you okay? Do you need anything? Did everything go alright?”

Rebecca talked about how initially she did not believe she could be as close to the women who served as recruitment counselors as she is with her own sisters. She shared that she actually ended up closer to the Pi Chis more than she anticipated; and was surprised that she became so close with them. Both Kate and Katherine talked briefly about how some of the recruitment counselors wished they could create their own sorority. Jane also alluded to this notion in her last interview. “It was a good mesh with all of them; we had a good time together, getting to know one another,” Kate said.
Not all recruitment counselors felt the bond with the other Pi Chis in the same ways. Not all of the Pi Chis stayed at the Midwest University House, and after that first night of recruitment, most did not visit the remainder of the recruitment weekend. Maura indicated that she personally did not spend time with the Pi Chis outside of the weekend’s events, and Jane further supported that with the statement, “I don’t think we really all got super close or anything. I guess you don’t really have time to make an effort to get everyone together and hangout. That’s a lot of schedules to accommodate.” Natalie also shared this opposing take (compared to Rebecca) about the Pi Chi staff. She described that she did not feel as though the Pi Chis really bonded the way she had initially envisioned they would. “As much as we wanted to start to get together and have like dinner and all, it never happened.” However, she did share that it helped the relationship of the Pi Chis to go to the Midwest University House and spend time together there, specifically as they worked through issues and difficulties with the PNMs while there. At the close of recruitment, Natalie acknowledged she was more comfortable with the other sorority women as a result of serving as recruitment counselors, and that she did share a bond with these individuals, but still felt it was not as close as it could have been between all of them.

**Relationships with sorority sisters.** Katherine talked about her sorority sisters by saying she just did not talk to them at all before recruitment started. “Our relationships, I think, are a little bit stronger, I would say.” Katherine shared this about her interactions with her sorority sisters, although as a sort of opposing view, Katherine candidly shared the notion of recruitment being bittersweet. “I never planned on
becoming friends with the [first year women] that are new [members] because I’m graduating and I didn’t wanna have another relationship where it’s really hard to say goodbye when I move back home.” However, she had plans to attend her sorority’s new member education classes, with the intention to introduce herself and get to know the newest members of the chapter.

I’m gonna go to the new member-ed class on Sunday to introduce myself and get to know them. I want them to see me as like a role model and what a senior [Sorority D] is all about and all that. Especially since I’m gonna be making my exit soon. I kind of want the girls to like be like, “oh, I wanna be like [Katherine],” and stuff like that. I mean, I have my flaws. I’m not perfect. But I want them to be like, “Oh, [Katherine], she’s pretty cool, I wanna hangout with her,” and stuff like that. I think that will happen. There’s a possibility I’ll even have to get another little. There’s so many new members.

**Counseling**

“A PNM going through recruitment often just needs someone to hear her express her thoughts and anxieties so that she can determine the best decision for herself” (NPC, 2014a, p. 44). Frequently, the sorority recruitment process is described as emotional and stressful for all involved, most specifically for the PNMs. The NPC (2014a) identifies that recruitment counselors' primary focus should be on the PNMs' experiences, and therefore skill development in areas that provide emotional and cognitive support of PNMs is necessary.
Participants in this study articulated that counseling was an activity they knew would be part of their experience, largely in the form of providing advice to their PNM group members. In addition, the recruitment counselors in this study were also vocal about just how to go about assisting PNMs in making decisions with regard to which sorority recruitment events to attend or not, and which sorority to choose to join.

**Giving advice.** If invitations to sororities did not pan out the way the PNM had hoped, Annie’s advice was “these other four sororities really wanna go back and talk to you.” That standard question of “What if you gave it a shot?” became commonplace as many recruitment counselors worked to convince PNMs not matched to their top choice sororities. “Just give it a shot,” Katherine said to her PNMs. “It just means they saw something in you and they really want to get to know you more. Well, why don’t you just go and meet them, because they invited you back?” Katherine encouraged group members to try out sororities they were invited to return to, although those sororities were not their top choices, or even choices at all. “We encourage you to give it a chance” was a statement many of them shared with the PNMs who experienced this situation.

Just go and talk some more and if you walk out of there and you’re like, “those were the longest 45 minutes,” then you have your answer—you don’t want to do that. But, if it’s, “that’s the best 45 minutes of my life,” then you probably should preference them first or second, and go back. (Katherine)

Jane told her PNM, “you know, it’s a different round, you might talk to new girls . . . it could be totally different than you expected this round. It might be worth a try.” Maura would not say, “join here or there,” but rather described her approach to guidance
as “asking questions to evoke feelings the PNM had during the event to see which is a better choice.” She found that “the whole helping them decide on which chapters to release for voting and stuff” easy.

Kate defined this the best with her story of Susie, by using all the tools in her arsenal to convince Susie to go to the recruitment event, as “and all the crap we tell them.” Statements such as, “do you need (or want) to talk?” after a PNM completes a round, or “you have to do what’s best for you” when making a decision on which groups to keep and which to eliminate. “Just keep an open mind” and “stay positive” were also frequently used, as well as stock answers for when encouraging a woman to return to a chapter they had released from their own choices, saying “these girls really want to see you” and “they see something in you they want to get to know better.”

**PNMs making decisions.** Natalie and her partner provided guiding questions to assist their PNM group members in decisions of who to pick, rank, and/or preference. “Who do you want to go back to for another round?” or “who did you feel the most comfortable with?”

Katherine shared that when a PNM was having a hard time deciding, she would ask her “questions others wouldn’t think to ask,” with scenario-based questions like, “who would you ugly cry in front of,” or “who could you ask for a tampon from and not be embarrassed?” Maura shared, “honestly with every girl having a hard decision, I just said, ‘where were you most comfortable,’ or ‘whose morals match yours, or you think match yours’ from the limited time spent with them.”
“If you’re comfortable in that sorority, if you can see yourself hanging out with them on the floor in your pajamas and you’re comfortable with them and living with them, then you should go with your gut feeling” (Annie). “‘Who would you want to like, ugly cry and eat pizza in your fat jeans with?’ and all that examples when you join a sorority” (Natalie). “Would you be devastated on the last day, opening a bid card and it is not the one you put first?” This is the question Natalie and her partner asked group members as they signed their Membership Recruitment Acceptance Binding Agreement (MRABA) cards. “I understand all the anxiety and pressure to pick one,” Natalie shared.

The final day of recruitment brings with it the decision of which sorority a PNM would like to join the most. The Pi Chis play an important role in this process, and their feedback demonstrates how important that decision was to the PNMs, as well as the recruitment counselors. Pi Chis are not permitted to be present when the MRABA is signed by their PNMs (NPC, 2016). However, they do have opportunity to provide counsel to the PNMs, encouraging them to maximize their options for membership. According to the NPC, a PNM may only list chapters to which she attended a preference (final) round event. If she lists all of the chapters on the MRABA, she takes full advantage of her chances of matching to a sorority (NPC, 2016). Its slang name, suicide bidding, or its proper NPC name, single intentional preference, refers to choosing to have only one option for sorority membership on an MRABA. Engaging in single intentional preference has a high risk of not receiving an invitation to join a sorority and becoming part of sorority life at all. Natalie thought that deciding to single intentional preference was difficult. She captured the anxiety of deciding to do so when sharing about one of
her group members, saying that by engaging in single intentional preference the PNM was “banking on having the one chapter she wanted.”

Rebecca told of her own recruitment experience to her PNM group.

The chapter I put down first, on the day I preffed first, I did not get asked back and did not get a bid from, so I understand where you’re coming from, but I did try my chapter out and look where I am a year later!

**Navigating Emotions**

Maura’s response captures what this theme is all about, stating,

I felt like this was, I know girls were talking about making connections and making a decision that will affect their whole lifetime. [T]here was just a lot more emotional weight on the decision than just like, every day decisions that other positions have.

The Pi Chis experience dealt with navigating the emotions of not only the PNMs, but their own emotions, too.

**Navigating PNM emotions.** Katherine hoped to help the PNMs relax a little and let them know it was okay to be themselves. Many of the Pi Chis would review the individual schedules of their PNMs before they arrived for the night’s round of events. Because they had assisted the PNMs in entering their selections into the computer system, ICS, the Pi Chis knew their group members’ choices. In Jane and Maura’s group, one PNM was not invited to the sororities she had preferred, but was invited to a chapter she had ranked lowest. Jane knew she was going to be, in her words, “crushed.”
When asked if she related to Susie’s experience, who received invitations to a sorority she had not selected, Kate shared that she “related, to an extent.” This was because Kate had had another option in sorority to attend, where the PNM in her group did not. “A little bit, I mean again, I had when I was going through recruitment I was invited back to a chapter that I didn’t pref, but I was also invited to my top choice for Sunday.”

Katherine had an interesting take on her PNMs. She noticed when a sorority might be a positive addition to a PNMs experience at the University, one that the PNM might greatly benefit from the chance to join. According to her, sorority life could build confidence for some, “like when you can just tell when people need this,” and one of her group members did, in her opinion.

Kate and Katherine, who are members of the same sorority, were the only two who had instances where they had to talk a PNM into attending their own sorority’s recruitment round. In each case, the PNM had eliminated their chapter as a choice. In Kate’s experience, she felt she had to convince the woman to even finish the recruitment process, sharing that she had told her, “you’ve given up all this time . . . what’s two hours?”

Rebecca found herself with a PNM who was released from the process and described her: “she wasn’t sad, just frustrated, overwhelmed . . . kind of over it.” This left Rebecca herself candidly sharing, “I just don’t really get it,” in reference to how or for what reasons PNMs are released from the process. Kate, on the other hand, conveyed
frustration because the PNM she had to release from recruitment all together was
tremendously upset. “That was rough,” she shared.

Kate’s situation involving Susie was also particularly intricate. Susie did not
receive invitations to any of the sororities she had initially ranked highest, but did receive
an invitation to attend the events of one of the sororities she ranked the lowest. This
particular chapter happened to be the one where Kate is a member. When Susie indicated
she wasn’t going to finish the recruitment process after all, Kate’s internal reaction was
simply, “Oh, crap.” “It was just talking to her, I was just, like after all that, and still, it
wasn’t enough . . . after all that, I couldn’t convince her to sign a MRABA.” After
recruitment, Susie was receptive to becoming friends with Kate, and even hangs out with
Kate and her sorority, the group she initially didn’t see herself joining.

Jane’s “rough” group (as she called it) continued with a PNM who was
adamant—she was done with recruitment. “I was really struggling for words—she had
her mind made up,” Jane recalls. “It was hard to see the PNM cry over going to a chapter
she clearly didn’t want; hate to see her feelings hurt; she was a very nice girl.”

Navigating their own emotions. The recruitment counselors conveyed their own
emotions they experienced as they guided the potential new members through the
recruitment process, as well as when they reflected on it in our interviews. Their
emotions ranged from nervousness for someone to be released from recruitment, to
excitement for the PNMs to receive a bid to join, to frustration with either the PNMs or
the sorority recruitment process.

Jane expressed she was nervous for the recruitment process, initially.
I was very, very nervous because even going into recruitment, me and my Pi Chi partner were worried about this girl and how things were going to go with her and how crushed she would be. I was very, very nervous to have to call her, and I guess I’m still a little bit nervous just about her well-being.

Maura discussed the emotional aspect within the Pi Chi role. “I liked it. A lot of my leadership roles on campus aren’t so nurturing or caring.” Katherine was excited by the fact that everyone in her group who persisted through the process was matched to their first choice sorority. Natalie expressed her excitement over a few of her own group members joining her particular sorority.

Several sorority recruitment counselors indicated some unaddressed frustrations with the PNMs who did not seek out their assistance. Because the Pi Chi role is one of guidance, some found it frustrating because they would want to help and be someone the PNMs could “look up to;” however, some did not seem “to be having it.” “I guess you can’t force anyone to connect with you . . . you know, ‘be my friend!’” Jane shared.

Annie was frustrated when a PNM became upset because she did not receive a bid after choosing to intentional single preference. “We told [her] this could happen,” she said in the interview. “We were forward in how we explained [intentional single] preference . . . I do feel bad that it didn’t work out.” Annie was also terribly frustrated because one of the PNMs in her group gave away her affiliation. She was mad because it was not because of social media, as she had taken great care to hide her affiliation. It was for a PNM to tell those in her group she was a member of Sorority C.
Kate’s frustration manifested in the way she described how a majority of the PNMs in her group eliminated her sorority after the first night of sorority recruitment.

[PNMs] picked their top four [choice sororities, out of five] . . . they sit down with us and they choose to basically cut [one sorority] and they take their top four, and the majority of our group cut to the two sororities, my sorority and my partner’s sorority, and so we’re sitting here . . . and we’re like, they’re cutting our chapters!

(Kate)

Kate and her partner gave themselves a pep talk; “we just kind of had to remind each other we know the kind of girls that are in that chapter, and we love them anyway.”

Navigating frustrations with sorority recruitment. The Pi Chis expressed frustration with, first, how short recruitment really is. Katherine shared, “you can’t get to know a sorority in 35 minutes in the first round.” When PNMs are upset about the chapter or chapters to whom they have been matched, Rebecca added, “we just couldn’t understand; we had to keep reminding ourselves we see a different side of these girls probably than those chapters do, because 35 minutes isn’t a long time on the first day.” She continued, “and you don’t get to meet everyone even throughout all three days. There are probably [sorority] girls that she [PNM] never met.” Natalie talked about how she thought recruitment was hard because it was not long enough.

Well, just talking with them and saying how the process can be a little dated in the sense that like, how am I supposed to get to know you, say like full-heartedly that I don’t want this person in my sorority when we’ve only talked for maybe like an hour and a half, tops, [the] entire weekend?
She continued to describe how it is hard to make an impression to a sorority in such a limited amount of time with all of the conversations. Each sorority has upward of 60 members (according to participants) so with all of these individuals involved, Natalie had the realization, “oh my goodness, these chapters don’t [really] get enough time to really bond and hang out.”

Kate’s situation with Susie evoked frustration for her. So she was, at first, like, “I don’t even want to go, like I’m just too upset, I’m confused.” It’s very self-esteem shattering. I was invited back to a chapter that I didn’t want to go to and ended up being the chapter that I’m in, but emotionally, I guess had a handled it a little better as a freshman. But this girl was just extremely confused as [to] what happened. She’s like, “was it me? Did I do something wrong?” You know it’s just sad. I don’t know how else to describe it, because this poor girl is questioning herself and her own personality, and who she thinks she is, just because she didn’t get invited back, and that’s very . . . just, a no. You shouldn’t have to question who you are.

Kate continued, sharing, “it was just sad to watch and all I could tell her was that the computer system talks.”

Jane expressed her frustration with regard to a PNM who withdraws because she is only asked to attend a recruitment event for a sorority she had eliminated from her choices.

That was a little bit hard, because Panhel wants you to encourage them to continue going through [recruitment], even though they don’t want to . . . they
aren’t interested in that sorority, so it’s kind of a struggle between I’m sympathizing with this poor girl because she is sobbing, it’s not the sorority she wanted, and then I’m also trying to encourage her to give the girls in [this other sorority] a chance.

Describing the overall Pi Chi experience, Natalie told me,

It’s a lot. Personally, I think it’s a growing experience. What are you willing to give up to help other people find their home? And, as hard as it is to give up your letters—and I think it was definitely worth it to—cause I’ll see the PNMs I had in my group around campus, go up to them still, and see how they’re doing. They all seem to love where they are so, it’s so worth it to me to say . . . well, I mean they’re happy and I am happy now. Like I helped them do this.

Natalie also commented that she might contemplate doing this again in the coming year, because it was such a great experience for her, but she wanted others to know it is a sacrifice. She also shared it is stressful for the PNMs. They put so much time in to talk to the sororities to have the sorority say no. “It’s devastating!” she quietly exclaimed.

Katherine indicated that this experience made her realize things about herself.

It’s weird to talk about myself like this, but I guess this recruitment weekend made me realize I’m not awkward like I thought I was; or unable to hold a conversation. I don’t know. I just thrive on being put in these situations and being forced to meet new people like that.
“By the end of the weekend, I was so stressed out and sad . . . I wasn’t sad, I was very tired, I guess is what I should say,” Rebecca candidly shared. “I definitely thought it would be a lot easier, which I hate to say. It was really hard.”

The recruitment counselor experience as described by these participants is multifaceted. It prompted many instances of assisting the PNM figure out where she fit, while reminding the recruitment counselor of her own experiences with the same decisions. Further, the recruitment counselors shared many instances in which they counseled their PNMs, giving advice specifically as it related to the PNMs making decisions ultimately leading to their final decision of which sorority to choose. All of the recruitment counselors reflected on their relationships with those also involved in the recruitment process: with the PNMs, with the other recruitment counselors, with their Pi Chi partner, and even with their own sorority sisters. They navigated through emotions both demonstrated by the PNMs and felt by themselves throughout the experience, from start to finish, and even after recruitment ended. They recognized and articulated their frustrations with the recruitment process, specifically as it related to the treatment of PNMs. Finally, they reflected on the experience as a whole, all of whom agreed that if they were able, they would return to the recruitment counselor experience.

**Description of Category #2: Negotiating Disassociation**

On the campus in this study, the recruitment counselors disassociate in a ceremony setting, officially delineating the start of their Pi Chi experience, temporarily severing ties to their individual organization. This occurs in May, prior to the close of the
academic year. Figure 4 describes the second category, including themes and sub-themes derived from negotiating disassociation.

Marie described the disassociation ceremony that occurred as “a little ceremony in one of the rooms in the student center.” Panhellenic Council invites the women who serve as Pi Chis and the sororities to come to the student center to say an official goodbye. Food and gifts are provided, and the recruitment counselors spend time with their sorority. According to Marie, “we got our Pi Chi shirts, and all put our shirts on and took a picture, and it was supposed to be kinda like a symbolic way to [say], ‘okay this, this is when we’re gonna disaffiliate now.’”
Recruitment counselors end their disassociation at the close of the sorority recruitment process on Bid Day, engaging in the tradition of Pi Chi Reveal, or simply, Reveal.

“Disaffiliation” was, in their words, “different,” “interesting,” and “challenging, but rewarding.” Some shared that they did not mind disassociating, while others indicated, they had no “overwhelming feeling” either way. Maura indicated it was “pretty easy leading up to” the point when the recruitment counselors began receiving their group member assignments from the Panhellenic Advisor. Natalie’s description of disassociating was that this requirement was “not natural or normal behavior . . . not being able to say hi to sisters was weird.” She felt that cutting contact with her sorority sisters, even though she lives with three of them, and only for a limited period, was stressful. “I don’t know, you appreciate things more when you don’t have them, so I feel like this process has really taught me, like, how much I love just being with my sisters like, 24/7.”

