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The nature of inclusivity and exclusivity of social Greek letter organizations on college campuses: A case study, Eastern Michigan University

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The Nature of Inclusivity and Exclusivity of Social Greek-Letter Organizations on College Campuses: A Case Study, Eastern Michigan University

by
Casey Jordan Krone

Dissertation

Submitted to the College of Education
Eastern Michigan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
Educational Leadership

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Ypsilanti, Michigan
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the women of the J.P.N., to trailblazing women everywhere, and especially to Mom, Grandma Jordan, and Grandma in Tennessee. Thank you for all of the sacrifices you have made so that I could have this experience. I hope I have made you proud.
Acknowledgments

Many people supported me throughout this dissertation process. Whether it was asking me about my progress, or showing interest in learning more about my topic, or understanding when I needed to dedicate time to writing and could not be present for other things, your understanding, support, and patience helped in more ways than you could know.

To Dr. Flowers and my committee members, thank you. I know how busy you all are, and I am so thankful for the time that you shared with to help me create a dissertation of which I can be proud. I have transformed as a student in this program, and I acknowledge that this transformation is a result of being in your classes, having conversations with each of you, and witnessing your dedication and passion for lifelong learning.

To my husband, Chris, thank you. Thank you for allowing me the space and time to do something that was so important to me. You’ve seen me writing at all hours of the day and have been patient throughout the process. Thank you for supporting me, encouraging me, and believing in me. You’ve been there since the first graduation and for each one since.

To my family, I promise this is the last graduation I’ll ask you to attend. Thank you to my parents for providing me with the educational opportunities I have had. You ignited my passion for learning, which has led me to this point. Thank you for making sure I knew that I could do anything I set my mind to, and then supporting me when I chose to take this on.

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Amber and Alexis, I spent more hours in the archives than I expected, but it was worth it to connect with the two of you. Thank you for all that you both do to preserve the history of our institution. It’s so important, and I hope you know how appreciated you are. Thank you for helping me to navigate the research, for being such good listeners, and for being so supportive. It’s been a nice bonus to gain new friendships during this process.
Abstract

Social Greek-letter organizations have been exclusive since their inception in 1776. As an educator working with Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University, I was faced with a lack of information and needed strategies for assisting Greek-letter organizations on campus that expressed interest in being inclusive of students who identified as transgender. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the role and function of social Greek-letter organizations, specifically the nature of inclusivity and exclusivity of these organizations on college campuses. Given the unique nature of Eastern Michigan University as one of the most diverse college campuses in America, in this study, I focused on the development of social Greek-letter organizations on the EMU campus. In addition, I sought to place EMU in the context of Greek-letter organizations on American campuses. To accomplish this goal, I developed a contextual understanding of Greek-letter organizations in the United States. I had six research questions I sought to answer as a result of my research:

1. How did Greek-letter organizations begin?
2. What has been the place of Greek-letter organizations in higher education?
3. How have Greek-letter organizations evolved over time?
4. How did Greek-letter organizations emerge at Eastern Michigan University?
5. How have Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University evolved over time?
6. How are Greek-letter organizations organized?

I conducted a qualitative case study. The Eastern Michigan University Greek community was my unit of analysis. I used archival research and unobtrusive data. Data was organized chronologically as well as by themes. As a result of this research study, I believe Greek
organizations are inherently exclusive. They were born out of the context of higher education in American, which was also created as an elite institution for White, Protestant men. As Greek organizations currently exist in America, I do not believe they are truly capable of being inclusive in nature.
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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Greek-letter organizations have been part of American college campuses for over 200 years. People have questioned the role of these organizations in terms of their presence on higher education campuses, their relationship to the institution, and their positive or negative effects on the institution and students. Greek-letter organizations operate within a dynamic and changing context. For example, women, minority students, various religious groups, and students with different sexual and gender identities are visible on modern college campuses across America. Leaders of Greek-letter organizations, much like leaders at higher education institutions, have attempted to adapt to new groups of students becoming a part of the higher education landscape. New Greek-letter organizations have formed over time so each of these groups can experience fraternal life. Higher education professionals must grapple with issues involving assimilating these student groups into Greek-letter organizations. Researchers who have examined the membership practices of Greek-letter organizations over time have found the organizations’ role, purpose, and relevancy on college campuses are still in question 200 years after their inception.

Statement of the Problem

Greek-letter organizations have formed for many reasons over the years. The first Greek-letter organizations formed as literary societies exclusive to men (Hastings, 1965). Women formed their own versions of these organizations to prove their worth and ability in higher education. New organizations formed when existing group members excluded members of religious groups. In fact, Greek-letter organizations have been exclusive since their inception. Members organized them to persist, not necessarily to change. As transgender students have attempted to join Greek-letter organizations, they have been
excluded—thus, the exclusivity problem recurs. Greek-letter organizations are exclusive by nature; inclusion of a new student group has presented challenges for Greek-letter organizations as well as opportunities for further research.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the role and function of social Greek-letter organizations, specifically the nature of inclusivity and exclusivity of these organizations on college campuses. Given the unique nature of Eastern Michigan University, as one of the most diverse college campuses in America, in this study, I focused on the development of social Greek-letter organizations on the EMU campus. In addition, I sought to place EMU in the context of Greek-letter organizations on American campuses. To accomplish this goal, I developed a contextual understanding of Greek-letter organizations in the United States.

**Research Questions**

The nature of this study involved developing deeper awareness and understanding of working with a group of students within the fraternity and sorority system. To date, little professional guidance, literature, or established processes and procedures exist on this topic. The reasons for conceiving this study were largely attributable to my frustration and lack of understanding about how to support a minority group within Greek-letter organizations. I felt a responsibility to understand the development and evolution of Greek-letter societies on American college campuses. I determined that achieving this goal could involve asking specific questions of students, faculty, staff, as well as conducting my own research on the history and purpose of Greek-letter organizations in America. My initial question was “How?” Through exploring the history of Greek-letter organizations, I found patterns and trends
emerging that revealed the way in which Greek-letter organizations have become inclusive or exclusive of student groups over time. During that process of exploring literature, the following questions began to guide the study:

1. How did Greek-letter organizations begin?
2. What has been the place of Greek-letter organizations in higher education?
3. How have Greek-letter organizations evolved over time?
4. How did Greek-letter organizations emerge at Eastern Michigan University?
5. How have Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University evolved over time?
6. How are Greek-letter organizations organized?

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for several reasons. First, this study is significant because of its focus on illuminating the role and function of fraternities and sororities at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). Second, this study could have significance for others in the student affairs profession as they work with students in the higher education environment. Many populations of students discussed in this dissertation are present on other college campuses, and other practitioners may find utility in what I have found. Third, in this study, I sought to inform my practice as a leader in the field of higher education and student affairs. Fourth, I sought to use this study as a method to gain a deeper understanding of the large and storied system of Greek-letter organizations on a national level. Fifth, I hoped to gain a better understanding of my personal experience as a lifelong member of a Greek-letter organization. The final purpose of this study was to develop myself as a professional, an individual, and a scholar. I provide detail in the following paragraphs.
Focus on EMU. This study is significant because of its focus on illuminating the role and function of fraternities and sororities at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). As a large public institution that has hosted Greek-letter organizations almost since its establishment in 1849 as a university, EMU provided a context in which to view the history and development of Greek-letter organizations throughout history and may constitute a helpful platform for understanding Greek-letter organization on other campuses as well. Additionally, this study is significant because it has the potential to create a framework for initiating conversations among EMU campus leaders, Greek-letter national leaders, and students as they attempt to create environments that are more inclusive for students.

Provide tools for students and members. This study is significant because it may provide tools for students and members. As a student affairs professional whose primary concern at work is the welfare of students, I have lacked the appropriate tools or resources to support students who asked questions about membership practices within the Greek-letter community. I have also felt at times that I did not have the appropriate knowledge base or experience to answer questions members of the Greek-letter community asked about membership, resources, policy, and building an inclusive community. These questions were important to me because Greek-letter life served as a vehicle for my extracurricular involvement and provided a community that challenged me to grow as an individual. I would want that opportunity to be open for anyone who might want it; however, I also acknowledge the shortcomings of at least the EMU Greek-letter community in having the knowledge, skills, and tools to know how to support or include members of minority populations. I have experienced frustration over the challenge Greek-letter organizations have faced nationwide as their leaders tackle the inclusion of minority groups over time. I have found it difficult to
accept that students still face exclusion, perhaps through unwritten policies or simply because Greek-letter members lack knowledge and fear what might happen if they include students who are different.