Initially, both Annie and Maura talked about how disassociation was not difficult or much of a concern. Annie thought it would be harder if she lived on her sorority’s floor in the residence hall, instead of living off campus as she currently does. When we spoke immediately following Bid Day, Annie still had that same opinion she had in the beginning. “I think it was all worth it, [it was] only for a few short weeks. Even though I missed out on a few things, I still feel I made 21 new friends.”

Maura agreed. She lived off campus, doesn’t eat in the cafeteria, and was studying abroad in the semester prior, so she had really been disassociated for five
months longer than the rest of the Pi Chis. She also indicated that even upon return to campus, she did not see her sorority sisters all that much. “I feel [that the] on campus recruitment counselors have a lot harder time, finding friends to go to the caf or living on the floor,” she explained. Maura also talked about one of the Pi Chis who did live on the sorority’s floor, who had a tough time with disassociation. “She eats with sisters and doesn’t really have friends outside the sorority,” Maura shared, which she felt made disassociation that much more difficult in the end.

Rebecca and Kate felt the opposite. Both thought it must be more difficult to disassociate if one was not living with her sisters. To Rebecca, living on the sorority’s floor made disassociating easier because she can leave her room door open for sisters to visit regularly, although she does admit she had to be careful about where she said she lived on campus when talking to PNMs. Kate shared those same opinions, although she lived in a different residence hall than her sorority’s floor, and shared how rough it was for her to not live on the floor. In fact, Kate said she would have to find a reason to go to the floor, and when she would go to visit, it was always late at night to go unnoticed in and out of the residence hall. She said she was discouraged about visiting that late, because she would only catch a few sisters awake. Kate felt it was hard to make the effort because she would get busy and then would not see her sisters. In the beginning, Kate felt disassociation was more difficult, but that over time, it provided a space for reflection on friendships.
At first I guess I was just kind of sad because I was like, some of my best friends are in [sorority], so like just having to take a step back, and just, like, I don’t know, like kind of reflect on my friendships with them.

“[It] hasn’t been as hard as I think it could have been,” Marie shared, acknowledging that the most difficult part was remembering that she is disassociated and not to say hi to people and to maintain some distance from her sisters. “The people who were like, my best friends within the sorority are either gone for the semester or have graduated, and so there wasn’t as much trouble breaking the rest, the ties from there, if that makes sense,” she said. Marie felt her ties to the sorority were less salient, as her big sister had graduated and her little sister was studying abroad. These were some reasons she chose to serve as a recruitment counselor. In addition, Marie talked about how she struggled with sorority recruitment as a sorority woman, feeling as though it required a lot of “talking up your sorority.” She felt that she would really rather be in the position of listening and providing advice.

Disassociating “kind of reinforced I’m in the right sorority for me,” Katherine shared of her experience. Although, at the beginning, Katherine thought the period of disassociation from her sorority would last for such a long time.

**Remaining Neutral, Objective, and Unbiased**

The Pi Chis repeatedly talked about wanting to remain as unbiased as possible for the PNMs in their groups. Rebecca was quite serious about this notion.

I don’t want a girl to ever base her decisions off of me because I don’t want her to think that I’m not gonna like her if she’s not in my sorority, and I want her to
know that no matter what they do, if we develop a relationship, I will always have that relationship with them.

Annie shared that she was nervous she would give away her affiliation, especially during recruitment week. She would get excited and smile at her sisters. When asked about philanthropy, Annie was intentional in not naming her sorority’s first.

I tried to stay as neutral as possible, but if they asked about what’s this philanthropy, I tried to always make sure I wasn’t gonna say [Annie’s sorority] first. I would try to go put it in the middle somewhere, so they didn’t know.

Natalie found it hard to talk about her own sorority to someone who wanted to join it. She found it difficult to keep the excitement of being a member hidden. She struggled with disassociation in this respect, sharing “it’s hard . . . I love [my sorority]!”

Many of the Pi Chi partnerships, including Natalie’s, practiced disassociation. In other words, they worked together to sort of member check with one another. Was their voice biased? Were their words encouraging one sorority over another? Did they show emotion? Natalie worked on being “stone faced” when it came to having to talk about her sorority in particular. They worked on conversation techniques, calling it their “self-check,” looking to engage in mutual, unbiased conversation. Both Maura and Natalie spoke about how they viewed it, and while difficult in the moment to be truly neutral, they asked guiding questions that would allow the PNM to drive the conversation. “I tried really, really hard and I think I did a good job with being unbiased,” Natalie shared. “It was very difficult . . . I wanted everyone to love my sorority as much as I do.”
Maura described herself as very neutral. She initially thought disassociating was going to be difficult, particularly as it related to masking emotions or feelings, but in practice, she found it was not difficult to her at all. “[Disassociation] just didn’t affect me as I thought it would when PNM[s were choosing other sororities. I thought it would be harder than it was.” Her opinion was that by “demonstrating little things” she would be able to show that she was unbiased and had a neutral opinion of all the five groups. She demonstrated this by cheering for all the sororities, taking time to learn their cheers so she was able to show that this was a sorority community, in addition to having multiple conversations in front of the PNM[s with women in all the sororities including her own. To Maura, by focusing on community, she thought this was a way to understand objectivity and impartiality for PNM[s. “It’s one of those things that if you look at it in a bigger picture and realize that definitely people should and do fit in elsewhere and you’re trying to maximize their options, not yours.” She further demonstrated her neutrality through counseling, saying the same things to each PNM who was struggling, regardless of which sororities each was considering.

Okay, I have to be very intentional about not swaying one way or another or giving away too much or anything like that . . . I think it was actually harder with her . . . I didn’t want anyone to think, oh, she came to me and then she joined my sorority, because that kind of looks sketchy.

**Difficulties With Disassociation**

In some ways, they were happy to create distance between themselves in their sorority, or that distance was already present. One Pi Chi shared, “I don’t think anyone is
too distraught about me being disaffiliated or not being able to sit next to me in class, ‘cause that can all change after recruitment. There’s only, like, two more weeks.” Others were candid and shared,

I have friends that aren’t in sororities so it’s actually brought me closer to them again, which is nice” and “it didn’t really bother me that I couldn’t hang out with everyone, just because [everybody] has a strong group of friends outside of the chapter as well.

In other ways, there was a definite fear of missing out. Rebecca mentioned on more than one occasion that she was sad because she was not able to take photographs or post pictures to her various social media profiles. It also made her “sad” to see her face blocked out in the chapter’s recruitment video. One particular instance of difficulty with disassociation came the first “letter day” of the semester, when it was a “bummer” she could not wear her sorority t-shirt with the rest of the chapter. As a resident of the sorority floor, she observed what the sorority was doing to prepare for recruitment weekend and felt left out because she wanted to help. However, Rebecca still maintained it was easier living on the floor because her sorority sisters could still surround her all the time. Although, seeing the room her sorority sisters occupied for recruitment weekend made Rebecca feel as though she “was missing out because I’ve never been on the ‘sorority side’ of recruitment.”

Annie’s only indication of difficulty with disassociating was her initial exclamation during recruitment week. She shared, “I just wanna go cheer with my sorority” when she saw the chapter’s recruitment room and heard their cheers in the
campus center. Jane described how it was hard to be disassociated around those PNMs who were sophomores and juniors and knew the Pi Chis’ sorority membership. She was afraid those particular PNMs might share the Pi Chis affiliations with the younger PNMs. Katherine shared that disassociation was “kind of really difficult.”

I didn’t think it would be so hard ‘cause I was kinda like, having gone through all of the negative experiences that I would be like, “bye, I am free for awhile,” but now it’s like, crap, I really wanna get dinner with her and catch up.

She continued, talking about how it was hard at first to interact with her sorority sisters on campus. The women in her sorority often forgot that she was disassociated and would say hello, to which Katherine would give the “little finger wave” or ignore the sorority woman all together. She knew she could not draw attention to her sorority membership in any way. In fact, she carried a bag for school with the Pi Chi letters affixed mainly to remind her sisters that for the time being, she was not part of the sorority.

Some of their difficult emotions with disassociating subsided when they made new friends with their fellow Pi Chis or reconnected with other friends on campus from whom they drifted apart. Kate shared,

Although we don’t have our individual chapters, we can all come together and, you know, form a big group of friends. It kind of forces us all to get out of our comfort zone and experience other things. [Being a Pi Chi] forced me to open up to other people.
Kate eats meals with her RA community or the other Pi Chis. “As much as it kind of stinks not to be affiliated, I like it at the same time because again, [it] forced me to get to know other people.”

When the Pi Chis disassociate, they have to remove visible evidence of their sorority membership from their daily lives, but the sorority also has to do that as well. All of their photos are covered up in the sorority’s composites on the floor and in any type of photo album, and they are often omitted from videos or other ways the chapter advertises itself to PNMs during the sorority recruitment process. Sometimes, that also means removing the Pi Chi from the sorority’s group texts or email lists. Jane said about her own sorority,

That’s another thing that’s hard about the disaffiliating is they took me off their email list because I don’t need to know, like, when chapter meetings are and stuff, but then I feel like I’m really, really out of the loop with what’s going on.

**Electronic Communication and Social Media**

Electronic forms of communication allow the Pi Chis and sorority women to be in constant contact with one another. Texting, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, email, and Snapchat are all ways the Pi Chi and her sorority sisters, as well as the PNMs, would communicate. Each of the Pi Chis spoke at length about the notion of virtually disassociating, as in removing all traces of their sorority membership from their social media and electronic communication methods. They did this as a group in one of their recruitment counselor training sessions. Annie shared,
Yeah, it’s weird, ‘cause we have like 50 other members in our sorority [who] have Twitter and people are constantly retweeting and you have to, think twice like, oh, I can’t retweet that because there are like, people could see it. My twitter has always been private but there’s like, I used to have like, [sorority affiliation] like, on my picture-so like, girls can still see that so I had to remember like, change my picture, and then I thought about it for a while, I had my Facebook just deactivated. I was like, I can like, go without it but I didn’t like not being in like, the [sorority affiliation] group, like, the Facebook group because people would talk about things and I’d be like, what are you talking about? So I reactivated it and just changed my name to Annie Marie, so I don’t think . . . it may be hard to find me now.

The recruitment counselors maintained their own group on the social media platform Facebook, to provide themselves with information and to connect. However, in addition, many of them, although not all, indicated they still stayed part of their own sorority’s Facebook groups, as well as remained part of their organization’s email listserv. Marie, who held a position in her chapter while she was disassociated, thought electronic means of communication were helpful.

Obviously email and Facebook have been really beneficial . . . I can kinda still delegate tasks to other[s] in that way, but I think it will be a lot easier to fully execute the things I need to once recruitment is over.

One of the Pi Chis indicated that it was more difficult to disassociate online than it was to do so in person. Natalie also shared, “honestly, I know that like, [being] a Pi
Chi now, you have to be super careful with your social media, and who you’re hanging out with.”

Many kept up through text as well. Texting was particularly helpful between the Pi Chis, as it allowed them to get in contact with one another in a more private, less obvious way.

Social media brought a sort of added layer to the notion of “fear of missing out.” When the Pi Chis would see pictures posted on Instagram or Facebook, when tweets about sorority come up, they often had emotional reactions. Rebecca, in particular, commented on this phenomenon, sharing about a particular time that her big sister in the sorority was posting photos without her. “That’s my big! Stop taking pictures!” she exclaimed during the interview. Rebecca continued, sharing, “I can’t Instagram anything!” Natalie declared similar sentiment, as she was looking though sorority photographs online and wanted to “like” or “tag” herself in all of them.

Rebecca indicated that social media made her pay closer attention to what is out there about her sorority and sorority life in general. If she was not in a sorority, she said she probably would not pay that close attention to what is posted/said. Because she is, she reacts. Rebecca talked about the negative posts about sorority life every day until the start of recruitment. In particular, the online app Yik Yak, which invites anonymous posts from those within a 25-mile radius of the campus, seemed to target Rebecca’s sorority, according to her. It was hard for her, she confessed, to read such things. Upon reflection in our interview, Rebecca seemed to relive an almost visceral reaction to posting, exclaiming, “I’m not like that! That’s mean!” This negativity on the Yik Yak
application during the first weeks of recruitment made the Pi Chis worry that women would not sign up. During our first interview, Rebecca talked about the fact that there were only 80 women signed up to participate just a few weeks out, and that might be a result of what was posted.

Because of the volume of negative posts to social media outlets prior to the start of the sorority recruitment process at the University, the Pi Chis took it upon themselves to encourage the PNMs to only post positive feedback. If not, they warned PNMs, it could affect the outcome of their recruitment experience, and they may not receive an invitation to join a sorority. Pi Chis warned of that if the sorority women found out about a PNM sharing negative or defamatory comments, “like, your chances are just done,” Rebecca told me.

Stereotypes

One topic of concern for the recruitment counselors throughout their time in this role was that of the misconstrued thoughts of those from outside of the fraternity and sorority community, or stereotypes. In this study, two of the five sororities seemingly fell prey to stereotyping, although all of the Pi Chis, regardless of their sorority association, talked about how they were impacted by stereotyping during recruitment and being disassociated.

Annie talked about the stereotypes that affected her partner’s emotions toward the PNMs, specifically as they made selections for the second night of the process. According to Annie, the attributed stereotypes may have been a factor in why one specific chapter was continually released, or “dropped,” from the PNMs list of
preferences. “I did not see a lot of negative things about [my sorority], other ones like my partner’s sorority, there was a lot of negative things about hers. I think that was hard for her.” Annie provided some examples of what was said about her partner’s sorority,

Like so weird, don’t fit in, awkward, [and] not normal. There [were] those kinds of things but [my sorority], more of them were just like, ‘not for me’ and [my sorority] is not for everyone so I understand that, but when girls were constantly saying, weird girls. I felt bad and she really took it to heart.

Katherine looked at the stereotyping and animosity occurring between and about the sororities, as “no matter the letter, we’re all Greek together.” This attitude was a Greek Week theme years before, and it stuck with her. “If you’re a good person, I’m gonna be friends with you. I have no rivalry with any sorority. I’m not out to get anyone.” Kate echoes this sentiment in her commentary on the topic by saying, “I mean, there are [stereotypes] but I’m not going to say what the general campus things because we’re like, ‘who cares?’”

One situation of stereotypes involving her own sorority was particularly frustrating for Jane. Both the Panhellenic Council president and Maura confronted Jane to say something to rectify the situation wherein false information was provided regarding open recruitment with Sorority G. Jane, however, did not want to be perceived as biased in front of her PNMs. Many of the recruitment counselors in the study described times where they actually experienced this—fighting with notions of being viewed and conducting themselves as unbiased while still holding a commitment to their own sorority membership.
Rebecca had most concern for stereotypes. She talked about how the stereotyping that occurred during her own sorority recruitment experience seemed worse than it was during the time she was a Pi Chi, and how she personally tried to counter rumors. “I just really tried to be myself, which I guess probably could have not worked in my favor because they could have been like, ‘oh, well, she’s just being herself—she’s just like all these [sorority] girls,’” Rebecca shared. She recalled one situation where she dealt with a PNM in her group that had heard negative things about her own sorority. Rebecca indicated when she heard the things the PNM was saying, it was hard for her not to immediately jump in and defend her sorority. The PNM shared that she had heard the sorority is “mean,” “exclusive,” and even “bitchy,” and “slutty.” In the moment, Rebecca said she had to take a step back from that conversation, because she wanted to avoid that immediate reaction. Rebecca’s Pi Chi partner assuaged the PNMs feelings and talked to her about giving the sorority a chance. That particular PNM is now a member of Rebecca’s sorority. Rebecca relayed,

Even the Sorority Ts, girls automatically think, oh, a lot of them are pretty, so they’re probably bitchy. No, not necessarily, you know what I mean? I think that’s definitely something that people go to. So that’s one of the hardest I think. Kate had a similar situation with a PNM where that young woman was swayed based on a preconceived notion of a particular sorority.

I found out later from her, she just told me this yesterday; the girl, because she asked to meet with me. Her brother’s fiancé is a [Sorority T] or was a [Sorority T] at some other school—I don’t know what school. So she’s just like, “I just
really had this idea in my head,” and she goes, “I guess it wasn’t a good thing because it was a preconceived notion of what I thought [Sorority T] was,” and she’s like, “I wanted to be part of something like that,” and so I guess the whole summer the fiancé-all she talked about be a [Sorority T] and how great this was. So she’s like, “I came in with a preconceived notion of a chapter when it’s obviously different here than it was at that other school.”

The Pi Chis found that they could be stereotyped for pretty much any reason. Annie referenced why the PNMs believed her to be in one particular sorority, saying

Everyone told me before I went through “they’re gonna think you’re in this sorority just from, I guess stereotypes ‘cause they all have brown hair . . .” most of the girls in that sorority have brown hair so [the other Pi Chis] like, “Annie, they’re [PNMs] all gonna think you’re a Sorority T.”

The “Guess the Affiliation” tradition, wherein PNMs try to guess which sorority each Pi Chi is a member of, brought up where the stereotypes are most evident. Rebecca was actually guessed to be a member of the sorority she had originally wanted to join. This led Rebecca to an epiphany of sorts. “I honestly could’ve fit into any one of these sororities.” She shared this with her PNMs, too. “Honestly, you could probably find a home anywhere, it’s just there’s always going to be that one [sorority] where it’s just a little bit more.” Kate, Rebecca, and Maura’s affiliations were not guessed accurately by the PNMs, whereas Katherine’s was overwhelmingly guessed correctly. “All the girls got it right that I was [in Sorority D], and I was like the whole weekend, is it really that obvious? I’m like, I could be a [Sorority T] or a [Sorority G]. Like, what the hell?”
Katherine said. She also shared that after recruitment ended, a number of the PNMs in her group told her, “well, if I had known you were a [Sorority D], I would’ve looked at it differently.” Katherine had indeed formed close relationships her group members.

**Being Back**

As previously mentioned, the recruitment counselors reassociate with their sororities on Bid Day, the culmination of the sorority recruitment process when the PNMs receive their own invitations to join a sorority. In effect, the Pi Chi role ends at this point.