To date, national chapter leaders have been unable to provide clear answers on membership policies for transgender students. I believe this lack of clarity represents a disregard for students who attend college as well as a disregard for current members who may need education about how to support an inclusive chapter at their respective institutions. I cannot say with certainty that every university Greek-letter community would welcome training or resources regarding transgender inclusivity; however, from attending national conferences for fraternity and sorority professionals, I know that many professionals have asked for resources to serve their students more effectively. Further, my findings may illuminate conditions at Greek-letter organizations at other institutions beyond EMU. Greek-letter organizations are inherently exclusive, so other practitioners may find my study interesting or applicable as they work with various groups in their Greek-letter communities or in other communities on campus. Others who work with students may find this research on inclusivity and exclusivity helpful as well.

**Inform effective decision-making and advising about policy.** The primary purpose of this study was to inform my practice as a leader in the field of higher education and student affairs, specifically as a professional working closely with members of Greek-letter organizations. As a student affairs practitioner, I wanted to use this study as a tool for improving my ability to support Greek-letter organizations and their members at EMU and Delta Tau Delta fraternity as they come to me with questions about policy interpretation and decision making. Prior to this research project, I believed not enough knowledge existed
about membership inclusivity within Greek-letter organizations, and because of this, Greek-
letter community students at EMU were not having the best experience possible as members
of these organizations. Further, I assumed that leaders at national headquarters were
unwilling to provide answers to their member chapters about membership of certain types of
students in their organizations. I had certain ideas about what Greek-letter organizations
could be, but I needed to understand the realities of Greek-letter organizations. This study has
informed my thinking, deepened my knowledge base, and therefore shaped my daily actions
as a leader in the field of higher education and student affairs. Applying the findings to
inform effective decision making could help other higher education professionals benefit
from this research.

**Gain a deeper understanding of national Greek-letter organizations.** Before this
study, I knew little about national Greek-letter organizations. Although I have volunteered
briefly for Sigma Sigma Sigma national headquarters, which required travel and a structural
understanding of paid staff and volunteers, my understanding of national organizations has
been limited to that brief period. National Greek-letter organizations have both similarities
and differences. I have communicated with a small number of national organizations in
operation because they have member chapters at EMU.

I sought to gain a deeper understanding of the large and storied system of Greek-letter
organizations operating on a national level. After this study, I hoped to have gained a deeper
understanding of the history of national organizations, the purposes of various organizations,
and the differences in membership practices and policies. I hoped to advance my professional
knowledge and skillset in higher education and student affairs, as well as to contribute to the
body of knowledge about Greek-letter organizations in America. I have worked closely with
Greek-letter organization members and chapters; therefore, seeking to understand the nature of Greek-letter organizations and the role they play in higher education was a logical next step. In my job, I am required to be knowledgeable about trends, practices, and policies that affect the chapters on campus at EMU. I believe that my effectiveness as a leader is contingent upon understanding the history of Greek-letter organizations both nationally and locally, as well as on my willingness to explore new trends and shifts in higher education. These endeavors help me better equip myself to make informed decisions as I advise students and write curricula. With this study, I have gained confidence and competence as it relates to communicating and collaborating with national headquarters to support the students with whom I work. Further, I am better equipped to answer questions about membership practices, to navigate the politics with national headquarters professionals, and to create educational materials for EMU students. Thus, this study has given me the tools to lead more effectively as a student affairs practitioner.

**Gain a better understanding of my personal experience as a lifelong member of a Greek-letter organization.** I hoped to gain a better understanding of my personal experiences as a lifelong member of a Greek-letter organization, which includes both the deep belief that Greek-letter organizations can foster positive personal development and the realization that if not handled responsibly, Greek-letter organizations can also create unhealthy, unsafe, and harmful environments. Although I feel fortunate to be a member of a Greek-letter organization, I have had mixed feelings about whether that experience was all it could have been. Being a member of a Greek-letter organization helped me build confidence and leadership skills and provided me with a social context that allowed me to enjoy my college experience. However, as a professional in the field, looking back, I remember times
when the chapter, campus professionals, and national headquarters fell short in educating members of the community on a variety of issues. As undergraduates, we did not often ask questions about membership practices; we did not take time to reflect formally on the purpose of our organization or ask whether it was a positive force on campus, welcoming students of all backgrounds. As a professional with more advanced knowledge and skills, I look at the gaps in programming and resources for members of Greek-letter organizations at EMU and spend my workdays attempting to close those gaps so that current undergraduates have an experience reflective of what they were promised. Thus, as students at EMU experience the processes leading up to initiation, they can learn more about what each respective organization can offer them. Greek-letter organizations offer various mission statements to appeal to students:

- “To believe in the worthiness and dignity of my fellow man, and judge him solely upon his personal worth and character” (Tau Kappa Epsilon, 2015, “Creed”).
- “At Delta Tau Delta, we believe in inspiring maturity, engaging the fellow community, and setting a positive example for those who follow” (Delta Tau Delta, 2015).
- “To believe in the life of love, to walk in the way of honor, to serve in the light of truth – this is the life, the way, and the light of Sigma Nu . . . this is the Creed of our Fraternity” (Sigma Nu, 2015, “Creed”).

To date, my experience beyond my undergraduate membership has consisted of serving as a Greek Life coordinator. I rarely attend alumni events for my own national organization, and beyond attending an annual conference for fraternity and sorority advisors, I have little involvement with other national organizations. I struggle with the desire to be
dedicated to my students and the issues they face on a daily basis while holding membership in an organization that may have very different ideas about what I should be doing as a campus professional or how I should be supporting my students. Throughout this process, I have learned more about what it means to be a lifelong member of an organization and what “giving back” can really look like. Prior to this study, I defined alumni membership narrowly. I now know that I can make changes in my field and, specifically, within the scope of working with undergraduate students in Greek-letter organizations while not necessarily agreeing or aligning with what might be going on with many national organizations. I am still thankful for all the doors that Greek-letter life membership has opened to me, but I also have a better understanding of which doors I will enter and which I will leave unopened.

**Develop myself as an individual, a professional, and a scholar.** The final purpose of this study was self-development. I hoped to develop myself as an individual, a professional, and a scholar while supporting the progress of Greek-letter organizations toward an ideal—inclusivity for all interested students. Mentors and classmates have told me repeatedly that compared to any other challenge I have faced, this process would require a different type of commitment, discipline, and endurance. I knew this research process would push me further, both professionally and academically. By completing this research study, I have proven to myself that I am competent in my field, that I can endure what sometimes seemed like endless hours of writing—or not writing—and that ultimately, I could become an expert in a subject I previously felt I knew little about.

**Self-interest in research and discovery.** My interest in conducting this study came from my personal frustration as a professional in student affairs. I realized that professionals lacked guidance and knowledge regarding how to support transgender students who were
joining fraternities and sororities. Further, students lacked the support of their peers in learning how to be inclusive toward students who identified as transgender. In order to remedy the problem, I needed to understand the role and function of Greek-letter organizations in higher education so that I could place the organizations from EMU in that larger context.

**Background of the Problem**

**United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights statement on Title IX and transgender membership in fraternities and sororities.** In November 2014, Douglas Case, coordinator for the Lambda 10 Project for Fraternities and Sororities, wrote a letter to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights requesting guidance regarding the membership of transgender students in social fraternities and sororities. Specifically, Case requested confirmation that Title IX did not apply to the membership practices of social fraternities and sororities. In December 2014, Catherine Lhamon, the assistant secretary for Civil Rights, explained that Title IX specifically excluded the membership practices of a social fraternity or sorority as long as the organization was exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code and its active membership primarily consisted of students at institutions of higher education. Lhamon stated “So long as a social fraternity or sorority meets these conditions, its membership practices are exempt from Title IX regardless of whether that organization admits transgender students”). This explanation was important. Social fraternities or sororities would not jeopardize their protection under Title IX, even if they decided to admit transgender students. This clear interpretation provided by the Office of Civil Rights showed that social fraternities and sororities could decide on a national level what their membership practices would be
regarding transgender students. However, the statement still left students at the local level guessing whether national organization leaders would allow them to join.