**Bid Day.** “Bid Day was awesome . . . it was so awesome to look around the room, oh my gosh, so many new sisters,” Natalie shared with enthusiasm. “Seeing everyone open their bid cards, and who [joined which sororities] brought me back to when I was a PNM and just how happy I was when I got what I wanted.” She continued to reminisce about her own experience in sorority life, sharing about how fast the sorority experience goes, “you’re just ‘oh, my gosh, I was just in this situation two years ago,’ and I can’t believe how much has gone by, time-wise.” It was also “awesome” to Natalie because she and her partner did not have to make any of those telephone calls that release PNMs from the recruitment process.

Maura agreed that Bid Day was fun. It was a sign that she no longer had to have that thought in the back of her mind not to show too much emotion when seeing sisters around campus. Annie also described Bid Day as not only fun, but exciting as well. She was glad to be back in her sorority. Although she was a Pi Chi and had opportunity to meet the PNMs first, before the sororities did, she still felt as though she was not as
familiar with a majority of her chapter’s new member class. Other recruitment counselors shared the same sentiment.

“Disaffiliation is one of the smartest things that you have to do to be a Pi Chi—it makes Bid Day a lot more fun,” Rebecca said in her second interview. “To re-affiliate is just so cool.”

Kate’s recollection of Bid Day was that of it being “surreal.”

I was almost tackled to the ground by my little, [and] my two best friends in the chapter cried. It was so nice to just see how loved and welcomed back I was. I was so excited to welcome new members, especially the ones that were in my Pi Chi group. The celebration was amazing, and my other best friend in the chapter that is gone this semester at basic training was able to surprise me and Facetime into Bid Day, and that was amazing. I cried, and I’m normally not a super-emotional person.

Reveal. “Reveal was fun,” Maura told me. “It was amazing,” Katherine shared. She continued, with laughter,

We all wanted to go back to Bid Day when we revealed—finally being able to recognize, “I’m in [Sorority D] sorority.” Because it was so hard not being able to talk to our sisters before. I loved Reveal. I just loved it because I love being the center of attention. I’m not going to be shameless about it.

Katherine was “swarmed” by sisters on Bid Day, and that was shocking to her. She had felt as though her relationships with sisters were stronger as a result of their time apart.
Running back to the chapter, to hug her sisters was exhilarating, according to
Natalie. “I know that kind of sounds selfish, but it was probably my favorite part,” she
said, adding “as much as I loved helping other people, I’m very happy to be back . . . just
to wear letters and hug people, talk in the hallways like nothing ever happened.”

Both Jane and Rebecca shared reservations about Reveal, sharing that they were
nervous that no one would run to them to welcome them back in to the sisterhood. Jane
shared her fear with me in her second interview.

For the Pi Chis, we went by partners and we had zip-ups, and so you’ll turn
around and unzip and then take off your sweatshirt and you would have your Bid
Day shirt on for your sorority. I guess that was really exciting . . . I know this
sounds stupid but since it’s just you and your Pi Chi partner, and you unzip and
you’re wearing your sorority’s t-shirt I, you were supposed to go running to your
sorority or whatever. I’m thinking to myself, “oh, God, what if nobody runs?”
What if they’re just like, “oh, hey?”

Rebecca also shared her fear of this happening. “I was like ‘what if no one like
wants to hug me? What if they all just stand back and they’re just like, ‘oh, she’s back?’”
she told me with some hesitant laughter. “I was really afraid that that’s what was gonna
happen. But that was not the case.”

“It’s really nice,” Katherine says in being recognized for “being back.” “It was
like the last people I never would’ve thought would miss me, would miss me,” she
recalled, surprised by the positive reactions of some of her sisters upon her return.
“Absence makes the heart grow fonder, I guess.”
Kate, Katherine, Rebecca, and Jane all talked about how, by the end of the sorority recruitment process, they could start their own sorority because of how well they worked together and how close they’d become to one another. Kate shared, “I came in contact with a group of girls that I never would have come in contact [with] on a regular basis and we all became friends in the process.”

In our third interview, Maura shared “it’s so weird, being back.” She continued, describing how sometimes, when she sees her sisters, she thinks not to wave. “[It] hasn’t fully clicked that I can hug and scream and be with sisters in public. It’s been nice.” She, like Katherine, enjoys going to the sorority floor without issue, and found herself having more of an appreciation for the Panhellenic Council and the other sororities on the campus. “I’m really happy I got to meet the other Pi Chis,” she also shared.

I think [being a Pi Chi] was a good kick off to my senior year, my last year. It was nice to be able to see almost every side of recruitment, being a PNM in formal recruitment, being an active member in formal recruitment. I did informal—I helped with informal recruitment for our chapter once . . . It was really interesting. The Pi Chi was kind of like the final part of that.

Something about her sorority affiliation makes her smile, so whenever Natalie thinks about hers, it “brightens my day and gives me a smile on my face.” Several weeks later, in our third interview, the sentiment was the same—”it feels like old times again.”

“I would rather do that and make the experience for the PNMs as awesome as I can than wear a t-shirt once a week,” Rebecca said about being disassociated.
Jane was rather candid about her experience of returning to her sorority after recruitment. “Well I was really out of the loop. I didn’t know what was going on because they weren’t including us in emails a lot of the time. To be honest, I kind of didn’t want to go back.” Jane described how she initially did not want to return to the sorority.

I guess I just like, I didn’t really want to go back at all. Like I did, but at the same time, I really didn’t. I didn’t want to have to go back to all the mandatory events, I didn’t want to go have to go to dealing with certain people . . . sorry, I feel like I’m sounding so negative.

One thing that stuck out to her in particular was how the other chapters used social media outlets to welcome their active sisters back into the chapter and thank them for serving as recruitment counselors, but Jane’s chapter did not do that.

I think one thing that was kind of interesting to me was, well, it’s not that it’s a bad thing, but I think [my sorority] focused a lot obviously on the new members, but I noticed in other [chapters], even on social media, the other chapters all posted “our sisters are back. They’re not disaffiliated anymore.” I think our chapter president didn’t recognize that until the second chapter meeting that we were back. They were like, “oh by the way welcome back,” so that was kind of not hurtful, but I mean, whatever. I mean obviously the whole point of that weekend is the new members, so it’s not like I was that insulted by it, but I just thought that compared to other chapters, we three girls who were disaffiliated, so it’s not like it was just like one girl, compared to some of the other chapters.
Jane spoke at length about being “over the whole commitment of sorority.” Her mom’s advice—get more involved, and “maybe at that point I’ll kind of get back into the whole [sorority] thing.” She described sorority recruitment as a “really stressful weekend,” and found some relief in reassociating with the sorority from that perspective, because she wouldn’t have to filter who she spent time with or what she said or wore.

**Disassociation as Necessary**

The last question of the last interview I asked the study participants felt that based on their experiences, if it was actually necessary to disassociate. All of them answered yes.

Kate, Maura, Jane, Natalie, and Rebecca all indicated that in order to be successful and effective as a recruitment counselor, one needed to disassociate. Kate’s response was, “I really believe you have to be disassociated; it defeats the purpose of our job if we aren’t. It allows the PNMs to come to a decision all on their own.” Maura shared,

I think I wouldn’t have learned, if I wasn’t separated from my sorority, I wouldn’t have been forced to hang out with other women. I wouldn’t have been as present with the other women in the other chapters as I was because I think that I would be sidetracked or thinking, “oh, I can just ask my sisters about this,” rather than asking these other women.

She continued, saying,

So, I think being disassociated brought that exposure to the Panhellenic Council, and how different chapters operate, run, and stuff like that. If I wasn’t
disassociated, I think that I would kind of put forth some effort of understanding other chapters but I would have always been comparing to my chapter, or in the back of my mind, not extending myself as much because I would have been in a comfort zone. Being disassociated is uncomfortable, because your chapter is your home and then all of the sudden, you can’t be in it, so you can’t say hi to 60 women on campus. So it wasn’t as hard . . . I just feel if I wasn’t disassociated, I wouldn’t have been a little bit uncomfortable and I wouldn’t have been more motivated to make those friendships and learn more about everybody else, than if I was associated.

Natalie pointed out, “honestly, I think being disaffiliated in this setting is very necessary because some girls are very swayed by physical things compared to character.” To her, disassociation pushed her to look for deeper, more meaningful connections with her PNMs. Her point of view was just because one might have similar interests or a few similarities with a group of women that does not mean they are a match for that sorority.

Rebecca felt that while she was disassociated, she was introduced to the notion that she is “a general member of Greek Life.” She described how that was necessary to do because if she was otherwise associated with her sorority, she felt the women in her Pi Chi Group would be less willing to confide in or talk to her. Rebecca felt as if the PNMs new her sorority association, they might be more inclined to base their decisions on sorority life on hers. She described this opinion through a situation, involving a woman in her group, sharing,
I had a girl in our group call us and say that she wanted to switch her prefs from [one chapter to another]. She was so willing to tell us why. If she knew that I [am] a Sorority T, I don’t think she would have been able to do that.

Rebecca also felt that being associated with her sorority and serving as a recruitment counselor would have been hard for her as well. “So, I think that’s one of the most important aspects to being a recruitment counselor, for sure.” She summed up her opinion of serving as a Pi Chi and why disassociation is vital by saying,

Because . . . what I think our whole job is—is to help these girls find a home, and if they know who you are, it’s gonna change so much of what they do. They’re not gonna wanna talk to you about certain things, they’re gonna feel bad. That’s the last thing you want them to do. Girls would still feel bad, they’d be like, well I don’t want this to be your chapter. It doesn’t matter because our job is to make sure you find your home and we’re unbiased and we’re just general members of Greek life . . . we have no connection right now. You talk to us about what you wanna talk to us about. I don’t think it would be the same. I don’t think it would work.

Jane and Natalie talked about the NPC pilot study to eliminate disassociation for recruitment counselors (Johnson, 2015). The Panhellenic Advisor had talked with them about it prior to her departure from the University, and at the time of the third interviews, they both shared that she had been in contact to tell them it was “extremely successful having people just be who they are.” It did not, however, change Jane or Natalie’s opinion on disassociation.
Summary of the Research Findings

Based on the responses to interview questions and an analysis, two categories were derived representing the research question: the recruitment counselor experience, and negotiating disassociation. Using transition theory as described by both Bridges (1984) and Schlossberg (1981), data were best collected by the use of Seidman’s (2013) three interview-series. Several themes emerged in support of each category. Through each interview, the participants were able to reconstruct and make meaning of their experiences, and were able to be represented in this chapter in their voices.

The category of recruitment counselor experience elicited themes of fit/finding one’s home, relationships, counseling, and navigating emotions. The category of negotiating disassociation produced themes of remaining neutral, objective, and unbiased, difficulties with disassociation, electronic communication, and social media, recognizing and addressing stereotypes, and whether or not disassociation is necessary to the Pi Chi role. Both categories share the experiences of the Pi Chis on this campus, demonstrating how the categories are not distinct from one another, but rather reciprocal in nature. One does not exist without the other—to disassociate is part of the recruitment counselor experience (in its current iteration), and to be a recruitment counselor and experience this role, one must distance herself from her sorority experience, in other words, disassociate. Although the NPC (2015) is engaging in pilot studies with success, most campuses across the country still conduct sorority recruitment with disassociated recruitment counselors.

Chapter 4 detailed the research question and presented the results of the collected data, specifically using the words of the participants to tell their stories. In Chapter 5, I
discuss the findings, implications for practice and future research opportunities, identify both limitations and strengths, and provide reflections of my own.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

As hard as it was to give up your letters and—I think it was definitely worth it to—cause I’ll see the [potential new members] I had in my group around campus and go up to them still and see how they’re doing and they all seem to be loving where they are, so it’s so worth it to me to say, well, I mean they’re happy and I am happy now. (Natalie, interview 3)

The goals of a recruitment counselor program are to provide support, friendship, and guidance to participants in sorority recruitment (PNMs) by current sorority members, who are educated to represent the attitudes and ideals aligned with the National Panhellenic Conference and its member organizations (NPC, 2014a). Those educated sorority women selected to serve as recruitment counselors, or Pi Chis, should be fair and impartial, promoting an understanding of the benefits of sorority membership. Each recruitment counselor is responsible for emphasizing the similarities in values and goals of all chapters on the campus. They are also responsible for communicating realistic expectations of the sorority recruitment process and sorority membership to PNMs (NPC, 2014a). Recruitment counselors are accountable to a variety of stakeholders for an array of responsibilities both before and during sorority recruitment, most notably to the PNMs they lead through the process.

Limited research is available specifically related to the recruitment counselor role, in particular, the requirements assigned to it. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to describe the perspectives of recruitment counselors as they negotiated
disassociating from their sorority for a finite period. I sought to illustrate the
participants’ experiences of recruitment counseling and disassociating, or distancing
themselves, from their own sororities as each moved into, through, and out of this role.

In the previous chapter, the collected data are represented in the participants’ own
words. Data analysis produced two categories: the recruitment counselor experience and
negotiating disassociation. Using an interpretive, qualitative approach provided latitude
to depict the recruitment counselors’ stories in this manner. The purpose of this chapter
is to examine the results of data analysis through discussion of the findings situated
within relevant and related scholarship. In addition, limitations are acknowledged and
opportunities for additional research are addressed. To close, I reflect on my role as the
researcher, and provide implications for those who are practitioners in the field of
fraternity and sorority life advising.

**Summary of the Study**

Bridges’ (2004) and Schlossberg’s (1981) approaches to transition, as well as
Ashforth’s (2001) and others’ work with role transitions were selected to frame the
experiences depicted in this study. All three capture the shift that appears to occur as
participants move into, through, and then on from serving as a recruitment counselor.
Bridges (2004) and Schlossberg (1981) created a way of understanding the coping and
adaptation occurring in participants’ experiences, both with their sorority membership
and their new role as a recruitment counselor. Ashforth’s (2001) work, in tandem with
others, creates a framework for which to understand the movement from sorority member
to recruitment counselor, and back to sorority member. Because transition involves the
interpretation of experiences, and the recruitment counselor role is an intraorganizational role transition, both transition and role transition are necessary for contextualizing the composite whole of participants’ experiences.

The transition into the role of recruitment counselor begins as participants end their current sorority membership. Bridges (2004) described five aspects of an ending—disengagement, dismantling, disidentification, disenchantment, and disorientation—that, perhaps while not all experiencing an ending go through all five aspects, the recruitment counselors in this study do describe some. Their ending is officially marked by suspension of active participation in the chapter, albeit temporarily, through a disassociation ceremony organized by the Midwest University Panhellenic Council. Disassociating from the sorority is indicative of disengagement, the separation from that which is familiar (Bridges, 2004). In doing so, each woman begins to come to terms with a new situation that no longer includes attending meetings, wearing sorority clothing, or even interacting with sorority sisters in public spaces.

For some of the participants in the study, disenchantment was what prompted them to become recruitment counselors, a recurring pattern detailed in all three of their individual interviews. Disenchantment in sorority recruitment and sorority life was apparent through the descriptions many participants shared that as recruitment counselors, they were responsible for sharing decisions and information they, in no way, had any control over or say in, especially in terms of which sorority or sororities the PNMs were invited (or not invited) to join. For others, the recruitment counselor role triggered disorientation to the sorority life experience. Finally, some demonstrate a
dismantling of their own sorority membership experience, depicted in the reflective nature of descriptions of the relationships they had and have with their sorority sisters.

As the participants moved through the experience of serving as recruitment counselors, many unknowingly described what Bridges (2004) called the neutral zone, a period of what “is essentially emptiness in which the old reality looks transparent, and nothing feels solid anymore” (p. 139). This was evident in participants’ descriptions of the nervousness they felt delivering or sharing unwanted news with PNMs. In having to share such information, they discovered that they, themselves, had unanticipated emotions over the experience of sorority recruitment, a process each felt as though they really knew. The neutral zone (Bridges, 2004) was the ability for the recruitment counselors to take a step away from their sorority experience. While not being able to rely on their old routines and behaviors, the recruitment counselors learned how to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to both roles. Each discovered she was able, for the most part, to adapt and represent, sorority life as a whole instead of one, singular chapter.

While Bridges (2004) described the neutral zone as a time for confusion or uneasiness, the recruitment counselors somewhat contradicted this notion through the way each interacted with the PNMs. This was apparent in their disappointment expressed when they were not sought out for assistance by the PNMs; each discovered she was not needed by PNMs in their decision-making processes or even discussion of their selections. The recruitment counselors had been led to believe they were going to take part in each PNM’s decision-making process, providing guidance, and assisting with each
PNM’s needs at each step of the sorority recruitment process. When that was not what actually happened in practice, some of the recruitment counselors expressed their frustration at having not been utilized by the PNMs, some never utilized by the PNMs at all. Here is when each demonstrated a role transition, each Pi Chi viewing herself in the recruitment counselor role.

The recruitment counselors moved on from their roles on Bid Day by revealing their sorority associations and transitioning on from, or returning to, their respective sorority roles. What each woman described of her experience, which they called “being back” were the characteristics similar to that of Bridges’ (2004) beginnings, a sort of renewal, related to a time away from the experience of being a sorority sister. Each shared some semblance of anxiousness, coupled with relief (when welcomed upon return by sisters) to “be back.” While they had returned to their sorority membership, they found their outlook on sorority membership and sorority life altered.

The participants in this study served as recruitment counselors at a small, private, religiously affiliated institution in the Midwest. I interviewed each willing participant at three different points throughout the course of their experience serving during sorority recruitment in the fall of 2014. All eight women participated in the first interview, the Life History Interview (Seidman, 2013), sharing their perspectives on sorority life up to the point of, and including, their choice to become a recruitment counselor. The second series of interviews, the Contemporary Experience Interviews (Seidman, 2013), took place approximately two weeks later, the day after the close of sorority recruitment. Seven of the eight participants participated in the Contemporary Experience Interviews.
Finally, five of the recruitment counselors finished the study by completing the third and final round of interviews, the Reflection on the Meaning Interviews (Seidman, 2013), approximately one month after the Contemporary Experience Interviews and the completion of sorority recruitment. Once all interviews were transcribed and the data compiled, transcripts were analyzed according to Yin (2011); employing first and second cycle coding as described by Saldana (2013). The interpreted data elicited the two main categories referenced, and each category is supported by several themes and sub-themes. All are discussed in the sections to follow.

**Discussion of Category #1: The Recruitment Counselor Experience**

Annie, Kate, Katherine, and Rebecca identified the roles of PNM, sorority sister, and recruitment counselor as “sides” of, or roles within, the sorority recruitment process. They did so by describing how the recruitment counselor role was a “side” of the sorority recruitment process that they had not yet experienced. In both the second and third interviews, these specific participants described how much they each enjoyed being recruitment counselors, which they called “this side of recruitment,” and indicated they would have enthusiastically repeated their recruitment counselor experience.

The sorority recruitment process itself is representative of Goffman’s (1959) notion of performance, and these “sides” the recruitment study participants referred to are the roles, or parts, that bring the performance of sorority recruitment to life. Goffman viewed social life as a sort of staged drama, similar to that of a theatrical play: “Like stage actors, social actors enact roles, assume characters, and play through scenes when engaged in interaction with one another” (Cahill, 2007, p. 189). The sorority members,
the recruitment counselors, and the PNMs are the assumed roles; each of whom engages in social interactions that resemble scenes in a play. In the assumption of such roles, each party is establishing a social identity, taking their cues from one another, and thusly, influencing one another. According to Ashforth (2001), roles are socially constructed, wherein the responsibilities stay the same, but the occupant who assumes the role changes. Each who inhabited the recruitment counselor role demonstrated some sort of struggle to make sense of their experience, as well as demonstrate that she had command of the role itself.

Further, Goffman (1959) shared that a performance is “all of the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by [his] continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which is of some influence on the observers” (p. 22). If the sorority recruitment process is valued as a performance, the recruitment counselor is then an actor engaging in an act that exerts influence over the PNM. In demonstrating or “playing the role” of the recruitment counselor, the Pi Chis demonstrate internalization of the role’s assumed identity; creating definitions of themselves in the process (Ashforth, 2001). Internalization and demonstration of the role responsibilities is the performance that then creates an influence.

Fit

I began the first interview with each participant asking them to describe how they arrived at their decision to join the sorority in which they were currently members. The intention was to learn more about what prompted each of them to become recruitment
counselors, and is representative of the notion of transitioning into the recruitment counselor role.

What is interesting is how all eight women shared how they initially had no interest in actually joining a sorority. As PNMs themselves, it was once they were in the midst of the sorority recruitment process they began to envision themselves as members, and selected a chapter to join. Goffman’s (1959) notion of performance may have been the process in place that seemed to convince them that sorority was indeed something they might want to take part in while a student at the university. Each of the study participants seemed drawn in by the performance of the sorority members with whom they interacted during their recruitment experiences as PNMs, with those interactions a strong factor in their decisions to join a sorority in the first place.

When they were PNMs themselves, the recruitment counselors described their own transition from non-member to member in such a way that it was interesting to see how none of them drew any parallels to their PNM group members’ experiences of the same process, although their descriptions of both theirs and their PNMs possessed strong similarities. For example, Kate described the experiences of Susie, a woman who was matched to only her fourth choice of sorority during the last round of recruitment, which was similar to what Kate had herself experienced. However, Kate’s reaction to this was that it was different, because she was still matched to her first choice of sorority for the last round of recruitment, where Susie was not. Although, Kate ended up matching to and joining her last choice sorority, as did Susie, and while Kate joined the sorority, Susie withdrew from sorority recruitment and did not join. Kate took a chance, and feels a fit
with the sorority; and since Susie did not, Kate did not find similarity in their experiences when compared to one another.

The Pi Chis spoke at length and at numerous points about fit, specifically using the term “fit” as a descriptor. To the recruitment counselors, fit meant joining the sorority she most wanted to be a member of, while at the same time having the ability to be their authentic self while a member. However, almost all of them (five of the eight participants in this study) indicated that while they participated in sorority recruitment, they were not matched with the sorority they initially saw themselves joining. Their first choice organizational preference changed as they interacted with the sorority members and as they received (or did not receive) invitations to participate in each round. Repeatedly throughout the study, each recruitment counselor often referred to fit as “finding your/their home.” Sorority members describe the sorority recruitment process as the opportunity for PNMs to “find a home,” that is, to join a sorority that feels like family to them. The use of the term “home” by the recruitment counselors is again indicative of the familial language and characteristics regularly attributed to fraternity and sorority life. The NPC (2013b) also refers to the notion of “finding their home” in their weblog, *The Sorority Life.* Their advice to PNMs during the recruitment process is to keep an open mind throughout sorority recruitment, so that one is able to “end up in the home that’s right” for them (NPC, 2013b, para. 1).

Regardless of choice of colloquialism, the recruitment counselors’ descriptions are consistent with the construct of person-organization fit. Chatman (1991) defined person-organization fit as the “congruence between patterns of organizational values and
patterns of individual values” (p. 459), which the NPC (2016) actually refers to as mutual selection, and considers this congruence to be the foundation for the sorority recruitment process. Burnett, Vaughan, and Moody (1997) suggested that person-organization fit occurs when organizations and individuals attempt to find one another, based on selecting those with values that closely align with their own. The sorority recruitment process is meant to foster this very behavior—the chapter is seeking to select PNMs whose values match with theirs, and the PNM is encouraged (primarily by their recruitment counselor) to do the same.

However, in their second interviews, Rebecca, Kate, Katherine, and Natalie each described how the PNMs are particularly vulnerable. As a result of their participation in sorority recruitment, the Pi Chis felt as though PNMs were subject to judgment by the sorority women, rather than the altruistic notion that chapter women and PNMs are selecting one another based on matching values or ideas. Rebecca’s description of one PNM’s reaction to the absence of a desired invitation left her to create explanations and assuage her concerns without any real, relevant feedback. “Did they not like me?” the PNM asked Rebecca. Rebecca and the other recruitment counselors honestly have no idea.

**Relationships**

It could be argued that sororities are simultaneously common identity groups and common bond groups (Hogg, 2006), in that individuals as members are, at the same time, attached to the group as well as attached to members within the group. Identification as a collective, according to Hogg, determines its “groupness.” Group membership provides
an identity, an accepted belief system, and informs the individual of who she is and how to view and treat others while simultaneously informing how others might view and treat her (Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, 2007). When one joins a sorority, she does so on her own accord, agreeing to the tenets, rules, guidelines, and practices that dictate membership.

The recruitment counselor, however, is required to “sacrifice chapter affiliation expression as well as sorority friendships” (Witkowsky, 2010, p. 54), which is an action contrary to what is meant by sorority membership. This causes an adjustment to the sisterhood relationships with which the recruitment counselor was once accustomed. This transition into the role of recruitment counselor calls for adapting to a new situation, a change in relationships, routines, assumptions, and of course, roles because adaptation is the result of transition (Anderson et al., 2012). At this point, she is no longer preoccupied with the transition, but is instead integrating the new role, relationships, routines, and the like, into her experience (Schlossberg, 1981). This is also evidence of the neutral zone (Bridges, 2004) wherein the Pi Chi is experiencing a time out, or liminality from the sorority. She’s not active in a particular sorority, but is still a member of, and advocate for, sorority life all together.

The sacrifice of chapter membership and suspension of public acknowledgment of sorority affiliation causes the recruitment counselors varying degrees of role strain, particularly as it relates to the relationships this role requires. Goode (1960) described role strain as “felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations” (p. 483), or has difficulty with the expectations of a role or set of roles, wherein an individual occupying multiple roles
negotiates conflicting demands. In distancing oneself from her sorority recruitment membership, the recruitment counselor is setting aside those responsibilities assigned to the role of sorority member in favor of a different experience. Sayles (1984) described this type of role distance as role-set conflict, wherein an individual engages in role distance in order to be positively evaluated by conflicting reference groups, which in this instance, are the sorority, the Panhellenic Council who oversees the recruitment counselors, and the PNMs. Accordingly, “although the individual does not want to be evaluated negatively by [any] group, playing the role well for one group means not playing the role well for the other” (Sayles, 1984, p. 239). Thus, relationships with sorority sisters can be strained, as was the case with Katherine; with PNMs, as was described by Rebecca; and with the Panhellenic Officers and fellow recruitment counselors, which Jane describes. Each of the recruitment counselors varied with the degree of role strain they felt, as it changed based on with which reference group they were interacting and at what point in the Pi Chi experience they were interviewed.

**Relationships with PNMs.** The recruitment counselors took great care in making sure they communicated with and provided numerous opportunities for their PNM group to meet both them as the recruitment counselors, and the other PNMs in the group. Several of the Pi Chis shared how they thoroughly enjoyed meeting and connecting with the PNMs, because for many, cultivating relationships with PNMs was the most rewarding part of being in the recruitment counselor role. I could tell from their descriptions that they cared deeply for their PNMs, and wanted each one of their group members to match to a sorority. In fact, some wanted specific PNMs to match to their
own sorority in particular, referring to some PNMs as “rush crushes.” Overall, the Pi Chis in this study placed the PNM as their central focus.

**Relationships with Pi Chi Partner.** It is standard practice for recruitment counselors to have another Pi Chi to work with and assist one another through the sorority recruitment process, and this practice is in place for the recruitment counselors at Midwest University. In some ways, pairing recruitment counselors is a navigational aid, as each moves through the Pi Chi experience. The Panhellenic Council Advisor pairs each recruitment counselor with another counselor from a different sorority because the sorority recruitment process can be tenuous at times. Having a partner as a support provides the aid for the recruitment counselor because they can lean on one another in order to facilitate discussion that may otherwise be difficult on one’s own. The degree of support available from the individual’s network of friends (Anderson et al., 2012) is somewhat diminished due to transition into the role and being disassociated. Therefore, they were able to rely on the institutional support provided by the partnership, wherein a number expressed how their partnerships were successful. They probably wouldn’t end up life-long friends, but they were able to work well together.

However, several of the recruitment counselors shared some partnerships were stronger than others. During training, the Pi Chis engaged in personality tests and leadership development instruments that assisted the Panhellenic Advisor in pairing the recruitment counselors. Katherine talked about how she and her partner worked well together, while Annie cited she did not work well with her partner because they were very different in their personalities and approaches. Annie shared that although the
inventories were somewhat helpful, and she understood why this was part of training, ultimately they were not successful in matching her with her partner. Each individual recruitment counselor’s appraisal of transition dictates what type of support she may need. Annie may have benefitted from being paired with someone different, or a different way in which to interact with her assigned partner, which could have changed her perspective, and thus, the support garnered from the relationship with her Pi Chi partnership.

**Relationships with other recruitment counselors.** Through participant descriptions, I learned that although this is a small campus with a small sorority community, the recruitment counselors did not know each other all that well. They spent little time together during training and the weekend of recruitment. Maura is an extreme example of not knowing many of the other counselors, as she was studying abroad for almost the entirety the recruitment counselors were in training.

With the summer months occurring in the midst of their time as recruitment counselors, the Pi Chis really only interacted with one another in the role for approximately three weeks at the start of the school year. This made bonding with one another rather challenging, which some of the participants described. They did not bond with the rest of the group as much as they originally had been led to believe they might. Natalie, Jane, and Maura all talked at length about how they did not really connect with the other Pi Chis as much as they had anticipated they would—something they seemed to wish to have occurred, but ultimately did not. In some ways, the recruitment counselors were looking to build relationships with their fellow counselors that were similar to those
with their own sorority sisters, and for many, it just did not occur. This is comparable to why some of the Pi Chi pairings were not as successful.

Several of the recruitment counselors did indicate, however, that the Pi Chi experience ultimately forced them to get to know sorority members from other chapters. While they maybe did not make the deep connections they had hoped, they did describe the relationships they did have as a positive result of the experience. They looked to one another for empathy in difficult situations, and those who experienced such instances felt emotionally supported by the other recruitment counselors. When it really mattered, they felt they could count on the other counselors for assistance.

**Relationships with sorority sisters.** Katherine and Jane were the only ones to talk about their relationships with their own sorority sisters while serving in this role. The others spoke in generalities about how they stayed connected to the chapter through social media, primarily using Facebook. The recruitment counselors described how their sororities had private Facebook groups where chapter members shared updates and held conversations. Some of the recruitment counselors also continued to stay on their chapter’s email listserv, so they were continuing to receive the information on chapter business and upcoming activities. Those who remained connected to their sorority through electronic means still seemed connected to their chapter.

Where each participant lived during this experience seemed to have bearing on their connection to their chapters. Annie, Maura, and Natalie all lived with one or more of their sorority sisters and Rebecca lived on her sorority floor, and therefore each maintained regular contact with their chapter or its members. Kate, Katherine, Jane,
Maura, who lived with non-members or off campus, were not part of their chapters’ interactions or plans. For example, Maura, the counselor who had studied abroad, also lives out of state from Midwest University, so she was physically removed from the sorority membership experience for nearly eight months prior to the start of sorority recruitment. Katherine and Jane both lived with members of other sororities or roommates who were not involved in sorority life and Kate served as a resident advisor in a building on campus that did not house sororities.

Katherine shared vivid descriptions of how her sorority was a source of stress for her. She struggled to maintain relationships with many of the women in her sorority because of things that had occurred throughout the course of her membership, prior to her service as a recruitment counselor, which also included her removal from a leadership position. The environment of serving as a recruitment counselor seemed to provide Katherine with both a welcome reprieve from what she characterized as an unsupportive experience, as well as a source of role strain because she shared how she felt guilty for being absent from the chapter for the period of disassociation.

Jane conveyed feelings of frustration with the women in her sorority. She was discouraged with her sorority sisters for not remembering she and the other members from her chapter were gone for some time. She spoke at length of how the other chapters thanked their members on social media for their service as a recruitment counselor, and that made her wonder why it was that her sorority had not remembered or thanked her and the others who were recruitment counselors. She felt unappreciated, and found it difficult to assimilate back into the day-to-day interactions of sorority life upon her
return. Jane expressed that she was relieved to be back in the sorority because she no
longer had to hide her affiliation, but struggled to feel welcome or included in what was
happening.

In many respects, what Katherine and Jane both describe is Coser’s (1974) notion
of a “greedy institution,” or an organization or group that makes strong and total claims
on its members. According to Coser, greedy institutions require undivided loyalty to the
group. Greedy institutions tend to rely on voluntary compliance, not external coercion, to
obtain members, enacting pressure on individuals to weaken ties to other groups that
might also attempt to make claims on an individual’s time, energy, and social identity
(Coser, 1974). This type of organization possesses highly structured roles, and is, by all
accounts, exclusive. As such, Coser articulated that greedy institutions dominate an
individual’s identity to the point that symbolic boundaries are established between herself
and non-members (Arthur, 1997; Coser, 1974). Arthur’s (1997) argument is that a
sorority is representative of this type of organization. If the sorority is indeed the greedy
institution making significant claims on Jane’s and Katherine’s memberships, then
serving as a recruitment counselor represents a conflicting demand. The greedy
institution focuses on the commitment of their members; as a result, the recruitment
counselor may be viewed as less committed.

Counseling

According to the NPC’s (2014a) Recruitment Counselor Guide, the duties of the
Pi Chi include being “available and flexible during recruitment for all PNMs to contact
and address their concerns as needed in one-on-one counseling situations” (p. 60).
Within this theme, several subthemes emerged, including giving advice to their PNMs (including stock statements used to provide advice) and PNMs making decisions. In each of those subthemes, it is evident the Pi Chis took their responsibilities seriously. Being seen in the role of recruitment counselor by the PNMs made their Pi Chi social identity salient.

**Giving advice to PNMs.** NPC (2014a) instructs recruitment counselors to “provide PNMs sound advice and counsel” as the PNM seeks to join an organization that meets both her needs and her values (p. 6). One way the recruitment counselors in this study engaged in providing advice was a combination of what was said to them as PNMs and what they learned in Pi Chi training. This was the use of what I would classify as “stock answers,” or standard replies to provide to PNMs in common situations. Similar to the notion of FAQs, Kate described these pieces of advice as “all the crap we tell them,” including such things as “keep an open mind,” and “give them a shot.”

In an interview for *The Adelphaean*, former recruitment counselor Erin Hall shared similar sentiment as the participants in this study (Oben, 2012). “It was very difficult,” Hall shared, “but I encouraged girls that every chapter on our campus is amazing. I told them to keep an open mind throughout the process and give every chapter a chance” (Oben, 2012, p. 8). As the recruitment counselors in this study recounted the statements they had shared with their PNM group members, all of that “crap” (Kate) was evident.

Recruitment counselors felt pressured by Panhellenic Council to strongly encourage, almost pressure PNMs to remain in the recruitment process even when the PNM no longer wanted to participate. This was especially the case when a PNM was
returning to a sorority they had “dropped,” or selected as their last choice organization the day prior. Both Oben (2012) and the NPC (2014a, 2016) instruct the recruitment counselor to focus on the positives of sorority when counseling a PNM not matched to her top sorority choices. Therefore, in this study, the recruitment counselors encouraged PNMs to give other sororities a chance for consideration, and all that “crap” (Kate) they would say to PNMs is how they did so.

To return to the analogy that sorority recruitment is a “performance,” in this “act” the recruitment counselor could be considered what Goffman (1959) identified as a “shillaber” or “shill” (p. 146). Goffman viewed interaction as a performance, shaped by both the environment and the audience. Within this analogy, the PNMs are the audience, the sorority women are the performers, and the setting for the performance is the recruitment event. Each party creates a “front,” or “that part of the individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance” (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). To present a convincing front, the individual is required to fulfill both the responsibilities of the social role, and to communicate the characteristics of such to others in a consistent manner (Goffman, 1959). The recruitment counselors are supposed to fill both the roles of Pi Chi and sorority woman, in a consistent way. Goffman defined the “shill” as someone “who acts as though [she] were an ordinary member of the audience but is in fact in league with the performers” (p. 146). Each contributes to the “front” of the performance, as do the other actors, but unlike the audience (PNMs), the recruitment counselors are privy to the “back region,” wherein “the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly
contradicted” (Goffman, 1959, p. 112). What Goffman is referring to is the space separated by partition from the performance where the performers (in this case, sorority women) can expect that no audience members (PNMs) will intrude or interfere. This is the section of the recruitment event where the advisors and alumnae members are busy engaging in the preparation work for sorority recruitment, preparing refreshments, voting information, checking grade point averages, and checking attendance lists, while often dressed in casual wear with the promise of not being seen or known by the PNs. While the recruitment counselor is not present, she is still privy to the knowledge that such “back region” exists, and the PNs are not.