**National Greek-letter organizations’ Title IX interpretations and stated membership practices.** As described in the literature review, a small number of social fraternities and sororities have released their own interpretations of Title IX as it relates to their respective membership practices for students who identify as transgender. Of the hundreds of social fraternities and sororities that exist, however, only these few have actually clarified their statement on inclusivity of transgender individuals. Other undergraduate students, affiliated or unaffiliated with a Greek organization, must guess what their experience might be regarding transgender inclusivity and membership practices of other social fraternities and sororities. Of the few organizations that have clarified their stance on transgender membership, none has a chapter at EMU. Thus, all chapters at EMU currently lack an interpretation of Title IX or any other stated policies and practices regarding membership of transgender students. The problem is that the nature of Greek-letter organizations in history has not been one of inclusion.

**Students looking for answers.** Throughout the years of my employment at EMU, students, chapter advisors, and other professionals have approached me with questions about how to be inclusive to transgender students interested in joining social Greek-letter organizations. In every case, students sought answers on how to be inclusive and how to navigate national policies. Students with whom I interacted were always interested in being proactive and inclusive rather than exclusive. Students’ questions were mostly about what might be possible. They wanted to know if they could offer a bid or recruit an individual who identified as transgender without violating their respective national headquarter policies.
They did not often go to their national headquarters first, because as undergraduates, they had little control over what happened at the national level. In fact, structurally, outside of daily activities, students have little control over much of what happens organizationally.

In addition, there are written national policies, and then there are unwritten policies. When my students asked questions of their national headquarters, leaders usually told them no policy was currently in place for inclusion of transgender members. Sometimes they were told “no,” even though a policy did not exist prohibiting inclusion. Many times, by not asking, students were actually able to move forward with recruiting a variety of members. Students also wanted to know how to support a member of their chapter effectively beyond initiation. Some wanted appropriate educational resources for other members of their chapter who might not have known how to use the most inclusive language or who did not fully understand the meaning of the word *transgender*. Unfortunately, when students reached out to me, I had no simple, uniform approach I could apply.

In the course of this study, when I called the representatives at every national headquarters that had a chapter at EMU, I received different answers or no answer at all. The organizations did not always have set policies in place, nor did leaders provide educational resources that students could easily access to support members of their chapter who identified as transgender. I believe the reason that policies were not yet consistently in place in many national organizations was that organizational leaders did not want to be the first to change. Alternatively, the change process may be so slow that many of these organizational leaders had not been able to make that change happen. This is the nature of the problem. For the most part, I advised students to recruit and initiate any students they wanted as long as the action did not violate a stated policy from their national headquarters. Subsequently, I tried to
connect the chapter president and members to different programs that could help educate the members on how to be more inclusive and supportive to members who may have openly identified as transgender.

I learned to create my own approach to the problem, which was different for each situation in which a transgender student joined a chapter. The trouble with this approach was that the support of the national leaders was not always in place. Students did not often find answers or support from the national level. In one case, a sorority woman who had already affiliated with a chapter at EMU decided to begin her transition, and as a result, no longer felt welcome or included in the chapter. In this situation, national leaders did not support the chapter or this particular student. The student ended up leaving the chapter. Students have been looking for answers, and I have felt frustrated—as a professional who should be able to give them answers—at my attempts to navigate the various viewpoints of national leaders and at the lack of resources for students who were attempting to be inclusive and supportive to brothers and sisters.

Summary

When I arrived at Eastern Michigan University and found that students who identified in the LGBTQ spectrum were present in the Greek-letter community, I was happy to see that so much had seemingly changed since I was an undergraduate student. This inclusion was not necessarily unique to EMU, but it certainly was not the norm on a national level, and was definitely not supported in many Greek-letter communities in the nation. It seemed that the current students in the EMU community were more interested in who would be a good member of their organization, rather than focusing on a student’s identity as a barrier to membership.
However, students began approaching me with feelings of helplessness and frustration when they did not know where to go with questions about transgender membership and educational resources. I was frustrated to discover students who were ready to explore issues and support their peers were either meeting with resistance, or worse, indifference from their respective national leaders. With the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights interpretation of Title IX and Greek Life membership, it seemed that students finally received an explanation. They no longer had to guess who they were allowed to recruit or initiate as members. Even with this Title IX interpretation, however, students were still being given vague explanations about violations of “unwritten” rules, and resources from national headquarters that students could access to learn more about inclusivity remained unavailable.

Definitions of Relevant Terms

In this section, I provide definitions of terms used frequently throughout this document to give the reader context and understanding of relevant concepts. I wrote these definitions for this study; therefore, they are relevant and useful only for this study and are not intended for any other purpose beyond the scope of this document.

Association of Pedagogical Sororities/Association of Education Sororities (APS/AES). This was the umbrella organization for teacher’s sororities, founded in 1916 and operated until 1947.

Black Greek-letter organization (BGLO). This term is sometimes used to refer to organizations affiliated with National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC).

College Panhellenic Council (CPC). This is the local governing body for National Panhellenic Council-affiliated sororities active at Eastern Michigan University. The council
consists of elected individuals and meets regularly; its voting members comprise delegates from each sorority. The CPC was sometimes referred to as the Panhellenic Association during the early years at Michigan State Normal College.

**The Conservatory.** This is the term used to describe the music department, which was added to Michigan State Normal College in 1854. In many sororities, women formed the Conservatory, and many patronesses were faculty from the Conservatory.

**Eastern Michigan College.** When Michigan State Normal College experienced increased enrollment and added new departments after WWII, college leaders changed the name to Eastern Michigan College in 1956; the name remained until 1959.

**Eastern Michigan University (EMU).** When Eastern Michigan College added a graduate school to its already growing institution in 1959, it became Eastern Michigan University. I may refer to EMU as *the university* or *the institution* throughout this document.

**Fraternity.** Fraternity is the term I use to describe social Greek-letter organizations whose membership is designated for men only.

**Greek-letter community.** I use this term to describe the community of social Greek-letter organizations present at Eastern Michigan University during the development of this document and the research described herein. This community included eight chapters in the College Panhellenic Council, which was associated with the National Panhellenic Conference; eight chapters in the Interfraternity Council, associated with the Interfraternity Conference; and eight chapters in the National Pan-Hellenic Council, associated with the National Panhellenic Conference. Members of the Greek-letter community included in this document were past members, current members, and members affiliated but not yet initiated.
Inclusivity. For this document, I used the definition of inclusive organization from the Gill Foundation (n.d.). The Gill Foundation defined inclusive organizations as learning centered-organizations that value the perspectives and contributions of all people, and strive to incorporate the needs and viewpoints of diverse communities into the design and implementation of universal and inclusive programs. Inclusive organizations are, by definition, diverse at all levels. (para. 5)

Interfraternity Council (IFC). This is the local governing body for NIC-affiliated fraternities active at Eastern Michigan University. The Council comprises elected individuals and meets regularly; its voting members consist of delegates from each fraternity.

Michigan State Normal College (MSNC). This term used is to refer to the institution known as Michigan State Normal School, founded in 1849 and opening its doors in 1853. Michigan State Normal College operated from 1899 to 1956. Throughout this document, I may refer to Michigan State Normal College as the college or institution.

National Panhellenic Conference (NPC). Founded in 1902, this is the umbrella organization for 26 national and international autonomous social sororities.

National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC). Founded in 1930 at Howard University, this conference was formed to consider problems of mutual interest for nine historically Black national fraternities and sororities. This is the local governing body for NPHC-affiliated sororities and fraternities at Eastern Michigan University. The council consists of elected individuals and meets regularly; its voting members comprise representatives from each chapter. In its early years at EMU, the NPHC was also referred to as the Black Greek Council.
**North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC).** Founded in 1909, this is the trade association representing 70 national and international men’s fraternities.

**Patroness.** This term is used to describe faculty and staff who acted as advisors to sororities at Michigan State Normal College in the early years.

**Social Greek-letter organizations.** For the purposes of this document, this term refers to the Greek-letter organizations, both locally and nationally, that are social in nature. The scope of my study did not include national honorary or academic Greek-letter organizations. I focused only on local chapters associated with the National Panhellenic Conference, the Interfraternity Conference, the National Pan-Hellenic Council, and a handful of local chapters and national chapters that did not affiliate with one of these three councils.

**Society.** I use this term to describe early organizations at Michigan State Normal College. Not all of the early organizations or societies were social Greek-letter organizations. Many were early literary societies. MSNC writers used this term to describe early student organizations in many publications.

**Sorority.** I use the term *sorority* to describe social Greek-letter organizations from any council whose membership is designated for women only.