Therefore, the recruitment counselors are inadvertently part of what is referred to as a performance team, or a group of individuals who cooperate to achieve goals sanctioned by the group (Goffman, 1959). The performance team is responsible for establishing a single routine (Goffman, 1959). Rather than performing independent of the sorority women, by virtue of being a sorority woman each Pi Chi engages in the cooperative action, which is to get a multitude of women on the campus (PNMs) to join a sorority. All of this contributes to a single routine of sorority recruitment, conveyed through each individual sorority recruitment event, hopefully leading to the PNM joining a sorority on the campus.

The Pi Chis were not only responsible for guiding the PNs through the recruitment process and assisting in their decision-making, but were also tasked with delivering the news to the PNM that she wasn’t matched to the sororities of her choosing, or informing PNs they had been released from the sorority recruitment process
altogether. Recruitment counselors never wanted to deliver what they considered bad news, because they did not want to be viewed by the PNMs as the person responsible for rejecting them from sorority life. I describe this as being the “bad guy.” Having to deliver the news was hard for the recruitment counselor and caused them, as many put it, “stress.” “It was rough,” several of them conveyed. I sensed the recruitment counselors experienced guilt based on their reactions and the explanations provided to those PNMs released from the process, which of course, involved those previously mentioned stock statements. Through each participant’s description, it became obvious the recruitment counselors were conflicted by having to be the one to share this unfortunate news, especially because of the way they could be viewed by the PNM. Several of the recruitment counselors indicated they felt like saying, “It’s not my fault!” to their PNMs, when sharing the news. It is true; the sorority recruitment counselors are not responsible for any decision as to where the PNMs are matched.

When a recruitment counselor steps out of her sorority member role, she forfeits any opportunity to make decisions with regard to whom is invited to become a member of a sorority. Recruitment counselors do not vote, nor do they have a say, as to which PNMs ultimately are asked to join their sororities. That is difficult, however, for the PNM to understand, because as the “bearer of bad news,” the recruitment counselor is the face to a decision that is not, as Rebecca said, “in her favor.” This is an indication that the PNMs perceived the sorority recruitment process as convoluted. At points, the recruitment counselors felt the same.
PNMs making decisions. The PNMs make several decisions throughout the recruitment process—from initially deciding to participate, to ranking the sororities they would most like to learn more about, to finally making the choice as to which sorority they would ultimately like to join. For each decision, the recruitment counselors are available to provide counsel. In this study, however, several of the recruitment counselors indicated how surprised they were that so many of PNMs actually did not utilize them at any point before, during, or after recruitment; especially during the final round, when signing MRABAs and making their final selections. The recruitment counselors seemed almost dejected when they were not asked for guidance or advice by PNMs in their groups, as if their identity as a Pi Chi was not actualized because they couldn’t operationalize, or perform, in the role because a PNM never sought them out to exercise the role’s responsibilities.

As PNMs made decisions, the recruitment counselors asked them guiding questions to assist in narrowing their selections. The final day of recruitment is when PNMs make the decision as to which sorority to join. Pi Chis play an important role in this part of the process. Although Pi Chis are not permitted to be present when the MRABA is actually signed and submitted by the PNMs (NPC, 2016), recruitment counselors are able to provide counsel and encourage PNMs to maximize their options.

The recruitment counselors are also responsible for explaining intentional single preference to PNMs, including what can happen when choosing to have only one option. Annie conveyed frustration with the reactions of a released PNM who only listed one sorority on her MRABA. This is a prime example of where the PNMs decision did not
play out as intended. Natalie captures the anxiety of deciding to do so when sharing about one of her group members, saying the PNM was “banking on having the one chapter she wanted.” Because the Pi Chis already seemed to dread delivering bad news, intentional single preference made it more likely that they might have to, indeed, be the “bad guy.”

**Navigating Emotions**

Enacting their counseling skills actually lead the recruitment counselors to recognize and navigate the PNMs’ emotions, as well as their own. The PNM is the focus of the recruitment counselor’s job, but it was evident through participant descriptions that the Pi Chis were concerned about their own feelings throughout this experience. They too encountered and internalized the perceived positives and negatives conveyed about sorority recruitment and sorority life, in general. Their social identity as a sorority woman was a constant source of emotions they had never felt, because they were experiencing “this side of recruitment” for the first time, as a recruitment counselor.

According to Goode (1960), an individual may have several role relationships as a result of one particular role, and is likely to face “a wide, distracting, and sometimes conflicting array of role obligations” (p. 485). It was difficult for the recruitment counselors not to internalize or take personally the comments made by PNMs about each Pi Chi’s own sorority. It was difficult for many of them to separate themselves, particularly during the week of recruitment, from their sorority and that left them feeling emotions they had not yet experienced.
The transition through the experience of disassociating from their own sorority and serving as a Pi Chi meant utilizing the 4 S model (Anderson et al., 2012), addressing situations, support, and strategies (which includes coping, controlling, and managing), as they interacted with the numerous role sets required of them.

**Navigating PNM emotions.** The recruitment counselors worked diligently to provide a positive experience for the women in their groups. Many of the recruitment counselors spoke of worrying for their PNMs, who would not be invited to another round of recruitment, or who would not end up with an invitation to join a sorority. They developed strategies to handle those who would be most upset by the invitations they did receive, by making sure to know their PNMs’ schedules. Natalie summarizes what it was like to navigate the emotions of recruitment with the PNMs saying, “it was a little more difficult when people were very torn and they didn’t know what they were trying to think, and you were trying to kinda sort through their emotions with them.”

Pearlin and Schooler (1978) identified three strategies that are relevant to negotiating the emotions of PNMs. For example, the recruitment counselors provided responses to the PNMs that might modify the situation (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978), such as a recruitment counselor asking for assistance from her fellow Pi Chis in particularly trying circumstances. The recruitment counselors also provided responses that would control the meaning of the problem (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978), describing how they would reframe the conversation with a disappointed PNM, prompting her to look at returning to a sorority event she was invited, instead of focusing on the sorority where she was not invited. In this instance, the recruitment counselor is turning a potentially
negative situation into a positive one. Finally, the recruitment counselors provided responses to emotions that help to manage stress after it occurred (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978), by keeping in touch with women eliminated from the sorority recruitment process all together. Their intention was to maintain a friendship, as is the case with Kate’s relationship with her PNM Susie.

**Navigating their own emotions.** In Oben’s (2012) reflection on serving as a recruitment counselor, she talked about how she experienced recruitment with her PNMs. She spoke to being excited when “group members talked about falling in love with a chapter during the week” and shedding a tear “when things didn’t go as planned” (p. 8). Oben (2012) maintained that recruitment counselors also experience the “successes and heartbreaks” of sorority recruitment just as much as their PNMs (p. 8). This too, within this study, was the case with a number of the participants.

The recruitment counselors’ transition through the role is very visible here, as the Pi Chis are enacting said role, and in doing so, experiencing what the PNMs are. Role enactment, according to Allen and Van de Vliert (1984) “consists of all of those expectation-related acts that normally validate one’s occupancy of a social position” (p. 6). The intensity with which the participants occupied the role of recruitment counselor can vary. What is important to understand is that variability amongst the Pi Chis in their role enactment is possible and completely acceptable (Allen & Van de Vliert, 1984). All of them did the same job, but no two participants described their experiences the same. Some experienced strong emotion, such as Katherine or Rebecca, which could classify them at the higher level of intensity of role enactment. At the same time Annie, Maura,
and Natalie demonstrated lower levels of intensity in their enactment, with a sort of aloofness to the position, viewing it as simply a job, or a role to occupy for a limited period.

In addition to experiencing emotions for their PNM, some of the recruitment counselors expressed concern for the outcome of recruitment for their particular sorority, too. Katherine shared her concern the first night of recruitment, when 11 of the 18 women in her PNM group eliminated her sorority as one of their choices. She described her sorority was the one they “didn’t want to go back to.” This caused Katherine to question what had happened during the recruitment rounds, conveying she was “kind of worried about our own recruitment and numbers.” Disassociating did not take away the fear recruitment counselors felt about whether or not their sorority would achieve its recruitment goals. The inability for the recruitment counselor to distance herself completely all the time from her sorority is inherently apparent here. Sayles (1984) described this behavior as “role-set conflict” (p. 239), wherein an individual engages in role distancing in order to be seen positively by two conflicting role sets, which in this case would be the PNM and the recruitment counselor’s sorority sisters. Playing the role of recruitment counselor well means risking that she is viewed negatively as a sorority woman, because her sorority is not picking up members from the PNM pool. However, the recruitment counselor is not involved in the recruitment process where she could make a difference in terms of PNM choosing her sorority the way the sorority women might like, because the guidelines provided by the NPC and the University’s Panhellenic prohibit it. According to Sayles’ approach to role-set conflict (1984), role
distancing would allow the individual to satisfy the expectations of PNMs, while at the same time making it appear as though sorority membership is not a particularly valued role. Katherine, more or less, could satisfy the needs of her PNM group by conducting herself accordingly, while sharing with her sorority sisters that the guidelines prohibit her from assisting them in any way, therefore distancing herself from her sorority role. Her sorority sisters could not view her negatively because after all, she was following the rules.

**Navigating frustrations with sorority recruitment.** The actual sorority recruitment process takes place over a three-day span one weekend in mid-September. This was approximately three weeks, or 15 school days, after the start of the fall semester. At Midwest University, women in their first semester of college can participate in sorority recruitment. Any unaffiliated women interested in sorority life must enroll in the process with the University’s Panhellenic Council. The first round of events in sorority recruitment allots for PNMs to visit with each sorority for 35 minutes. There are five rounds during the first day, and the PNMs see all five sororities. Katherine, Natalie, and Rebecca all drew attention to the fact that the recruitment schedule is such a limited amount of time, and that made it difficult for both the PNMs and the sorority members. Their concerns were that each audience (the PNMs and the sorority women) has little time to get to know one another in order to make educated decisions.

The NPC (2016) strongly supports, although does not require, scheduling sorority recruitment early on in the fall semester. Their opinion is that a condensed, fall semester recruitment is an opportunity to engage PNMs early in their collegiate career in an
attempt to retain them to the university. Further, NPC (2016) feels that earlier opportunities for PNMs to acclimate to the demands of campus life by quickly affiliating with a supportive sub-population of like-minded students will help them succeed. NPC (2016) believes early fall semester recruitment “allows all participants the best opportunity to be considered objectively and to make their choices clearly without the subjective influences of detractors” (p. 97).

While a noble thought, many of the PNMs have only been college students for approximately 15 days, and the notion of making a life-long decision in three days seems rushed (which, coincidently, “rush” is the original term for sorority recruitment). The participants in this study agreed. The Pi Chis in this study were concerned that the limited time made it difficult for PNMs to whittle their selections to only one choice. In some ways, sorority recruitment is an illustration of Critical Contact Theory (Tom, 1971). Tom stipulated that employment candidates are unable to make meaningful distinctions between positions or employers with regard to objective or subjective factors because the length of time in contact with the firm is limited. Candidates must rely on the differences they can “readily perceive during their contact with organizations,” and therefore make a decision based on their evaluation of appearance, physical facilities, and the behavior of the recruiter (Tom, 1971, p. 575). With 35 minutes per round, and 65 sisters to meet, a PNM has a tremendously limited amount of time to make a decision as to which sorority fits her the best. She must rely on the conversations, attitudes, and behaviors with the few women with whom she interacts for the round, as well as the appearance of the environment in which the event is situated, to make a decision. Meaningful interaction is
severely limited. One simple way to alleviate this issue is to make better use of events leading up to sorority recruitment, wherein the sorority women are able to interact with those PNMs interested in participating in sorority recruitment so that both parties are more familiar with one another once the sorority recruitment process begins. Often, university Panhellenics and sorority communities do not engage in such behaviors, many because they start the sorority recruitment process prior to the start of a first year student’s first year of college, and therefore, neither entity has the chance to really meet and get to know one another. This is not the case for Midwest University; their sorority community has at least three weeks of time before sorority recruitment that could be utilized for a variety of “meet-and-greet” events that would introduce more sisters to PNMs and vice versa. This might make the relationship building of sorority recruitment more authentic and lessen the frustration with the process.

Seven of the study participants experienced sorority recruitment as an active sorority sister, and that informed their observations. According to them, during sorority recruitment, the sorority women also do not have the opportunity to meet as many PNMs because of time constraints. When fewer sorority women meet fewer PNMs, this decreases the number of people in the sorority able to decide if the PNM should be invited to return for the next event, or to join. It also may lessen the chance that the PNM chooses that sorority when she makes her selections.

Marie shared that although she enjoyed sorority life, the process of joining a sorority was hard. She, as well as Katherine and Maura, described how they personally did not feel comfortable voting on who should and should not be a member, which is
after all, the purpose of this process. Marie, Katherine, and Maura chose to be recruitment counselors so they could remain unbiased. However, to me it seemed they used the recruitment counselor role as a way out of selecting, or judging, PNMs. Each described that when participating in recruitment as a sorority woman, she really only saw and spoke to three to five PNMs each round. Maura pointed out she felt nervous she would mix up a name and how that might be a reason a PNM would not receive an invitation to join her sorority.

It is as if they disagree with parts of the sorority recruitment role (e.g., voting on new members, which is self-perpetuation on the sorority’s part), which here again, causes role strain in their sorority woman role. Because roles require individuals to complete what Goode (1960) referred to as “a sequence of role bargains” (p. 483), the sorority woman becomes a recruitment counselor, which could be classified as an alternative role behavior, in order to reduce the role strain associated with one of the obligations of being a sorority woman.

**Discussion of Category #2: Negotiating Disassociation**

It is important to note that from the very first interviews, no matter how many times I used the word “disassociation” (which I did intentionally), participants in the study still referred to this requirement as “disaffiliation” or “disaffiliating” from their sorority. Further, those who volunteer with the NPC also use the two terms interchangeably (NPC, 2015). The use of the term “disaffiliation” is indicative of the confusion over what it really means to distance oneself temporarily from her sorority chapter.
The NPC (2014a) describes disassociation as an action that is performed by recruitment counselors “to help ensure their actions and decisions support the welfare and best interests of the Panhellenic community” (p. 34), and it is the “common factor” that applies to the recruitment counselor role “on any campus” hosting NPC-member organizations (NPC, 2016). Disassociating occurs because the delegates of the 26 NPC member-organizations feel recruitment counselors are responsible for maintaining “principles of Panhellenic ethics” and therefore “must be disassociated from their own chapter’s recruitment process” (NPC, 2016, p. 124). In addition, disassociation assists PNMs by guarding them from “undue influence by any personal bond formed with her counselor” (NPC, 2014a, p. 34). However, the NPC (2016) does not articulate how it is the Panhellenic Officers and recruitment counselors should go about disassociating. In fact, the individual university’s Panhellenic Councils have the freedom to stipulate disassociation requirements. For example, at Midwest University, the recruitment counselor is disassociated for longer than the NPC (2016) 30-day guideline.

Disassociating requires sorority women to step away from their role as sorority member, although they are asked to simultaneously continue to support the sorority experience as a whole. It is in this way the recruitment counselor role is a transitionary experience, specifically if one looks at disassociation in terms of the five aspects of a natural ending (Bridges, 2004). For example, a recruitment counselor disengages from one role (sorority) by separating oneself from important and previously observed routines, such as wearing letters, attending meetings, and participating in chapter events. She may experience dismantling, or the taking apart of that old cue system, like sitting
with sisters in the cafeteria, and trading it for the new routines introduced via recruitment counselor training. She may disidentify, feeling a loss of ways she identifies herself within the context of sorority life, which in turn, is the cause for choosing to be a recruitment counselor. In other words, she can be a sorority woman but have no allegiance to a particular sorority. Jane and Katherine are very much representative of this disidentification, and disassociating provided the space to unpack those feelings.

“Separated from the old identity and the old situation or some important aspect of it, a person floats free in a kind of limbo between two worlds” (Bridges, 2004, p. 118). But that old reality is still there—the way things ought to be; the way things are. The discovery that one’s reality is no longer real is what Bridges referred to as disenchantment. The women described this feeling in how they saw what was happening in their sororities leading up to recruitment via social media outlets. Katherine, Kate, Natalie, and Jane all expressed a sort of disenchantment with the aspects of sorority life they had come to know as an active sorority sister. This is notably apparent in each discussion of how PNMs are vulnerable to the sorority recruitment system.

Lastly, disorientation, albeit not experienced by many participants in this study, is the deepening of feelings such being lost and confused (Bridges, 2004). The old sense of “going somewhere” has broken down; and disorientated individuals have lost their motivation or direction. Jane’s description of her experience post-recruitment as not fully engaged with her sorority, and the frustration she felt with not being welcomed or thanked for her service by her sorority were evidence of disorientation. She described being over the whole commitment of sorority, and seemed truly bothered by the fact that
she, and the other disassociated members of her sorority, were not commended for “being back” on social media. The other sororities had posted about their sisters “being back,” and expressed excitement for their return that Jane just didn’t receive from her own sisters.

Several themes elicited from analysis support this particular category. Themes derived included remaining neutral, unbiased, and objective; difficulty with disassociation; electronic communication and social media; the notion “being back,” and disassociation as necessary to the recruitment counselor role.

**Remaining Neutral, Objective, and Unbiased**

Maintaining neutrality in the eyes of the PNM is primary to the recruitment counselor role (Witkowsky, 2010, p. 54). The recruitment counselors at Midwest University discussed wanting to be as objective and unbiased as they were able for their PNM. They understood that they could have influence on the decisions of their PNM, and they seemed to take that impact seriously. However, the what the recruitment counselors in this study described was a sort of cognitive dissonance in balancing the ability to objectively assist a PNM through the decision-making process of sorority recruitment, and their expressed concerns about their individual sorority’s performance in recruitment (e.g., meeting their recruitment goals), or the inability to truly mask their sorority memberships. For example, Jane described a situation where she experienced frustration. She felt confronting a PNM would reveal her affiliation to her PNM group. Maura, Jane’s Pi Chi partner, and the Panhellenic President, a member of Jane’s sorority, sort of demanded that Jane address one of her group’s members allegedly sharing false
information about Sorority G (Jane’s sorority). Jane struggled with this because she did not want to show partiality, especially if it meant potentially revealing her sorority membership. Therefore, to avoid any further issue, Jane and Maura actually addressed the issue together as a team. Both advised the older PNMs in their group to keep any opinions they heard or knew of sorority life to themselves so as not to influence one another or the PNMs who were first year students. Jane shared that this advice seemed to work, although she knew the PNMs were staying up late in their residence halls sharing their experiences with one another, and that no matter how much the recruitment counselors told the PNMs not to do so, they still did. Because Jane and Maura confronted the situation together, Jane did not feel as though she had not demonstrated any favoritism or affinity to one specific chapter. Jane was able to conduct herself accordingly, and not reveal her affiliation to the PNMs. She was able to successfully address the issue and not feel as though she was breaking rules or unduly influencing any of the PNMs’ decisions.