**Student affairs.** I use this general term to refer to the types of activities, processes, and student services taking place at EMU and at other nonacademic institutions. Although at EMU, this suborganizational unit is called the Division of Academic and Student Affairs, I am referring only to the nonacademic functions at EMU when I mention the term *student affairs*. This division includes campus life, the department of diversity and community involvement, and many other services and programs.
**Transgender.** For this document, I use the definition of *transgender* written by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD; n.d.): An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms – including transgender. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to change their bodies. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon medical procedures. (para. 5)

**Transition.** For the purposes of this document, I use the definition of transition written by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD; n.d.): Altering one’s birth sex is not a one-step procedure; it is complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps; telling one’s family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one’s name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgeries. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. (para. 9)

**Organization of the Document**

Chapter 1 is the introduction to the document. I include an outline of the problem statement and the purposes of the study. Chapter 1 also includes definitions of relevant terms, which may help readers understand the terms in this specific context. Chapter 2 is composed of a literature review specifically pertaining to the history and function of Greek-letter
organizations in America. Additionally, I mention current challenges Greek-letter organizations are facing and describe recent observed trends. In addition to this review of literature, Chapter 2 contains a literature review of the conceptual framework used during my research. Chapter 3 includes my reflections on ethical theories, ethical conduct during research, research methodology, validity of my study, and the limitations I identified. The data from this study are presented in Chapter 4, summarized by section. Finally, the document concludes with Chapter 5, which provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research in this area.

In this study, I explored the role and function of social Greek-letter organizations in higher education and the ways in which they have fostered inclusivity or exclusivity on college campuses throughout history.
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, I offer an explanation of how I used my “self as instrument” for research, outline my research design, explore ethical questions, discuss validity, and discuss the limitations of the study. In addition to reading literature that specifically focused on the history of Greek-letter organizations in America, I familiarized myself with the body of literature to discern a conceptual framework to understand the development, evolution, and persistence of Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University.

Organizational Theory

First, I drew from Scott (2003) and his three views of an organization. Scott (2003) offered three system-related explanations of how an organization operates—rational systems, natural systems, and open systems. Each type of system is important; the combination of the three helped me to understand the EMU Greek community. Although the three systems perspectives may seem exclusive of one another, Scott and Davis (2007) found that both the rational and natural perspectives have been “combined with open systems approaches in multiple ways to create a wide variety of new theories varying in emphasis and in level of analysis” (p. 99). Rational systems, natural systems, and open systems are discussed further in the following paragraphs.

Rational systems. Rational systems proponents have defined organizations as “collectivities oriented to the pursuit of relatively specific goals and exhibiting relatively highly formalized social structures” (Scott & Davis, 2007, p. 35). From the rational systems perspective, organizations are formal collectives built to pursue specific shared goals.

Natural systems. Natural systems are concerned with formal structures and processes (Scott & Davis, 2007, p. 35). According to the natural system definition, “organizations are
collectives whose participants are pursuing multiple interests, both disparate and common, but who recognize the value of perpetuating the organization as an important resource” (Scott & Davis, 2007, p. 35). Although the natural systems model involves formal structures and processes, natural systems theorists would assert that these conceal many informal structures that would help to explain and predict human behavior within an organization (Scott & Davis, 2007, p. 59).

Open systems. According to the open systems definition, “organizations are collectivities of interdependent flows and activities linking shifting coalitions of participants embedded in wider material-resource and institutional environments” (Scott & David, 2007, p. 83). Thus, organizations are simply activities that involve groups of individuals with varying interests working together in an environment. Natural and rational systems theorists tend to view organizations as closed systems that are separate from their environments, whereas open systems theorists acknowledge that the organization exists within the environment, which constantly shapes and supports the organization (Scott & David, 2007, p. 101). McShane and Von Glinow (2005) viewed organizations as open systems because they take in resources from their environment and transform those resources into outputs that the organizations then return to their environment.

Organizational Activities

During this study, it was useful to consider and understand the perspectives presented by Scott (2003) while also attempting to understand the types of activities that take place within organizations. To accomplish this goal, I examined Parsons (1960), especially the way he identified the sets of activities that Thompson (1967) labeled technical activities, managerial activities, and institutional activities. Muwonge (2012) added a fourth level,
organizational activities, noting that this level was necessary to acknowledge and understand fully the perspectives inherent in the Eastern Michigan University Greek-letter community. This fourth level encompasses cultural activities. Figure 1 shows the different levels of organizational activities.

![Figure 1. Conceptual framework: Levels of organizational activities.](image)

Note. Adapted from Parsons (1960); and Theocratic Governance and the Divergent Cultural Groups in the USA (Doctoral dissertation), by C. L. Muwonge (2012). Available from Eastern Michigan University Digital Commons at: [http://commons.emich.edu/theses/406/](http://commons.emich.edu/theses/406/)

**Technical activities.** Technical activities are “focused around effective performance of the technical function” (Thompson, 1967, p. 19). The technical task is the actual manufacturing of a product of an organization. Technical activities can include anything related to the technical task, such as materials that have to be processed and the relationships among the different people needed to complete that task (Thompson, 1967, p. 19). People within the organization completed activities and tasks oriented to the technical core. “The primary exigencies to which the technical suborganization is oriented are those imposed by the nature of the technical task” (Thompson, 1967, p. 19). The technical core really determines the day-to-day functioning of the organization.
**Managerial activities.** Managerial activities are those that service the technical activities of an organization. Managerial activities include “mediating between the technical suborganization and those who use its products” and “procuring the resources necessary for carrying out the technical functions” (Thompson, 1967, p. 19). In this way, the managerial level of an organization controls the technical activities.

**Buffering.** Buffering mechanisms prevent outside influence on the core of an organization (Scott, 2003, p. 200). Buffering can occur in many ways. One way an organization might employ buffering is through coding or sorting, which is a way to classify environmental inputs before they reach the technical core (Scott, 2003). For example, buffering might include stockpiling an inventory to minimize the effects of a demand uncertainty in the future.

**Bridging.** Buffering strategies are used to strengthen organizational boundaries. Bridging mechanisms, in contrast, are those that interact with exchange partners in outside environments (Scott, 2003, p. 203). Although buffering helps to minimize the effects of the external workings of the internal organizations, bridging strategies involve actions where organizations move beyond their boundaries and “actively seek the disturbance so as to minimize the negative effects of the disturbance” (Scott, 2003, p. 203). Bridging tactics might include engaging in cooptation, bargaining, or sharing strategic information (Scott, 2003, p. 203).

**Task environment.** During the course of this research, it was important for me to understand the different environments that influenced the emergence of Greek-letter organizations at EMU. The first of these environments was the task environment. Dill (1958) defined the task environment as the parts of an environment that are “relevant or potentially
relevant to goal setting and goal achievement” (p. 410). Organizations that make a difference to the organization in question have been defined as “organization sets” (Evan, 1966). No two task environments are identical; thus, considering all elements is important when describing and defining a task environment. “Which individuals, which other organizations, which aggregates constitute the task environment for a particular organization is determined by the requirements of the technology, the boundaries of the domain and the composition of the larger environment” (Thompson, 1967, p. 19). Blau and Scott (2003) defined an organization-set as other organizations to which any one organization is related.

**Institutional activities.** Institutional activities, in Parson’s (1951) model, affect any organization that has both technical and managerial levels. This means the organization is part of a larger social system, which gives the organization legitimacy, allowing its goals to be possible. This gives the organization, in a sense, the “right” to exist, to receive resources. With legitimacy, comes a third level of an organization. “This overall articulation of the organization and the institutional structure and agencies of the community is the function of the third, or institutional, level of the organization” (Thompson, 1967, p. 20). The institutional activities or an organization include all of the institutional structures, external and internal agencies, which becomes the third level or the organization and its activities.

**Institutional environment.** In order to understand the role and function of Greek-letter organizations at EMU, I needed to understand the institutional environment. Scott (2001) described Parson’s view on institutionalism: “A system of action was said to be institutionalized to the extent that actors in an ongoing relation oriented their actions to a common set of normative standards and value patterns” (p. 109). This means that those within the organization were performing tasks a certain way based on a set of behaviors that
had become such the norm, that they would be considered to be institutionalized. Scott gives a clear definition of what institutions are made up of when he described institutions as “composed of cultural cognitive, normative, and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life” (p. 109). Berger and Luckmann (1967) defined institutions as “symbolic systems that are ‘experienced as possessing a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact’” (p. 58). They are basically implying that organizations function within their own world and operate within their own reality. In addition, Scott (2003) argued organizations receive resources, support, and legitimacy based on how they conform to norms. Values, rules, regulations, norms, and culture comprise the institutional environment.

In relation to Greek-letter organizations at EMU, the institutional environment is composed of various external groups that inform the community’s values, rules, regulations, norms, and culture. These groups include the National Panhellenic Conference, the North American Interfraternity Conference, the National Pan-Hellenic Council, all of the organizations’ national headquarters, the Fraternal Information and Programming Group, the Association of Fraternity and Sorority Advisors, and the Association of Fraternal Learning and Values.

**Cultural environment.** Muwonge (2012) described the cultural environment of an organization as a completely separate environment, which is then influenced by elements that also influence the organization. The cultural environment is “composed of the values and beliefs of the environment that are associated with the institution’s right to exist” (Shinn, 2012, p. 31). To date, the cultural environment related to the Greek-letter community at EMU has been mostly composed of EMU students coming from areas in southeast Michigan.

**Cultural Activities**
**Cooperative strategies.** Cooperative strategies can be used to gain some power, but “with respect to the task environment, the organization must demonstrate its capacity to reduce uncertainty for that element” (Scott, 2003, p. 205). In order for power achievement to be effective, there must be an exchange of commitments between both A and B, thus, reducing potential uncertainties in the task environment (Scott, 2003, p. 205). Three different types of cooperative strategies are contracting, coopting, and coalescing.

**Contracting.** Contracting in organizations is referring to the “negotiation of an agreement for the exchange of performances in the future” (Scott, 2003, p. 204). These agreements are not just legal contracts but can also take the form of an understanding between parties that can be unspoken, meaning that some contracts rely on the faith and belief between two parties that one another will perform the agreed-upon task (Scott, 2003, p. 205).

**Coopting.** Selznick (1949) defined coopting as “the process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy—determining structure of an organization as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence” (p. 10). Coopting can be more constraining for an organization than contracting, because it can cause one element of an organization to affect other aspects of the organization (Selznick, 1949, p. 10).

**Coalescing.** Coalescing refers to “a combination or joint venture with another organization or organizations in the environment” (Scott, 2003, p. 208). Coalitions require future joint decision making, because while the venture is operative, organizations act in ways that bring them toward common goals (Scott, 2003, p. 208). Thus, coalescing is the most constraining form of the three cooperative strategies described here.
Coupling. In order to understand the many elements within a system or organization interact, it was important to become familiar with the concept of coupling. The word *coupling* implies some type of connection or linkage, but in contrast to the idea of organizations being coupled “through dense, tight linkages, it is proposed that elements are often tied together frequently and loosely” (Weick, 1976, p. 1). Glassman (1973) determined the degree of coupling between two systems based on the activity of the variables that the two systems shared. Organizations must respond when change occurs in their environment, and it is important to understand how they might respond. However, Glassman argued, “Loose coupling allows some portions of an organization to persist” and “lowers the probability that the organization will have to—or be able to—respond to each little change in the environment that occurs” (p. 6). When loose coupling occurs, it simply means that an organization’s functions become slightly more generalized and less specific. No longer can an organization respond to each disruption or change.

**Organizational Environment**

Organizations have roots within larger social systems. The organizational environment is complex. For example, an organizational environment can include the publics associated with it, the culture, the structure of the community in which it is located, and the other organizations to which it may be related. Blau and Scott (2003) acknowledged, “The boundary between an organization and its social context is never entirely clear” (p. 186). The social environment of any organization influences the organization, both internally and externally through the relationships it may have with other organizations. However, just as an organization may be influenced by its environment, it may also influence its environment in turn. “The social processes that characterize the relations between organizations, and that are
affected by their internal structure, help shape the larger social system in which the organizations exist” (Blau & Scott, 2003, p. 186). Pfeffer and Salancik (1974) shared this perspective using resource dependency theory to describe interconnectedness: “Organizations employ a variety of strategies for bringing stability and certainty to their environments. They may restructure the organization to avoid instability or its consequences; stabilize exchange relationships; or restructure the set of exchange relationships to enhance stability” (p. 229). Pfeffer and Salancik (1974) suggested that the organizational environments come to affect organizational actions partly by affecting the distribution of power and influence inside of that organization. So many elements exist in an organizational environment that no organizational leader could likely attend to more than a small proportion of the environmental inputs at any one time; subgroups within each organization will likely access and process different parts of the environment (Dill, 1962).

**Isomorphism.** DiMaggio and Powell (1983) described isomorphism as a process of homogenizations that occur when one unit within a population is forced to resemble other units that face similar sets of environmental conditions. This condition indicates “organizational characteristics are modified in the direction of increasing compatibility with environmental characteristics” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 149). DiMaggio and Powell offered three mechanisms through which isomorphism may occur at the institutional level. The first level of isomorphic change is coercive isomorphism, which results from formal and informal pressures that are placed on organizations by other organizations that they depend upon. Isomorphic change may also result from cultural expectations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 149). The second mechanism through which isomorphism might occur at the institutional level is through mimetic processes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 149). These
processes result from uncertainty within organizations whose leaders attempt to copy other organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 149). Finally, the third source of isomorphic organizational change is normative pressure. This change is normative in nature and stems from professionalization, with the aim of achieving legitimacy.

**Institutional Theory**

Greek-letter organizations have become institutionalized in American higher education. As I studied both national and local organizations, it was important to understand the way these organizations have become institutionalized and how they have persisted before I considered how they may or may not have changed over time.

**Institutions.** Although considering the behavior of individuals was important, I was also interested in understanding the collective behavior of groups. Individuals are parts of groups and they often function in response to other members of the group.

Another idea fundamental to the study of human life, that of collective behavior, grows out of the fact that human beings so obviously behave in response to the behavior of each other that what the individual does can be understood only by using collectivity as a point of reference. (Hughes, 1936, p. 180)

Humans do things based on other humans doing things. This quote helps illustrate the fact that you cannot consider one human’s behavior without considering the behavior of other humans they may be responding to. Scott (1995) described regulatory, normative, and cognitive structures that govern the way humans exist within social frameworks. Humans interact within institutional arrangements that include regulatory structures consisting of rules, laws, and sanctions. In addition, normative structures play a role in guiding values and norms; cognitive structures dictate reality and social meanings. The concept of the “institution” is an
evolving subject studied for some time. Many social scientists have provided early
descriptions of how institutions have emerged and persisted. Hughes (1936) wrote, “The
survival of an institution therefore, represents the persistence of particular definitions of
wants” (p. 181). Parsons (1951) and Selznick (1949, 1957) explored the nature of institutions.
Their ideas have expanded and become more diverse over the past 40 years.

**Institutionalization.** Berger and Luckman (1967) described the origins of institutionalization when they defined *habitualization* as “any action that is repeated frequently,” which “becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be reproduced with an
economy of effort” (p. 70). Berger and Luckman explained, “Institutionalization occurs
whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (p. 71).
This means that every institution has a history, and each institution is a product of that
history. This idea was meaningful for me as I conducted this research—it was important for
me to understand the historical context of Greek-letter organizations both nationally and at
EMU. Further, institutions provide a level or control through predetermined standards and
expectations. “Institutions also, by the very fact of their existence, control human conduct by
setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the
many other directions that would theoretically be possible” (Berger & Luckman, 1967, p. 72).

**Institutionalization as a process of instilling value.** Philip Selznick and his students created a model of institutional theory that indicates organizational structure “as an adaptive
vehicle shaped in reaction to the characteristics and commitments of participants as well as to
influences and constraints from the external environment” (as cited in Scott, 1987, p. 494).
Selznick viewed institutionalization as the process of infusing with value (as cited in Scott,
1987, p. 494). Selznick also distinguished between two types of organizations—those that are
technically developed instruments, disposable or mechanical in nature, and those that have
gone through the process of being institutionalized or valued by those who are a part of them.
The second type of organization is less expendable, because members of these types of
organizations become concerned and perform maintenance to ensure the organizations’
survival (as cited in Scott, 1987, p. 494). Selznick viewed institutionalization as a process
that happens to and within an organization over time. He noted, “Effective leaders are able to
define and defend the organization’s institutional values—its distinctive mission” (as cited in
Scott, 1987, p. 494). Leaders are able to defend and define an organization’s values because
those values have been so institutionalized over time. Those values are clear.