**Difficulties With Disassociation**

In general, disassociation did not seem to be this tremendously burdensome requirement to the recruitment counselor. The way many of them described disassociation was as more of a temporary inconvenience necessary to the role. Each recruitment counselor described how she was, for the most part, able to distance herself from her sorority membership for the required period. What was most difficult about disassociation, based on recruitment counselors’ shared observations, included removing
traces of sorority membership from social media (specifically photographs), deciding what to wear to the gym, and finding someone to eat with in the cafeteria.

Some recruitment counselors, however, demonstrated difficulty with disassociation because they were unable to create the necessary role distance required for the entirety of the experience. Goffman (1961) described role distance as the separation from a role that is associated with one’s identity, and which in this case is the sorority member role. When distancing oneself from a specific role (sorority member), the individual intentionally promotes a lack of attachment and commitment to that role, and does not fully engage in its performance (Goffman, 1961). However, according to Hogg (2006), only one identity is “psychologically salient” to govern “self-construal social perception” and “social conduct” (p. 115). As situation and context change, so does salient identity, or the form that identity takes. In doing so, Goffman (1961) argued that individuals free themselves from social roles and projected definitions of self, not to rid themselves of such, but rather because other social roles and identities have a hold on them. Therefore, when one disassociates to become that recruitment counselor, she is distancing herself from her role, responsibilities, and identity as a member of a specific sorority.

While most reported following Midwest University Panhellenic’s guidelines with regard to disassociating, some described instances where rule violations occurred. Maura shared her frustration with one of the Panhellenic officers who failed to uphold disassociation guidelines. Maura alleged the officer revealed the sorority memberships of some of the recruitment counselors to the PNMs, and pressured PNMs to make decisions
that maybe were not their own choices. As Panhellenic officers and recruitment counselors, each is trained not to push a PNM toward joining a specific organization or make the choices for the PNMs, but rather the Pi Chis were responsible for asking guiding questions that encouraged the PNMs to come to their own decisions. According to Maura, this particular Panhellenic Officer “forcefully” suggested to two women to select only one sorority that was maybe not their first choice preference because “[the Panhellenic officer] didn’t think they would fit in the other one.” It is not the place of the Panhellenic Officer, or any of the recruitment counselors for that matter, to have an opinion on where the PNM should join; it is her responsibility to guide the PNM to making her own decisions.

In another interview, I learned of one of the recruitment counselors sharing about her PNM group members with her sorority sisters. She and her sisters discussed who they felt would be great for membership in the sorority, even providing names of the PNMs to her roommate, even though the recruitment counselor was disassociated. Another recruitment counselor also did this same thing, describing to me how she talked to her sorority sisters about the PNMs in her group, specifically about who she liked and who she disliked; however in this same interview while the recruitment counselor did recognize there were rule violations occurring amongst them, she was dissatisfied when violations were not addressed. “We definitely did talk about recruitment and some infractions that we had heard that had gone on and nothing happened punishment-wise, which was disappointing to hear,” one counselor shared, although she, herself, was one who had violated the rules.
What makes disassociation difficult is while thinking in terms of disassociation as role distance, creating a clear separation between the sorority woman and her sorority member role. It is important to understand that role distance is also the result of role-set conflict. Role-set conflict is the distancing behavior demonstrated by the individual looking to be regarded positively by two conflicting roles, and to enact one role positively means sending cues to the other that it is not as valued (Sayles, 1984). In order to be a recruitment counselor, one must first be a member of a sorority. If a sorority is an “exclusive organization” as perceived by Arthur (1997, p. 84), possessing the qualities of “greedy institutions” as described by Coser (1974), then by virtue of serving as a recruitment counselor, the sorority woman is indicating that the sorority member role is not as valued. This is contrary to the notion of greedy institution, as the sorority would command uncontested loyalty. In sororities, a commitment is required by relinquishing some individualism in favor of prescribed group images. This commitment is often expressed through the embracement of certain appearance ideals and demonstrated through specific items of clothing (Arthur, 1997). According to Coser (1974),

Organized groups are always faced with the problem of how best to harness human energies to their purposes. They must concern themselves with mechanisms which insure that people will be sufficiently motivated to be loyal even in the face of competing appeals from other sources within the wider social structure. (p. 1)

Individuals encompass many roles in many situations and thus exert energy in compartmentalized ways to fulfill each role’s requirements and responsibilities (Coser,
1974). This multifaceted involvement with varied and numerous role sets is likely to create conflict, which can often be solved so long as “none of the claimants to the individual’s commitments makes totalistic claims” (Coser, 1974, p. 3) or in other words, exert primary control over the individual’s time and energy, requiring almost exclusive loyalty. Because greedy institutions make total claims on their members and rely on voluntary compliance, a means of activating loyalty and commitment is to “aim at maximizing assent to styles of life by appearing highly desirable to the participants” (Coser, 1974, p. 4). This type of organization then creates symbolic boundaries to separate the insider from the outsider, using idealized images, such as dress (Arthur, 1997). Discontinuing the use of such images demonstrates role distance. One way to demonstrate this distance is to no longer wear the items of dress that tell the rest of the world to which sorority she belongs.

Arthur’s (1997) study of sorority pledges further contextualize the meaning that not wearing letters holds for the recruitment counselors; that is, using the sorority’s letters and related symbols as valid status markers. According to the symbolic interactionist tradition, dress is a part of the presentation of self, and that the self emerges through interactions with others (Arthur 1997; Goffman, 1959).

An example of such from this study was Katherine. In her second interview, Katherine shared how her sorority purchased several items including “a lax penny . . . which is pretty sweet. It has our crest on it.” A sorority’s crest, or coat of arms, is regarded as the most sacred of all the public symbols of a sorority, but it is frequently used as decoration on t-shirts, tote bags, cups, and many other consumer goods. The use
of the sorority’s crest was one way to denote that she is truly a member of a specific organization. When she is no longer permitted to wear it, or any of the other items that distinguish members of the sorority from those who are not members, Katherine is no longer able to legitimize her social identity, causing uncertainty.

According to Hogg (2006), three distinct processes—self-enhancement, optimal distinctiveness, and uncertainty reduction—are motivators of social identity development. While self-enhancement, also known as positive distinctiveness, is the belief that “we” is better and distinct from “them,” optimal distinctiveness is a description of how the individual strives to achieve a balance between inclusion and uniqueness, wherein that equilibrium is considered optimal (Brewer, 1991; Hogg, 2006). However, uncertainty reduction is the process to “reduce subjective uncertainty” with regard to an individual’s social world and his or her place within it (Hogg, 2006, p. 120). Uncertainty with one’s self-concept motivates identifying with groups, and individuals prefer to identify with groups that are clearly defined and distinctive entities, such as sororities (Hogg, 2006). Uncertainty reduction, however, is an immediate, more enduring social context, more invasive than simple social comparisons, as the individual’s self-concept is deeply involved. Katherine’s inability to visually demonstrate who she is with, via her sorority letters or the crest of the organization, this can trigger uncertainty as it is more than an item of clothing. Katherine has chosen the social identity of sorority women. She has categorized herself as a member of Sorority D. Hogg et al. (2007) described social categorization of self and others as generating “a sense of in-group identification and belonging, and regulates perception, inference, feelings, behavior and interaction to
conform to prototype-based knowledge one has about one’s own group and relevant
outgroups” (p. 136). While individuals may belong to groups without adopting the
group’s classifications as part of his or her social identity, social identities are selected
from various bases for self-categorization available to an individual at a given time
(Brewer, 1991, p. 477). Katherine experiences uncertainty because she cannot outwardly
express a social categorization.

Electronic Communication and Social Media

Social media sites allow users to present themselves to others with intentionality,
as well as garner feedback from others (Yang & Brown, 2016). Goffman (1959)
discussed that an interaction is based on a performance relationship between the actor and
the audience. The actor interacts with others they are attempting to guide and create a
certain image as to what the audience sees them as—this is how the audience obtains
information about the actor to form an opinion, judgment, or gain knowledge. The
recruitment counselors change their profiles on their personal social media sites, which
included changing their names (e.g., instead of “Annie Smith” she became “Annie
Marie”), and removing all traces of sorority membership, placing photographs under
strict privacy settings. Their online presence then becomes that of an unaffiliated
champion of sorority life, with no particular inclination to a specific chapter, but rather
promotion of all of them.

Disassociating on social media was more difficult for the recruitment counselors,
according to their interviews. However, all of them maintained membership in their
sororities’ closed Facebook groups (non-members would not have access or know who is
a member) or other social media outlets able to be password-protected. For example, Marie used Facebook to participate in her executive board position, “virtually” completing tasks for an upcoming philanthropy event.

It’s been really difficult to do that when I can’t attend the chapter . . . and I can’t really talk to people about it. I mean, obviously email and Facebook has been really beneficial, for that means . . . I can kinda still delegate tasks to other people in that way, but I think it will be a lot easier to fully execute the things I need to do once recruitment’s over.

There was no mention of social media in the NPC Manual of Information until 2015 (NPC, 2015). In the 20th edition (NPC, 2015), there are 19 references to the use of social media, but only one mention is specific to the recruitment counselors. It references how PNMs are to use social media outlets for logistics and clerical messaging when in contact with their PNM group (NPC, 2016). There is no mention of disassociation.

According to Stoller (2012), social media is no longer trendy; rather it has become part of the cultural landscape, especially for today’s college student. Social media is another means of establishing identity; it is a way for influence and meaning making (Stoller, 2012). Social media and disassociation were a sort of afterthought brought to light in my very first interview with Jane. In her discussion of recruitment counselor training, she alluded to how they had to make all of their social media accounts devoid of their sorority membership. With the increased use of social media and other forms of instant communication, the recruitment counselors were never really disassociated in the first place. They never really distance themselves from their sorority membership in that
respect. Because social media is an extension of the notion of social identity development, representative of both self-categorization and social comparison, I would argue that by staying part of chapter email listservs and Facebook groups, the recruitment counselors are not disassociated; at least not in the way that would promote neutrality and objectivity. Disassociation itself is an interesting requirement, given the ways in which sorority membership influences its members, and remaining knowledgeable about the chapter’s plans for recruitment and regularly interacting, even in social spaces, can make maintaining neutrality less able to occur.

Stereotypes

The perceptions of sorority life, especially negative ones, were primary concern to the recruitment counselors. Stereotypes are one reason the NPC (2016) suggests as a best practice for collegiate membership recruitment to take place as early as possible in the fall term. The NPC’s rationale is to promote objectivity—a fair and balanced view of all sorority chapters on the campus—and by scheduling the sorority recruitment process to occur early “allows all participants the best opportunity to be considered objectively and to make their choices clearly without the subjective influences of detractors” (NPC, 2016, p. 97). In other words, the PNMs would not have enough time to be influenced by the opinions, thoughts, and feelings of others, especially critics of the sorority experience.

Goffman’s (1959) idea of a performance team is particularly relevant in this instance. The performance team “is a set of individuals who co-operate in staging a single routine” for consideration by an audience (Goffman, 1959, p. 79). Within the context of the performance team, the performance, or single routine, serves
Mainly to express the characteristics of the task that is performed, and not the characteristics of the performer. Thus, one finds that [individuals] enliven their manner with movements which express proficiency and integrity, but whatever this manner conveys about them, often its major purpose is to establish a favorable definition of their service or product. (p. 47)

If we value the “performance” of the sorority recruitment counselors, they are expected to perform in order to convey a favorable view of all sororities, fostering an impression that they are in favor of all sorority life, but in reality, or their personal characteristics actually are that of professed loyalty to one particular sorority.

Throughout the recruitment weekend, the recruitment counselors engaged in an activity to pass the time and entertain the PNMs that could perpetuate stereotypes. In this activity, PNMs guess the memberships of the recruitment counselors. While considered a rather innocuous activity, this could really have both positive and negative results. It could offend some of the recruitment counselors if their affiliation was guessed correctly (e.g., Katherine who shares “I could be a this or a that,” in reference to other sororities on campus). It could also offend some of the recruitment counselors if their affiliation is guessed incorrectly (e.g., I think I exude the qualities of my sorority, how could one not know which sorority is mine). There seems to be more to this activity than what the recruitment counselors convey in their interviews, most likely because they do not have understanding of the sociological constructs—social identity, stereotypes/prototypes, social identity, and social categorization—at play. Guessing individuals’ affiliations is, in essence, categorizing individuals, and if the activity was named that, they might not
participate. Katherine expressed that she was a little upset that the PNMs guessed in which sorority she is a member, because she took great care and time to become a Pi Chi, participate in training, refrain from communication on social media, and hide all traces of her affiliation, only to have it guessed right from the start of the process. Essentially, the PNMs were able to pinpoint what sorority Katherine is a member of because of the way in which she demonstrated the stereotypes, or out-group membership-related behaviors designated by others, associated with her particular chapter, demonstrating the metacontrast principle. Hogg (2006) described the metacontrast principle as the maximization of the ratio of perceived intergroup differences to intragroup differences, accentuating similarities within groups and differences between groups. During recruitment, sororities strive to demonstrate entitativity, or the property of a category, in this case the sorority, which makes it appear as though the sorority is a cohesive and clearly structured entity that is distinct from the other sororities (Hamilton & Sherman, 1996; Hogg, 2006). Therefore, one could know, based in social interaction, who is a member of which group (sorority).

In the study conducted by Atlas and Morier (1994), findings had implications for understanding the stereotypes associated with sorority life. This study looked at the sorority recruitment process, specifically self-selection to participate in the process and join a sorority, attributes for selection of members of the sororities, and the effect of rejection on those who participated in sorority recruitment. According to the researchers, stereotypes served several functions, including informing a PNM as to whether or not she would like to join a specific sorority, or to join a sorority at all. Atlas and Morier
indicated that those stereotypes attributed to sororities are often resistant to change because women who are likely to participate in sorority recruitment may be similar to the current members, and current members in the sorority are more likely to select similar individuals to join their organizations (Atlas & Morier, 1994). Hogg’s (2006) research might describe this as depersonalization. One can categorize oneself (self-categorization), or others (categorization), and depersonalizing is viewing someone as having the attributes of a category (Hogg, 2006). In-group attributes and categorization is often positive; out-group attributes and categorization is often highly negative and sometimes degrading (Hogg, 2006), and this is what the sorority recruitment counselors in the Atlas and Morier (1994) study viewed as stereotyping.

Rebecca is an example of Atlas and Morier’s (1994) study results. In her experience with sorority life, stereotypes had tremendous influence on her decisions. She ultimately matched to her second choice sorority (Sorority T). Rebecca described to me stereotypes she heard about Sorority T chapter kept her from really considering membership. Now that she is a member, she hoped to change the conversation by serving as a recruitment counselor.

“Being Back”

“Being back” is the commonly used phrase for the recruitment counselors’ return to their sorority, to “be back” or “go back” to their sorority chapter.

Bid Day is the conclusion of sorority recruitment. It is a celebratory day; the day where PNMs receive their invitations to join a sorority and recruitment counselors are able to “run home” to their sorority after revealing their sorority membership to all of the
PNMs. It is a transition for both parties; one with a beginning to a new experience in sorority membership; the other, while returning, a beginning nonetheless, one where change is based on the deconstruction of outlooks as a result of the “out-group member” period of time (Bridges, 2004; Hogg, 2006). It was a day described as filled with emotion, much like the other days of recruitment, but heightened. While all of the participants described their excitement to return to their sorority, some still had reservations and found themselves experiencing a difficult adjustment. It is an ending as a recruitment counselor, but also a beginning (again) as a sorority woman. While the recruitment counselor is returning to the same sorority they had only months earlier left, for some, they returned different, with new knowledge and a new perspective.

Reveal is a tradition incorporated into the Bid Day celebration at Midwest University. Each recruitment counselor is “revealed” as a member of a particular sorority to the PNMs. The recruitment counselors unzip sweatshirts, revealing their sorority’s Bid Day t-shirt, and take off running for their sorority and new members, who are grouped up on the quad and cheering for their return. While the others reflected on their return with excitement and calm relief, Jane and Rebecca actually shared how nervous they had been that their sorority sisters would not cheer, run, and embrace them, welcoming them back to the sorority upon their reveal. Each expression of nervousness and admission of concern speaks to the idea of feeling unwelcome, as though each was punished, or somehow shamed, for going against the loyalty once pledged to their individual sororities.
Jane and Rebecca articulated what was equivalent to crossing, or going against, a “greedy institution” (Coser, 1974). The greedy institution seeks to “weaken [one’s] ties to other institutions or persons that might make claims that are in conflict with” (Coser, 1974, p. 6) the institution’s, in this case sorority’s, own demands. Jane, Rebecca, and the others chose outside roles; they took a step away from sorority to assist the entire community, not to recruit solely for a particular chapter. Now each is suspecting she’s viewed as not “fully and totally committed” (Coser, 1974, p. 8) to their sorority as a result. They set aside the symbolic boundaries (e.g., wearing letters and all the trappings that indicate membership) to become available to “an alternative line of action” (Coser, 1974, p. 8). This left Jane and Rebecca, most notably, wondering if they would be welcomed upon their return. (They were.)

**Disassociation as Necessary**

Although the NPC is a conducting study on whether or not to eliminate the disassociation requirement, the five participants who participated in the third interview of this study all agreed they needed to disassociate in order to conduct their responsibilities and provide fair advice to the PNMs.

The recruitment counselors felt that disassociating allowed the PNM to make a decision absent of at least one other influence—knowing their recruitment counselor’s sorority membership. Natalie pointed out that PNMs seemed to be easily swayed to select a sorority based on what she called “physical things, compared to character” (Natalie, personal communication, October 12, 2014). She felt, and Rebecca concurred, that simply because one has a similar interest or is part of the same team or group on
campus, does not necessarily lead to sisterhood, at least not in the way sisterhood is regarded within this sorority community. To the recruitment counselors, in the end it should not matter what their choice for sorority membership was; the PNM should find a chapter of their own choosing.