*Institutionalization as a process of creating reality.* Berger and Luckmann (1967)
referred to works by Shutz, Dilthey, and Husserl, arguing, “Social order is based
fundamentally on a shared social reality which, in turn, is a human construction, being
created in social interaction” (as cited in Scott, 1987, p. 494). Berger and Luckmann believed
that social order only exists as a product of other human activities. As individuals take
actions, social order comes into being; these individuals then interpret these actions and share
their interpretations with others (as cited in Scott, 1987, p. 494). This turns into a process
wherein actions or behaviors recur over time, receive assigned meaning by interpretations,
and become institutionalized into the organization (as cited in Scott, 1987, p. 494). Berger
and Luckmann claimed three phases characterized institutionalization as a process—
externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Externalization occurs when people take
action. objectivation occurs when people interpret their actions as having an external reality
separate from themselves, and internalization occurs when people internalize the objectivated
world: “Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 61).

**Institutional systems as a class of elements.** Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued, “The prevalence of organizational forms can be attributed not only to the complexity of ‘relational networks’ and exchange processes but also to the existence of elaborated ‘rational myths’ or shared belief systems” (as cited in Scott, 1987, p. 497). Several elements differentiate this view from the previous two. First, this point of view stresses the importance of cultural elements like symbols, normative beliefs, and systems (as cited in Scott, 1987, p. 497). Organizations sometimes function in ways because they receive positive feedback for doing so. “Organizations do not necessarily conform to a set of institutionalized beliefs because they ‘constitute reality’ or are taken for granted, but often because they are rewarded for doing so through increased legitimacy, resources, and survival capabilities” (Scott, 1987, p. 498). This view also indicates that less attention paid by members in the organization to processes and technical systems means more attention can be given to the nature of the belief systems within the organization itself (as cited in Scott, 1987, p. 497). Further, in modern societies,

the forms and sources of social beliefs and other types of symbolic systems have themselves become more rationalized: folkways and traditions and customs give way to laws, rules, and regulations; and elders’ councils and other forms of traditional authority are replaced by the nation-state, the professions, and rationalized systems of law. (Scott, 1987, p. 499)

Though some behaviors start as informal customs or traditions, over time, as they become more institutionalized, they become more formal in nature.
Institutions as distinct societal spheres. This perspective on institutional theory is about the idea that “as conventionally defined, social institutions refer to relatively enduring systems of social beliefs and socially organized practices associated with varying functional arenas within societal systems, e.g., religion, work, the family, politics” (Scott, 1987, p. 499). Many institutions are easily identifiable in society, because there are many of that type of institution. This point of view has mainly focused on Hughes ((1936) who noted, “More commonly the term institution is applied to those features of social life which outlast biological generations or survive drastic social changes that might have been expected to bring them to an end” (as cited in Scott, 1987, p. 499). Hughes offered an example of a ceremony being celebrated by people who no longer knew its origin or understood its significance—and who may not have agreed with the meaning of it if they had known. Overall, this view focuses on “the existence of a set of differentiated and specialized cognitive and normative systems—institutional logics—and patterned human activities that arise and tend to persist, in varying form and content, in all societies” (Scott, 1987, p. 500). There are some patterns of behavior that cross cultural boundaries and show up in many different types of societies over time.

Institutionalization and cultural persistence. In order to understand how the Greek community at EMU had come to be institutionalized, I needed to explore how that institutionalization led to persistence before I was able to discuss how the organization may or may not have changed over time. Zucker (1977) noted that cultural persistence occurs “because social knowledge once institutionalized exists as a fact, as part of objective reality, and can be transmitted directly on that basis” (p. 726). One explanation focuses on the normative framework of institutions, which persist because the norms associated with that
institution are shared (Zucker, 1977). This means there is no need for external motivation to conform—the norms have already become centralized. A second approach is the subsystems approach (Zucker, 1977). This approach focuses on subsystems or clusters as “separate spheres of activity, each with distinctive clusters of norms and each forming a distinct part of a typology of institutions” (p. 726). There can be individual systems within larger systems that do not operate together in any way, except for being a part of the same larger system. In both approaches, the assumption is that each individual actor plays little part in maintaining the institution; rather, the institution itself controls the individual actor’s behavior.

**Ethnomethodological approach to institutionalization.** This approach is very different than the two described by Zucker (1977). In this approach, reality is defined as “socially constructed” and “is experienced as an intersubjective world known-or-knowable-in-common-with others, which exists historically prior to the actors” (Zucker, 1977, pp. 727-728). In this process, the actor transmits a socially defined meaning, and at the same time, that meaning can change within the actor’s social reality (Zucker, 1977, pp. 727-728). Acts are both objective and exterior in nature; that is, they are objective when they are possible for other actors within the system to repeat (Zucker, 1977, pp. 727-728). They are exterior when “subjective understanding of acts is reconstructed as intersubjective understanding so that they acts are seen as part of the external world” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 61). Three aspects of cultural persistence are affected by institutionalization: transmission, maintenance, and resistance to change.

*Transmission.* Zucker (1977) defined transmission “as the process by which cultural understandings are communicated to a succession of actors” (p. 729). Transmission can occur relatively easily, as one actor communicates something as an objective fact, and the actor
within the system who is receiving it accepts it as such (Zucker, 1977, p. 729). The more that transmission continues within a system, the higher the institutionalization (Zucker, 1977, p. 729).

*Maintenance.* Zucker (1977) mentioned an assumption that transmission of acts within a system is sufficient for maintenance. Zucker argued that “for acts low on institutionalization, direct social control (or other intervening mechanisms, such as internalization) is necessary, while for acts high on institutionalization, all that is required is transmission” (p. 730). When something is so institutionalized, there does not necessarily need to be anything done to pass on that behavior or act except to teach it to someone else.

*Resistance to change.* When acts that are high on institutionalization are transmitted, actors making personal attempts to change them will not be successful; in fact, their efforts may actually result in the redefinition or new view of the actor, rather than a new understanding of the act itself (Zucker, 1977, p. 730). Acts performed by actors who are exerting personal influence are seen as dependent and thus are not often successful in changing acts that are high on institutionalization (Zucker, 1977, p. 730). Resistance to change varies by the level of institutionalization within a system (Zucker, 1977, p. 730).

**Organizational Culture**

I wanted to consider organizational culture as I approached this study. Schein (1990) recognized the difficulty of defining organizational culture—the concept of an organization itself can seem ambiguous: “We must first specify that a given set of people has had enough stability and common history to have allowed a culture to form” (p. 3). Thus, Schein defined culture as something that a group must learn over time. Culture occurs through the group having to learn to solve its “problems of survival in an external environment and its problems
of internal integration” (Schein, 1990, p. 3). Culture is something that is learned by group members by dealing with conflict and problems and how those conflicts or problems are resolved.

**Three levels of culture.** Schein (1990) defined three levels of culture—observable artifacts, values, and basic underlying assumptions. Artifacts are defined as something that someone entering an organization could observe and feel (p.3). Artifacts could include dress code, the way people talk to each other, the smell or feel of the physical space, and the physical layout (p.3). However, artifacts are not always a reliable way of knowing what is really going on in an organization. Values in an organization include norms, philosophies, and ideologies (p.4). Underlying assumptions are those things in an organization that determine “thought processes, feelings, and behaviors” (p. 4). Assumptions that are deeply held by members of an organization start out historically as values (p.3). If these values persist within the organization over a long time, they are increasingly taken for granted and eventually become underlying assumptions (p.3). These assumptions typically involve things that tend to be no longer open for discussion.

**Cultural preservation through socialization.** Culture remains and reproduces itself when new members are socialized into an organization. This process of socialization starts as soon as the recruitment of new members begins. During recruitment, current members of an organization are likely to look for new members who already have the “right” set of assumptions, values, beliefs, or life experiences. The intended outcome of socialization is to encourage a culture to persist. However, not everyone who is socialized into an organization may react the same way. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) offered three possible outcomes of socialization—custodial orientation, creative individualism, and rebellion. Custodial
orientation occurs when total conformity to all organizational norms and values has occurred, along with the learning of all underlying assumptions. Creative individualism occurs when a new member has learned central assumptions of the culture, but rejects all secondary ones. Rebellion happens when there is a complete rejection of all values and assumptions by the new member being socialized.

**Cultural reproduction.** Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) developed the concept of cultural reproduction. Their work focused mostly on social class and education class in terms of the power held by the dominant class. Those who are at an economic and educational disadvantage are locked into that track. Bourdieu (1993) created a model for cultural reproduction and identified parental socioeconomic status and cultural capital as factors that may affect the cultural reproduction of a group. Reproduction of culture occurs when the norms and values of a community are passed from one generation to the next. Massey (2007) discussed durability as a characteristic of social stratification. Durability remains from one generation to the next and withstands time as a function of cultural reproduction. For example, on college campuses today, and especially within social Greek-letter organizations, students seem to gravitate toward individuals like themselves. They may be drawn to others with similar characteristics, such as hometown, interest in social activities, skin color, and language (Brantlinger, 2003). Clues like shared language, clothing, and other markers provide evidence of class standing, which students use to make group affiliations.

**Change within organizations.** When referring to change in organization, Schein (1990) discussed the role of leaders who sought to enact change. “Leaders of organizations sometimes are able to overcome their own cultural biases to perceive that elements of an organization’s culture are dysfunctional for survival and growth in a changing environment”
In addition, Schein (1990) outlined the various ways leaders might try to make change happen. Leaders may use one or more of these strategies in combination, depending on the changes they wish to implement. According to Schein, the first way a leader may try to make change is to unfreeze the present system. One way a leader might do this is to help members of the organization understand the current threats to the organization if this change does not occur (Schein, 1990). The second strategy is that the leader may announce a new direction and a new set of assumptions (Schein, 1990). The third strategy is that the leader may choose to fill key positions within the organization with replacements who already have the same assumptions; these new people may even be brought in from the outside (Schein, 1990). The fourth strategy involves rewarding actions that reflect the new direction of the organization and punishing those that reflect the old direction (Schein, 1990). The fifth strategy includes convincing organizational members into adopting new behaviors through either coercion or seduction (Schein, 1990). The sixth strategy involves creating scandals to attempt to destroy symbols, sacred cows, or traditions within the old organization (Schein, 1990). Schein’s final strategy includes the creation of new rituals, traditions, and symbols, using a combination of the previously outlined techniques.

**Conceptual Framework**

The purpose of this study was to understand the role and function of social Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). In order to do this, I developed a contextual understanding of Greek-letter organizations in the United States. It was important for me to have a conceptual framework through which to view my research and to analyze data as I collected them. Therefore, I focused on the reproduction and preservation of culture as two key concepts in the conceptual framework for this study. At the time of this study, the
cultural environment on the EMU campus was composed of various student groups who came from cultural groups in and around southeast Michigan. Some of these students joined social Greek-letter organizations at EMU. National organizations govern each of the chapters present at EMU and influence how chapters function at individual campuses. To understand the role of Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University, I examined the characteristics of students who were part of that social context. I also sought to know the nature of the national organizations that affect that social context. The organizing conceptual framework for this study shows how both student culture and national organization culture occur on campus, as diagrammed in Figure 1.

Within the Greek-letter community at Eastern Michigan University, different types of social Greek-letter organizations exist, which can be grouped by councils. These organizations have distinct characteristics that further differentiate the organizations students might seek to join. Figure 2 shows how the groups are separated within the Greek community.
Overview of Greek-Letter Organizations in Higher Education

This section provides a background on Greek-letter organizations, including their development, structure, and function, from their inception in the United States higher education system to the present. Having a contextual understanding of the history of these organizations is important when considering the way Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University developed. This section includes a history of fraternal organizations in America and a discussion of how they have changed over time.
The first societies at American higher education institutions. Members of religious denominations established many of the early colleges in order to train ministers. Harvard, established in 1636, was founded by the colonial legislature; early Harvard curricula focused on training men for ministry, which was supported by the Puritan government. Many leaders of the Puritan government had attended Oxford and Cambridge in England. Similarly, the College of William and Mary was founded in 1693 by the Virginia government. When conservative Puritan ministers in Connecticut grew tired of the liberal theology at Harvard, they founded Yale in 1701 to train Orthodox ministers themselves. This pattern continued throughout the 19th century as leaders of many Protestant denominations, along with Catholics, opened their own small colleges. However, for many years, higher education in America was only open to White men from wealthy families who were affiliated with particular religions. These men were the first students of American higher education institutions.

Students formed their own societies to address their frustration with courses that excluded discussion of current literature, issues, and events. The first recorded collegiate society within the territory of the present United States was founded in 1750 at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia (Hastings, 1965, p. 10). The society was formally named the F.H.C. Society—the initials stood for a secret Latin phrase. The brothers of the original F.H.C had a secret handshake, wore a membership medal, and issued certificates of membership for one another (Hastings, 1965, p. 10). In public, the society was called, The Flat Hat Club, a name thought to have come from the fact that the society members wore mortarboard caps (Hastings, 1965, p. 10). Thomas Jefferson was a famous member of the F.H.C. (Hastings, 1965, p. 10).
A second secret society emerged at the College of William and Mary in 1773 shortly after the F.H.C. appeared, called the P.D.A. in imitation of the F.H.C. (P.D.A. stood for *Please Don’t Ask*; Hastings, 1965, p. 10). When John Heath, a student at William and Mary, was denied membership to P.D.A., he formed the first Greek-letter fraternity, Phi Beta Kappa (Hastings, 1965, p. 10). Student members of the F.H.C. ceased activity in 1781 when the institution suspended classes as the armies of the American Revolution approached during the Yorktown campaign (Francis, 2015, pp. 82-83). Much like the early American lodges of Freemasons, who described their system as “a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols” (p.82), these early societies had secret rituals, symbols, handshakes, and requirements for membership (Masonic Higher Education Bursary Fund, n.d.).

**The development and early years of Greek-letter societies.** On December 5, 1776, the first Greek-letter organization appeared (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-10). Phi Beta Kappa was founded at the College of William and Mary (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-10). Like many other early colleges, institutional founders established the College of William and Mary with colonial and religious roots (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-10). The College of William and Mary was founded as an Anglican institution, which meant governors were required to be members of the Church of England, and professors were required to adhere to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion from the Church of England (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-10). This meant that the early members of Phi Beta Kappa were wealthy White Anglican men.

Phi Beta Kappa was formed for both social and literary purposes. The fraternity had many of the characteristics of the present-day fraternity, including “secrecy, a ritual, oaths of
fidelity, a grip, a motto, a badge for external display, a background of high idealism, a strong tie of friendship and comrade-ship, an urge for sharing its values through nation-wide expansion” (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. I-10). The purpose of the society was to debate literature, although there was also a focus on friendship (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-10).

This original Phi Beta Kappa chapter at the College of William and Mary lasted four years, held 67 meetings, and had 50 members before the approach of Cornwallis’s army forced the college to close its doors (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-11). Students at Yale and Harvard showed interest in restarting the society; thus, in 1779, the chapter at the College of William and Mary approved alpha chapters to begin at both Harvard and Yale (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-11). These two chapters opened a chapter at Dartmouth in 1787; expansion did not occur again for almost 30 years, at which point only five chapters existed (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-11). Phi Beta Kappa has continued to exist as an honor society into the present. When the two new alpha chapters were formed at Harvard and Yale, members were selected from the junior classes to begin an “immediate society” (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-11). Not much else is known about the men who were allowed to become members other than that they were selected and had to be at least juniors in standing at their respective institutions (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-11). Of course, membership was limited to the men who were able to attend Harvard or Yale in the first place.

**Freemasonry influences.** Freemasonry made its debut in North America in 1773, when Henry Prince, the Provincial Grand Master for North America from the Grand Lodge of England, granted a charter to some Boston Freemasons (Coil, 1996, p. 33). Between 1733 and 1737, other lodges were established in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina (Coil, 1996, p. 33). In North America, lodges began to form around common
interests and affiliations. By 1813, in North America, hundreds of lodges had formed (Coil, 1996, p. 33). In 1826, William Morgan, an anti-Freemason, threatened to expose Freemasonry’s secrets and subsequently disappeared from Batavia, New York (Coil, 1996, p. 33). Many claimed that the Masons murdered Morgan, and although this was never proven, many protests occurred throughout the United States (Ellis, 1920, p. 247). The protests sparked an anti-Masonic movement that spread across the country (Ellis, 1920, p. 247 Ellis, 1920, p. 247). Thus, many citizens learned about Freemasonry traditions and became interested (Ellis, 1920, p. 247). These interested citizens included students in the American college system. The growth of the fraternity on college campuses simply gave new meaning to activities that had long before been introduced by Freemasons. Fraternities incorporated Masonic spirit into fraternal movement. Even today, many fraternity houses are still known as lodges.

The determination of undergraduates to shape their college experience was evident in the way fraternity expansion occurred in the early 1800s. Many parent chapters were formed at Union and Hamilton in the 1820s and 1830s (Rudolph, 1962, p. 136). Most colleges of New England and New York were involved in the fraternal movement in some form by the 1840s. “Few American colleges were left untouched by this movement which so ably characterized the enterprise and initiative of the nineteenth-century college undergraduate” (Rudolph, 1962, p. 136). In the early 1800s, Kappa Alpha originated at the University of North Carolina (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. I-10–11). The men of Kappa Alpha were inspired by Phi Beta Kappa during the anti-Masonic movement when Phi Beta Kappa’s secrets were revealed, which fueled the formation of not only the Kappa Alpha Society, but also Sigma Phi and Delta Phi at Union College (UC) in 1827 (Anson & Marchesani, 1991,
People wanted to form secret societies dedicated to discussing literature and current issues, but that also had a social function as part of their mission and activities (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. I-10–11).