The recruitment counselors also talked about deeper, more meaningful connections they were able to make as a result of disassociating from their sorority and taking that step away from their initial sorority membership. Disassociating provided the recruitment counselors the chance to connect, albeit maybe not as strong as they had originally hoped, with other sorority women outside of their own chapters, which many were really looking forward to doing. Mostly they were able to connect with their PNMs rather closely, because they had, in essence, set aside their sorority commitments in favor of putting their energy and focus on the PNM experience.

Finally, disassociating provided recruitment counselors the chance to learn more about how the university’s Panhellenic Council operated, and taught them more about how they are part of a wider sorority community, rather than a singular chapter. Rebecca called it being “a general member of Greek Life” (Rebecca, personal communication, October 12, 2014).

Limitations

As previously acknowledged, this study takes place at only one university, with only one sorority community, and throughout sorority recruitment for only one group of recruitment counselors. Further, there were only a small number of participants and not
all completed the three-series interviews, so each of their stories are not entirely represented.

The tight timeframe on the spacing of interviews presented a challenge. Seidman’s (2013) recommendation is for the interviews with participants to take place approximately three days to one week apart, so as to “reduce the impact of possibly idiosyncratic interviews” (p. 37). Seidman recognized that alternatives to this structure can occur, so long as a structure is maintained throughout that allows participants “to reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives” (p. 37). The interviews in this study were conducted outside of the suggested time frame, opting for two to three weeks in between interviews to allow for some ability to reflect on the transition that may (or may not) have occurred. Seidman (2013) stated that “there are no absolutes in the world of interviewing” (p. 25), and therefore the interviewer is able to make adjustments as he or she sees fit. However, the timeframe and the three interviews may have leant to the fact that while eight women agreed to join the study and initially participated, only five finished the study. One participant officially withdrew, and two participants failed to attend the third and final interview in the series, with no acknowledgment as to why they were absent. The three-series, in-depth interview requires much of study participants, especially with regard to their personal time, during an already busy time of the school year.

Further, I did not engage in any sort of document analysis for this study, with regard to policies and procedures as they relate to Midwest University’s Panhellenic Council’s recruitment counselors or the recruitment process. I did so intentionally, in
order to learn more about the experience of serving as a recruitment counselor from the participants, rather than relying on knowledge of what they should know, in favor of what they did know. Any sort of policy violation indicated is derived from my interpretation of the recruitment counselor’s descriptions, in tandem with knowledge from the NPC (2016) Manual of Information and personal experience.

Lastly, I would also include some fieldwork in the way of observation during the sorority recruitment experience to compliment the Contemporary Experience interviews. I believe that observation and field notes would provide additional detail and a more robust picture of the experience of the sorority recruitment counselor as it is unfolding.

**Opportunities for Additional Research**

The identified opportunities for additional research provide the chance to revisit portions of this study, specifically related to the action of disassociating both in person and in virtual spaces; consideration for other transitions the recruitment counselors are navigating in tandem with this one (through sorority, through college, etc.); and expanding the study itself to look at the experiences of those within different sorority communities. Expansion of this particular study could yield results that inform the National Panhellenic Conference's future decisions and practices.

**Removal of the Disassociation Requirement**

In 2014, the NPC conducted a pilot study designed to determine if the practice of requiring recruitment counselors to disassociate would continue. The question posed to the NPC was whether “disaffiliation” was necessary and realistic in today’s recruitment environment (Johnson, 2015). Ten campuses took part in the initial trial, allowing
recruitment counselors to remain affiliated throughout the entirety of sorority recruitment. Initial results were positive; “knowing a recruitment counselor’s affiliation did not impact the relationships between the potential new member (PNM) and recruitment counselor, and had little to no impact on the PNMs’ preferences listed on [their] MRABA” (Johnson, 2015, p. 2). The NPC (2015) and its board conducted a second year of inquiry to both gather more data and involve additional campuses. The results of this second study informed the newest edition of the Manual of Information (NPC, 2017), providing for Panhellenics to vote to allow for recruitment counselors to actually remain associated with their chapter, having their membership known by PNMs, during the recruitment process.

What we know from this study is that while the Pi Chis were required to disassociate from their chapters, those recruitment counselors weren’t always disassociated. They engaged in conversations, both in person and online, and shared information they were not supposed to share with their sorority sisters. They remained members of member-only sites on social media platforms, and remained informed about the sorority’s plans for recruitment. Midwest University has a requirement for who can serve as recruitment counselors; those who are juniors or seniors are considered to serve first, but when there are not enough willing participants, or there are not enough volunteers from a particular chapter to serve as recruitment counselors, then sophomores are considered. In this case, it was a junior recruitment counselor who openly admitted to sharing information with her roommate, who was also her sorority sister.
Removal of this requirement poses many questions that could create additional lines of inquiry. One question for consideration is the influence of sorority membership on the recruitment counselor, and more specifically, is sorority membership an influence as she performs in this role. Initially the thought that removing the requirement of disassociating would be beneficial, as that allows sorority women to remain active participants in aspect of their social identity thought to be highly salient. After all, group salience is knowledge of group memberships, and it is assumed that sorority members have a strong attachment to their organizations (Warber et al., 2011; Witkowsky, 2010). However, saliency of group membership in the overall social identity of a sorority woman could depend on where she is in her transition through her undergraduate membership. For example, where Maura described how she did not wear her sorority pin in a presentation to the Board of Trustees spoke to the notion that her sorority was not a prominent part of her identity any longer. On the other hand, Rebecca’s description of an upcoming date party and becoming a big sister spoke volumes of how she was truly enmeshed in the undergraduate sorority experience.

Further, as Coser (1974) noted, an individual exists at the intersection of many social circles. “Modern man is typically enmeshed in a web of group affiliations and hence subject to the pushes and pulls of many claimants to his commitments” (Coser, 1974, p. 2), and as such, individuals are responsible for multifaceted involvements with a number of role sets. If recruitment counselors are asked to perform the responsibilities of the role in their current iteration, save for the disassociation requirement, the recruitment counselor could encounter contradictory expectations, as was the case with the
recruitment counselor who did not recognize she broke a rule, but did identify when others did. Gilligan’s (1977) theory of women’s moral development articulates that women’s perceptions of self are more embedded within the relationships they build, and therefore issues of morality are “insistently contextual” (p. 482). Her research alludes to the inclination of women to develop morally through a sequence of three periods and two transitions, of which each level identifies complex relationships between the self and others (Evans et al., 2010). According to Gilligan (1977), women identify care and responsibility as their moral compass. Within this theory, the beginning or first level is “orientation to individual survival” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 112). “The goal at this level is to fulfill individual desires and needs for the purposes of preserving the self” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 112). Here, the recruitment counselor is seemingly unaware that by revealing and sharing information about PNMs to her sorority sisters is benefiting her survival as a chapter member; and that she is not considering the relationship she has with the PNMs, for which she is responsible for allowing to participate in the sorority recruitment process free of bias. What is more is the transition period following “orientation to individual survival,” called “from selfishness to responsibility” is attachment and connection to others (Evans et al., 2010, p. 112). The recruitment counselor is cementing her membership in the sorority by disregarding the implicit and explicit customs and guidelines of the recruitment process, specifically as it relates to the recruitment counselor role.
Transitions Within Their Own Sorority Experience

In listening to their answers to the interview questions, as well as reading and re-reading the interview transcripts, the unique personalities of this particular collection of Pi Chis at this university are evident. They were not solely transitioning through the recruitment counselor role, but also through their sorority experience as well. These women range from seniors who are clearly making the transition from demonstrably involved to markedly retired in their sorority experience, like Katherine, Maura, and Annie who spoke about saying goodbye and graduation in their interviews with me.

Davis and Myers (2012) talked about this in their study of planned organizational exit. The study described the experiences of 31 sorority women nearing graduation at two universities, and examined the communication and organizational identification as members disengage from active sorority membership (Davis & Myers, 2012). The researchers describe members’ planned exit as “the time of exit is predetermined at entry” (Davis & Myers, 2012, p. 194), which is the case with active membership in a sorority. One is only active while enrolled in the college or university where the sorority is chartered; after graduation she is then considered an alumna of the organization. Therefore, women who join sororities know their membership will end at the time of graduation or departure from the university. Davis and Myers reported that although individuals enter these roles with full awareness of their end date, they still may feel reluctance or loss as the date grows closer and they are required to retire from their roles and their membership within the sorority. “They also may anticipate a change in their personal and social identities as they leave their organizational roles” (Davis & Myers,
The notion of reluctance in planned organizational exit was most evident in Katherine’s second interview. Initially, Katherine spoke about not wanting to make connections with the new members in her sorority, because she was not as sure as to how she was going to be involved with sorority after graduation. This is contradictory to a later statement she made in her second interview, indicating,

I’m gonna go to the new member-ed class on Sunday to introduce myself and get to know them [the new members]. I want them to see me like a role model and what a senior [Sorority D] is all about and all that. Especially since I’m gonna be making my exit soon. I kind of want the girls to be like, “oh, I wanna be like [Katherine],” and stuff like that.

Katherine wanted to be liked; to be seen as an example in the sorority and leave a sort of legacy in the chapter.

Returning to transition in the sorority experience, there was also Rebecca, the sole second-year student. Rebecca reported being so positively impacted by her experience as a recruitment counselor, the following year she was elected as the Panhellenic officer responsible for selection, training, and implementation of the recruitment counselor program (Rebecca, December 15, 2015, personal communication). However, in her third interview, she was concerned about with whom she would match for her little sister in the sorority and what the details of the next social event were. This is evidence that Rebecca is in the center of her sorority experience; that her departure from her time-limited sorority membership was a distant thought.
**Disassociating Virtually**

Are recruitment counselors actually disassociated from their sorority if they are still able to remain contact with their sisters, even in a virtual space? Because of the fast-paced evolution of technology, in concert with the ways individuals interact with one another electronically, looking into disassociating virtually presents a strong opportunity for additional inquiry, especially with regard to the influence it could have on the recruitment counselor's experience of disassociation.

Participation in social networks such as Facebook groups or other forms of electronic communication, even if only as a consumer of the information, still provides an opportunity for the recruitment counselor to be knowledgeable about what is happening with regard to their sorority’s recruitment process. Knowing about the sorority’s recruitment plans is in direct opposition to NPC best practices and policies. NPC (2016) “disapproves of the presence of membership recruitment counselors and other designated Panhellenic personnel at chapter membership recruitment events” (p. 50), and further, stipulates recruitment counselors are to be completely “disassociated” from their respective NPC chapters for the period immediately preceding recruitment. Therefore, engaging with their sorority sisters in virtual outlets could be construed as the same as engaging in person.

In addition, how PNMs acquire information about a sorority, or its members, prior to joining, is of interest, especially now that electronic communication and social media have a strong presence in the lives of undergraduate students. In a study of newcomers to organizations, Morrison (1994) shared that those newcomers engage in information
seeking in order to reduce uncertainty and to better understand, predict, and control their environments. Morrison also found that new organizational members acquire information primarily through monitoring others’ behaviors, as well as asking their peers, and that personal sources of information were utilized more frequently to obtain information regarding group norms and customs, in comparison to impersonal sources (Morrison, 1994).

This does not, however, account for the ways that individuals obtain information prior to joining or seeking membership in an organization. Burnett et al. (1997) found that participants in their study “seek information from certain sources to determine attractiveness of an organization” (p. 301), and therefore recommend that sororities be aware of how women choose to join a sorority and decide which sorority they would like to join based on their ways of seeking out and gathering information. This is especially true of social media. In their most basic sense, social media (or social networks) are meant to bring people together, to create, interact, collaborate, and share in the process of creating as well as consuming content” (Obar, 2015, p. 746). User-generated content such as photographs, tweets, status updates, and even Yik Yak posts (also called “yaks”) could be those personal sources of information that provide evidence to outsiders of what is customary and acceptable to the sorority, through its members’ personal information.

**Expansion of the Study**

Expanding this study to include additional recruitment counselors from different sorority communities and university environments could be lucrative, as it would better inform the NPC’s adoption of best practices. Part of why the disassociation requirement
is so ambiguous is due to the number of campuses’ sorority communities the guidelines have to address, and the vast differences between them. A large, public, urban institution, whose sorority community engages in a less formal sorority recruitment in the middle of the academic year, is going to utilize recruitment counselors in a very different fashion than the school represented in this particular study.

Further, it would be interesting to see how the involvement in sorority by the women who served as recruitment counselors in this (or any subsequent) study evolved or changed, and whether or not those changes were a result of serving as a recruitment counselor. According to Hogg (2006), more prototypical members of a given group may have more influence, whereas less prototypical group members tend to be almost unpopular, with relatively little to no influence over the rest of the group. Recruitment counselors may be the less prototypical version of the sorority’s ideal and this unknowingly led them to serving as a recruitment counselor, for they found it a way to be influential. It would be interesting to know today what Jane, Kate, Katherine, Marie, Maura, Natalie, and Rebecca’s involvement with their sororities looked like months after their return. Now that they have seen their sorority as an outside member, is their perspective altered?

**Researcher Reflections**

When I initially framed this study, of most interest to me was whether or not undergraduate sorority women thought that disassociation was a necessary component of sorority recruitment, and what their feelings were toward it. It came from years of advising the sorority recruitment process on three campuses where it was difficult to
encourage women to apply to serve as recruitment counselors because it meant giving up their wardrobe for an extended period. It seemed as though it was more important to be able to wear letters than it was to help others join the community. My own personal experience with my classmates was also similar—almost no one wanted to do this because of something they were giving up, rather than seeing the role they were playing in someone else’s sorority experience; one of guiding and assisting in finding their own set of letters to wear. It wasn’t until one of the sorority recruitment counselors I advised shared with me the notion of being a recruitment counselor was “giving up my letters, so she could find hers.”

Implications for Practitioners in Fraternity and Sorority Advising

The opportunities for additional research provide implications for the individual(s) who advise fraternity and sorority life on a campus, or for those who volunteer their time with sororities. However, one implication in particular should be considered, especially when training and preparing recruitment counselors for navigating the emotions of the PNMs.

Participating in the recruitment process as a sorority woman, they see all the PNMs come through their event, and when a PNM does not attend the next day, the sorority women do not really think about it or even know why the PNM is not there, because each sorority woman is responsible for getting to know those who are there. However, for the recruitment counselor, their responsibility is to that small group of PNMs, and each Pi Chi is responsible for talking through a decision-making process that is in no way transparent.
Rebecca inadvertently articulated the opposite when she shared that as recruitment counselors, they would not want PNMs to preference an organization or accept a bid from an organization if they were not comfortable with the group.

These processes at work are what can sometimes make the recruitment process more difficult to navigate for both PNMs and recruitment counselors. Goffman’s (1959) self-presentation is helpful for understanding the processes at work in this study. If social interaction is a performance as Goffman described, then the sorority recruitment process is the play, and the sorority women are the actors, as social actors attempt to manage others’ impressions of the group. The sorority women are a performance team, or the “individuals who cooperate in staging a single routine” (Goffman, 1959, p. 79) and the “routine” is the recruitment events. With the PNMs as the audience, the sorority women strive to attract them to want to be part of this exclusive group, as access to subsequent routines, or recruitment events, is by invitation.

The recruitment counselor models the behaviors the sorority women are looking for or “a visible model for the audience of the kind of response the performers are seeking” (Goffman, 1959, p. 146). Each is responsible for demonstrating the ideal of the sorority woman, while not privy to the insider information that sorority membership brings, which is the decision as to which PNM receives an invitation to join, and which PNM is denied. This was evident in the recruitment counselors’ descriptions of their interactions with unmatched PNMs. Rebecca defended the good work of the recruitment counselor, sharing “we have no say in how this system works and how the sororities rank.”
Processes within sorority recruitment are perceived by the recruitment counselors in this study as creating an air of vulnerability for the PNMs. All of these processes conducted outside of the role of the recruitment counselors make it difficult for the Pi Chi to explain to the PNM the situation when she is not matched to a sorority of her choice early on in the process. This becomes especially difficult when the PNMs' perception is they were not matched to a sorority based on looks or personality. Maura’s outlook is “it’s a fault in the way that recruitment is done, or maybe our school isn’t big enough so we don’t have chapters that suit every personality type.” Truly, the reasons for why a PNM is not matched are actually infinite.

Conclusion

Framed within transition, this qualitative study investigated the experiences of sorority recruitment counselors as they negotiated disassociating from their sorority as they transitioned into, throughout, and on from this role. Although research of experiences within sorority life are limited, there are related constructs and opportunities that could inform practitioners within the field of fraternity and sorority life advising on who best to guide sorority women who are serving as recruitment counselors, and assisting them in doing so successfully. The participants in this study all articulated an overall positive experience being a recruitment counselor and those who participated in the final interview conveyed that disassociating is a necessary requirement for this role.

This study revealed opportunities for expanded and additional research, as well as implications that could be developed into topics for recruitment counselor training sessions, including expansion of counseling skills, ethical leadership development,
making processes transparent, and making explicit the guidelines or practices related to
disassociation, specifically as it relates to social media and virtual spaces.
APPENDIX A

TIMELINE FOR RESEARCH
Appendix A

Timeline for Research

This schedule for conducting and analyzing research was followed for this study. Interviews are derived in accordance with procedures outlined by Seidman (2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IRB Application completed and submitted</strong></td>
<td>July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IRB application for this study was submitted again, reflecting the changes to the study. It is approved through July 2015.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dissertation Proposal Rewrites</strong></td>
<td>March 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will submit the rewrites to the proposal to the committee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment of Participants</strong></td>
<td>August 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will work with the professionals at both sites involved to recruit and make contact with the participants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Round One of Interviews:</strong></td>
<td>September 5 &amp; 7, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The focused life history interview</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Counselors at both institutions are selected and continue training at this time. The first round of interviews at both universities will consist of individual, in-depth responsive interviews. This type of interview puts the participant’s experience within the context of the study by asking questions (see Appendix D – Interview Protocol, first round) to describe her experience with sorority up to the point of this interview.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Round Two of Interviews:</strong></td>
<td>September 23-24, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The details of the experience interviews</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This round of interviews concentrates on the “lived experiences” of the participants within the context of sorority recruitment, being a recruitment counselor and being disaffiliated. Round two of interviews questions are constructed as a result of Round One of Data Analysis. This round of questions consists of asking them what they do on the job as a recruitment counselor, or to reconstruct a day of the sorority recruitment process. Asking for stories about the experiences as a recruitment counselor is a way of eliciting details (Seidman, 2013).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Round Three of Interviews:</strong></td>
<td>October 13-14, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Reflection on the meaning interviews</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Although all three interviews in the series focus on making meaning, in this third interview the participants are asked to reflect on the meaning of their experience of serving as a recruitment counselor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Analysis Completed</strong></td>
<td>January 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Written Dissertation (including chapters 4 and 5) are written</strong></td>
<td>April 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Written Dissertation Submitted to Dissertation Committee</strong></td>
<td>June 5, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dissertation Defense</strong></td>
<td>June 21, 2016, October 17, 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT
Appendix B

Recruitment Script

Recruitment Script & Materials

Principal Investigator: Dr. Mark Kretovics
Co-PI/Key Personnel: Katherine Carnell, doctoral candidate
Course Name and Number: HIED 80199: Dissertation I
                      HIED 80299: Dissertation II

Project: “We gave up our letters so you could find yours”: Recruitment Counselors’ negotiation
of voluntary disaffiliation from sorority membership

The following is the email text sent to each member of the University Recruitment Counselor
staff. The names and email addresses were provided by the Assistant Director & Director of
Student Activities at the University.

Dear <enter name here>:

I am requesting your assistance in a research project. My name is Kate Carnell and I am working
on my dissertation. I chose to study the experience of the sorority recruitment counselor, in
particular as it relates to being disassociated. I believe you have great to insight to share about your
experiences and therefore, I am asking you to consider sharing your ideas and feelings surrounding
serving as a Pi Chi in a series of three (3) individual, one-on-one interviews, occurring throughout
your experience this fall semester. The schedule of interviews is found here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>September 5-8, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>September 18-22, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 3</td>
<td>October 10-14, 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews will take place on your campus, and are being scheduled by email with me. Each of
our interviews will be audiotaped for the purposes of being transcribed at a later date. The
information you provide to a series of guiding questions will be the data that I am collecting and
will be utilized to write my dissertation.

Each interview may last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. I am the only individual to hear each
audio recording, which when completed will be transcribed to produce what are referred to as
“results.” Your audio recording will be stored in my office, locked, at the University of Mount
Union. The only other records of the interview will be written notes taken to make notes for the purpose of research, a typed transcript of your audio recording, as well as a signed informed consent document. You will receive a copy of that form for you, as well. You’ll be asked to sign a consent form each time we meet to interview. You may also be asked to review your audio recording with me and to potentially review the transcript of our conversation.

The most important thing for you to remember while you’re participating in this study is that there is no right or wrong answer to any questions asked. This interview is all about your experience! I am looking to learn about your overall experience as a sorority recruitment counselor, with specific attention paid to your experience of being disaffiliated from your sorority for an extended period of time. While the benefits of this study are not directly related to you, you are providing essential feedback that could influence changes to the ways in which sorority recruitment counselor training is conducted; as well as essential “insider” perspectives on the sorority recruitment process as a whole. You are also to withdraw from this study at any point or to feel free to not answer any questions for which you are unable or unconformable in answering.

If you would be willing to participate in this study, please contact Kate Carnell by email (kcarne11@kent.edu) on or before August 15, 2014 to schedule your interviews. More details about the study will be provided at the interview. In the meantime, should you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at the information provided below for your reference.

I sincerely appreciate your kind consideration of my dissertation! I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Kate Carnell
Doctoral Student, Higher Education Administration & Student Personnel, Kent State University
Director of Student Involvement & Leadership, University of Mount Union
kcarne11@kent.edu | carnelke@mountunion.edu
(330) 614-8402
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT
Appendix C

Informed Consent Document

Audiotape Consent Form

Project: “We gave up our letters so you could find yours”: Recruitment Counselors’ negotiation of voluntary disassociation from sorority membership

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by me, Kate Carnell, a doctoral student in the Higher Education & Student Personnel (HIED) program at Kent State University. This study is designed to learn about the transitional experiences of sorority women who’ve served as recruitment counselors, specifically as it relates to being disassociated from the sorority for a limited period of time. This research is being conducted for the dissertation requirement for the doctor of philosophy degree. I have selected to talk with you because you served as a recruitment counselor on your campus and are currently completing the sorority recruitment counselor experience.

This Informed Consent Document provides you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated benefits and risks of this research. Please read this information carefully and in its entirety. A copy will be provided for you to take with you.

What you will be asked to do:
Your participation in this study will require the completion of three separate individual, one-on-one interview with me, the researcher or PI – primary investigator. You will complete three interviews with me, scheduled to occur during the following timeframe:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>September 5-8, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>September 23-24, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 3</td>
<td>October 12-13, 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each interview should take approximately 50 minutes of your time. Your participation will be confidential in that I know who you are before the research process begins. Upon signing of this Informed Consent Document, you will be assigned a pseudonym. That pseudonym will be how you’ll be referred to, in writing, throughout the study and in the final document.

Each of our interviews will be audio-taped for the purpose of creating a transcription for analysis. It is quite possible that you may be contacted outside of our interviews, if necessary, to clarify answers to previously asked prompts. Again, should your exact responses (i.e., quotes) be used in the final copy of the study, your assigned pseudonym will be used to keep you, your sorority, and your university confidential.
Risks
Please be aware that you are, by no means, required to participate in any way. You may feel obligated to do so, but please be advised that your individual decision to participate is indeed yours. I do not foresee any risks to your day-to-day well-being as a result of participating in this study. The information you share will not be shared with any person on your campus other than through the written final copy of the dissertation. The only person knowing you by your pseudonym is the researcher (me).

Benefits
As a participant, the benefit to you is that by knowing your experiences as a recruitment counselor, you could inform future training and related practices that enable administrators and the National Panhellenic Council to make adjustments to the recruitment counselor role in order to be more effective and valuable to both those in the role, as well as the potential new members who count on the expertise of these selected sorority women.

Voluntary Participation
I highly encourage you to be open, honest and candid in your responses during the interviews as well, without feeling as though there are repercussions to such responses. This study is entirely driven by your descriptions of your experiences. All interviews will be audio recorded but data obtained will be used only for this study and will not be used outside of this study in any way. During the study, the information shared in audio recordings will be stored in the Office of Student Affairs at the University of Mount Union, which is where I currently work. This Informed Consent Document will be stored separately in my advisor’s office, located in White Hall at Kent State University. After the completion of the study, and in the event of possible presentation of results, the data (including audio recordings) will continue to be on file in the division of student affairs at the University of Mount Union until such presentation is made.

Because taking part in this study is completely up to you, you may not only choose not to participate, but also you may discontinue your participation at any time, and may feel free not to answer any questions as you see fit.

Audio Recording
This study involves the audio recording of three, one-on-one in-depth interviews in order to provide data supporting the study. Again, each recording will be transcribed in the data analysis portion of this study and will also be placed on file in the Office of Student Affairs at the University of Mount Union. The audio recordings will only be used for data transcription and analysis, and will not be shared with any other participant or fraternity/sorority life professional on any campus in any other way, other than the completed, written dissertation, publication, and/or in a presentation (e. g., at a national conference such as the Association of Fraternity Advisors Annual Meeting or for publication in the AFA Oracle).
You may listen to your audio recording at any time, upon request. The audio recording will be destroyed approximately two (2) years upon completion and acceptance of this dissertation. Further, you may be asked to listen to your own audio recording for clarification purposes.

I agree to participate in an audio-taped interview about my experience as a sorority recruitment counselor as part of this project and for the purposes of data analysis. I agree that Kate Carnell may audio-tape this interview. The date, time and place of the interview will be mutually agreed upon.

____________________________________  __________________
Signature                                      Date

I have been told that I have the right to listen to the recording of the interview before it is used. I have decided that I:

____ want to listen to the recording          ____ do not want to listen to the recording

Sign now below if you do not want to listen to the recording. If you want to listen to the recording, you will be asked to sign after listening to them.

Kate Carnell may / may not (circle one) use the audio-tapes made of me. The original tapes or copies may be used for:

____ this research project          ____ publication          ____ presentation at professional meetings

____________________________________  __________________
Signature                                      Date

Privacy
The information collected in your individual interview will not include identifying information. This signed Informed Consent Document will be kept separate from your interview transcript, and responses will not be linked to you, as you will be identified with a pseudonym.

Again, please know your information will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. Any identifying information will be kept in a secure location and only I and my dissertation committee will have access to the data. You will not be identified in any presentation of research results as individuals without your consent. If occasion of such arises, you will be able to review your comments and pseudonyms will be used.

Confidentiality may not be maintained if you indicate that you may do harm to yourself or others.
Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Kate Carnell at (330) 614-8402 or Dr. Mark Kretovics, dissertation advisor, at (330) 672-0642, or mkreto1@kent.edu. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at (330) 672-2704.

Consent Statement and Signature
I have read this Informed Consent Document and have had my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study, and with my signature below, I both understand that a copy of this Informed Consent Document will be provided to me for future reference, and provide my consent to participate in this research study.

___________________________________  __________________________
Participant Signature                  Date

____________________________________
Pseudonym
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEW)
Appendix D

Interview Protocol (Focused Life History Interview)

Interview Protocol
Participants are asked to engage in a series of three (3) in-depth interviews with regards to their experience as a sorority recruitment counselor. As a doctoral student at Kent State University in the Higher Education Administration & Student Personnel (HIED) program, these interviews are being conducted as part of dissertation research.

Participation in this study will require completion of three (3) interviews. Participation in this study is confidential, in that participation will only be identified by a pseudonym, assigned to the participant when the Informed Consent is signed. Each interview will be audiotaped for data collection and transcription purposes.

Names of the participants will only be recorded on their Informed Consent document. All names of participants and identifying information about specific sororities will be changed in the writing of the study. Using the Informed Consent form, all participants will be provided with a pseudonym, which is the only document linking the data gathered in the interviews and the participants’ individual information. The pseudonym will be assigned at the time the informed consent form is signed, and the participant will then be referred to by that pseudonym for the remainder of the study.

Participants will not be paid or receive extra credit for any classes as a result of participating in this study. It is believed that this interview does not involve any risks. The experiences of sorority women are important for making policy decisions as those experiences relate to the sorority recruitment process.

Disassociation is required for recruitment counselors by the National Panhellenic Conference and the national/international offices of sororities may benefit from knowing more of this information if, for instance, disassociation for a brief amount of time could lead to attrition in overall sorority membership. Professionals who work daily with the sorority experience are in need of data to support decisions surrounding recruitment and membership practices in the best interest of their campus. The primary audiences for this study are university professionals who work specifically with sorority life students, their advisors and the National Panhellenic Conference member delegates and officers.

Research Question
What are the experiences of participants as they negotiate disassociating throughout the entirety of the transition into, through and then out of their sorority recruitment counselor role?
Interview #1 – The Life History Interview (Seidman, 2013)
Scheduled for September 5-7, 2014
The first interview, called the life history interview, is meant to establish the context of the participants’ experiences (Seidman, 2013). The Pi Chi staff will be asked about how they experienced sorority recruitment themselves; why/how/when they decided to become a recruitment counselor, and bringing them up to the present point of their sorority recruitment counselor experience.

Research Sub-Questions addressed in this interview: What is the recruitment counselor’s experience of sorority so far? Why become a recruitment counselor? What is the sorority recruitment counselor’s experience as she moves away from her sorority and into the recruitment counselor role?

Interview Prompts
- Tell me about your sorority experience so far.
  o How did you decide to join? Did you go through recruitment?
  o If you went through formal recruitment, tell me about your Pi Chi. (what were your interactions? Did you “utilize” your Pi Chi? Was she in the sorority that you ultimately joined or a different one? Did you ever guess what sorority she was in or did you already know?)
- Describe your current level of involvement in your sorority. Do you hold a position? Are you on any committees?
- How did you decide to become a recruitment counselor?
- What were the reactions of your sisters when you decided to become a recruitment counselor?
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCE INTERVIEW)
Appendix E

Interview Protocol (Contemporary Experience Interview)

Interview Protocol
Participants are asked to engage in a series of three (3) in-depth interviews with regards to their experience as a sorority recruitment counselor. As a doctoral student at Kent State University in the Higher Education Administration & Student Personnel (HIED) program, these interviews are being conducted as part of dissertation research.

Participation in this study will require completion of three (3) interviews. Participation in this study is confidential, in that participation will only be identified by a pseudonym, assigned to the participant when the Informed Consent is signed. Each interview will be audiotaped for data collection and transcription purposes.

Names of the participants will only be recorded on their Informed Consent document. All names of participants and identifying information about specific sororities will be changed in the writing of the study. Using the Informed Consent form, all participants will be provided with a pseudonym, which is the only document linking the data gathered in the interviews and the participants’ individual information. The pseudonym will be assigned at the time the informed consent form is signed, and the participant will then be referred to by that pseudonym for the remainder of the study.

Participants will not be paid or receive extra credit for any classes as a result of participating in this study. It is believed that this interview does not involve any risks. The experiences of sorority women are important for making policy decisions as those experiences relate to the sorority recruitment process.

Disassociation is required for recruitment counselors by the National Panhellenic Conference and the national/international offices of sororities may benefit from knowing more of this information if, for instance, disassociation for a brief amount of time could lead to attrition in overall sorority membership. Professionals who work daily with the sorority experience are in need of data to support decisions surrounding recruitment and membership practices in the best interest of their campus. The primary audiences for this study are university professionals who work specifically with sorority life students, their advisors and the National Panhellenic Conference member delegates and officers.

Research Question
What are the experiences of participants as they negotiate disassociating throughout the entirety of the transition into, though and then out of their sorority recruitment counselor role?

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Interview #2 – The Contemporary Interview (Seidman, 2013)
The second interview, the contemporary interview, provides the opportunity for the participants in the study to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context of the experience (Seidman, 2013). Therefore, this set of interviews will be conducted immediately following sorority recruitment at the university on campus, while they’re engaging in being recruitment counselors.

Research Sub-Questions addressed in this interview: What is it like being a Pi Chi?

Interview Prompts/Probes/Questions
- What’s it like being a Pi Chi? Tell me more about what life has been like since you signed up in terms of your relationships with your sisters.
- Tell me about your relationships with the other recruitment counselors.
  o In what ways do you support one another?
- Tell me about your relationships with the potential new members in your group or going through the recruitment process.
  o What’s it like when you connect with them?
  o What’s it like when you feel like you’re not connecting with them?
  o How neutral/objective/impartial do you feel when you’re discussing recruitment with them? What about when you discuss their choice of sorority(ies)?
  o How do you portray your objectivity/impartiality?
- What are the emotions you’re experiencing while you talk to a potential new member about . . .
  o another sorority, knowing you would like the PNM to join yours?
  o your own sorority, knowing you would like the PNM to join?
  o your own sorority, thinking you’d like her to want to join a different one but she likes yours?
  o the PNM withdrawing from recruitment because she wasn’t invited back to the sorority she originally was the most interested in? and it’s yours?
  o someone in your group who was eliminated from recruitment all together?
- What is your current interaction with your affiliated sisters, in other words those who are not disassociated/disaffiliated, like right now?
- What are the recruitment events like?
  o What does it feel like to go to recruitment events as a Pi Chi?
  o When you see your sisters as you take your group to the recruitment event?
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (REFLECTION ON THE MEANING INTERVIEW)
Appendix F

Interview Protocol (Reflection on the Meaning Interview)

Interview Protocol
Participants are asked to engage in a series of three (3) in-depth interviews with regards to their experience as a sorority recruitment counselor. As a doctoral student at Kent State University in the Higher Education Administration & Student Personnel (HIED) program, these interviews are being conducted as part of dissertation research.

Participation in this study will require completion of three (3) interviews. Participation in this study is confidential, in that participation will only be identified by a pseudonym, assigned to the participant when the Informed Consent is signed. Each interview will be audiotaped for data collection and transcription purposes.

Names of the participants will only be recorded on their Informed Consent document. All names of participants and identifying information about specific sororities will be changed in the writing of the study. Using the Informed Consent form, all participants will be provided with a pseudonym, which is the only document linking the data gathered in the interviews and the participants’ individual information. The pseudonym will be assigned at the time the informed consent form is signed, and the participant will then be referred to by that pseudonym for the remainder of the study.

Participants will not be paid or receive extra credit for any classes as a result of participating in this study. It is believed that this interview does not involve any risks. The experiences of sorority women are important for making policy decisions as those experiences relate to the sorority recruitment process.

Disassociation is required for recruitment counselors by the National Panhellenic Conference and the national/international offices of sororities may benefit from knowing more of this information if, for instance, disassociation for a brief amount of time could lead to attrition in overall sorority membership. Professionals who work daily with the sorority experience are in need of data to support decisions surrounding recruitment and membership practices in the best interest of their campus. The primary audiences for this study are university professionals who work specifically with sorority life students, their advisors and the National Panhellenic Conference member delegates and officers.

Research Question
What are the experiences of participants as they negotiate disassociating throughout the entirety of the transition into, though and then out of their sorority recruitment counselor role?
Interview #3 – The Reflection on Meaning Interview (Seidman, 2013)
This third experience, the reflection on meaning interview, encourages participants in the study to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them (Seidman, 2013). The last in the interview series will enable the recruitment counselors to reflect on their experience of serving as a Pi Chi, as well as what it means so far being “back” and “associated” with their own sorority.

Research Sub-Questions addressed in this interview: What is the experience of moving on from being a Pi Chi to returning to full-fledged sorority membership? What was the overall Pi Chi experience like?

Interview Prompts/Probes/Questions
- How were your expectations of serving as a recruitment counselor/Pi Chi met?
- How were your expectations of serving as a recruitment counselor/Pi Chi not met?
- Once recruitment ended, tell me all about Bid Day. What emotions did you experience?
  o What was it like to go to your own chapter’s celebration?
  o What was it like to see your sisters and interact with them as a “member” again?
  o What was it like to “wear letters”?
- What has meant to be a Pi Chi?
  o What has been the most rewarding part of being a Pi Chi?
- In your opinion, and based upon your experience, talk about being disassociated.
  o What was the experience of disassociating from your sorority like?
  o Do you ever really feel disaffiliated from your sorority? Why or why not?
  o Talk about how you viewed your sorority (or sorority life in general) while you were disaffiliated. What feelings, thoughts, and ideas do you remember having while you were “outside” the chapter?
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