Just calling these organizations *literary societies* was radical in nature because many faculty members during that time refused to acknowledge much of the literature as well as many of the other topics that were up for debate. During this period of political revolution, debates on subjects such as taxation and slavery could only be held secretly. UC provided the perfect environment for a society like Kappa Alpha. UC was started as a nonsectarian institution and was arguably unparalleled as a place for intellectual freedom and open discussions (Union College, n.d.). Many students transferred from across the nation to study there, creating an atmosphere of diversity (Union College, n.d.). The name of UC alone was meant to encourage a “unified academic community open to all the diverse religious and national groups in the region” (Union College, n.d.). Although the influx of men from a variety of religious affiliations diversified the membership of the fraternity, it did not diversify the membership in terms of race or wealth.

Greek-letter fraternities were intended to bring together the most urbane young men on campus into small groups that would fill the vacuum left by removal from the family and the home community, but they served a further purpose, too. The fraternities offered an escape from monotony, dreariness, and unpleasantness of the collegiate regimen which began with prayers before dawn and ended with prayers after dark; escape from the long winters and ingrown college world, from the dormitory with its lack of privacy. (Rudolph, 1962, p. 136)
Fraternities also offered social activities such as “drinking, smoking, card playing, singing and seducing” (Rudolph, 1962, p. 136).

Unlike Phi Beta Kappa, the members of Kappa Alpha opted to be more social as a fraternity, appreciating literature and music as recreation (Union College, n.d., ). Support for this type of intellectual debate was evident in the speed at which the fraternity movement spread from Union College to several other chapters in the Carolinas (Union College, n.d., ). Other fraternal organizations mirrored Kappa Alpha, such as Pi Beta Phi and Chi Delta Theta, forming as local chapters at Union and Yale (Union College, n.d., ). As fraternal organizations continued to form at other universities, eventually Sigma Phi started and became the first fraternity to form a branch organization in the way we see organizations form today (Sigma Phi Society, n.d.). Three early men of the Sigma Phi Society were Southerners, and members have maintained small, selective chapters throughout time (Sigma Phi Society, n.d). These early members were privileged White men who socialized with the elite (Sigma Phi Society, n.d ).

Sigma Phi’s alpha chapter in New York at Union College opened a beta chapter at Hamilton College. Hamilton was nearby. Although initially founded as a seminary by a Presbyterian minister, Hamilton admitted both White and Oneida tribe men because it was founded as part of Samuel Kirkland’s missionary work with the tribe (Sigma Phi Society, n.d ). Hamilton today still comprises 70% White students, and 50% of the overall student population are men (Hamilton College, n.d.). Sigma Phi Society may have expanded to Hamilton because of proximity, but there were also privileged White men attending Hamilton, much like at Union College (Hamilton College, n.d ). This beta chapter caused a chain reaction, including the founding of Alpha Delta Phi at Hamilton, Psi Upsilon at Union,
and another chapter of Kappa Alpha at Williams, where Sigma Phi followed shortly afterward (Hamilton College, n.d.).

**Diversification of social organizations.** The growth of Greek-letter organization as a permanent culture on campus was a reflection of who the students were at the time. In the mid-1800s, nearly 60 organization were formed. Only nine of those were sororities.

During this phase the typical college student was male, white, Protestant, and from a high economic class; fraternities reflected that homogeneity. The creation of new fraternities was often an attempt by students to improve on existing organizations, or many groups sought to get away from social status or wealth as a condition for membership. (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 38)

Some students responded by forming a new organization that was not secret. The new organization formed at Williams was called the social fraternity, which later merged with what we now know as Delta Upsilon. Delta Upsilon was different in the sense that its members intended the fraternity to be the first antisecret fraternity; in fact, Delta Upsilon members actively opposed the secret societies on campuses where its first few chapters formed (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 38).

In the fall of 1834, a heated debate on campus focused on the two existing secret fraternities (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. III-49–53). The debaters did not question the presence of these societies, but their activities. The two secret fraternities had become political forces on campus rather than societies focused on literature and debate, as originally intended (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. III- 49–53). Instead, members of the established fraternities sought to place their members into positions of honor and high campus office, whether they were qualified or not (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. III- 49–53). Delta
Upsilon’s founders were frustrated; they gathered to form the Social Fraternity, based on social meaning as a focus “on how a society could better itself through group action” (Delta Upsilon, n.d.). Originally adopting the name Anti-Secret Confederation (ASC), seven chapters formed at other institutions, including Middlebury, Amherst, Union, and Rutgers (Delta Upsilon, n.d.). At first, the two secret fraternities ridiculed the men of this new society (Delta Upsilon, n.d.). However, the founding of this new fraternity represented a rejection of secret, select fraternal societies.

Members of Delta Upsilon’s aims matched those of the college, and in a short time, the so-called Social Fraternity had been able to gain more than half the men on campus as members, and these members eventually took over many campus offices and honors (Delta Upsilon, n.d.). Delta Upsilon chapters soon appeared at institutions that hosted other secret fraternities. In 1879, four of the chapters held a meeting and made the decision to move from an “antisecret” to a “nonsecret” society in hopes of preserving the founding elements of the organization while working in harmony with the other secret societies (Delta Upsilon, n.d.). The name Delta Upsilon was adopted (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. III-50). The founders of Delta Upsilon included 10 men from each of the three classes (freshmen, sophomore, and junior) at Williams College who were initiated in the Freshman Recitation Room (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. III-50). At that time, the first fraternities only admitted upperclassmen. Thus, Delta Upsilon members not only chose to be antisecret, but also to admit freshmen and sophomores.

Following the formation of this new type of fraternity, other fraternities formed at early institutions. For example, the Mystical Seven Fraternity formed at Wesleyan in 1837 (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. VIII-12). Alpha Delta Phi formed a second chapter at Miami
in 1833, followed by Beta Theta Pi in 1839 (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. III-6–8). Another society formed at Union College in 1841, called Chi Psi, thus comprising five societies at Union (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. III-33–36). In the same year, the Mystical Seven formed the first Southern fraternity at Emory College and another chapter at Franklin College in 1844 (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. III-33–36). The Mystical Seven was the first society to form after the William Morgan’s mysterious disappearance—the so-called Morgan Incident. The Mystical Seven members’ early writings make reference to a “new form of masonry” and have many ritual etchings that also appear in Masonic sources (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. III-33–36).


Fraternity expansion in the South continued with the formation of the W.W.W., or Rainbow, at the University of Mississippi in 1848. The chapter members originally named the chapter The Mystic Sons of the Iris (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. VIII-28). The fraternity would only admit seven men at a time, as a tribute to the original number of seven founders (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. VIII-28). Further, they would not initiate a man
from a Northern state because of lingering tension from the Civil War (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. VIII-28). This practice led to low membership numbers, which caused the fraternity to be dormant for some time (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. VIII-28). As hostilities died down, this practice faded away; eventually, in order to thrive and create a stronger fraternal presence in the Southern states, the Rainbow fraternity merged with Delta Tau Delta (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. VIII-28). Thus, the national fraternal movement and expansion had begun.

Civil War and fraternal redevelopment in the South. When the Civil War broke out, fraternity expansion came to a near halt nationwide. The Civil War devastated American higher education institutions in the South. Many colleges and universities throughout the South had lost faculty, money, buildings, and people (Stetar, 1985, p. 1). However, as the War ended, many surviving officers of the Confederacy entered the administrations of Southern colleges and universities (Stetar, 1985, p. 1). Many advocated for types of training programs for their students that would help rebuild the South (Stetar, 1985, p. 1).

Although higher education institutions in the East, West, and Midwest were booming in the post-Civil War era, no such evidence of this trend occurred in the South. “Left virtually destitute by the War and lacking students, buildings, and assets, college leaders clung more to romantic dreams and were unable to share in the bold expansion experienced by other regions” (Stetar, 1985, p. 1). As leaders worked to redevelop higher education in the South, they adopted a new approach to serve as a force for societal betterment. “Utility found a gradual, if grudging, acceptance in a South confronting the debilitating effects of the wary and an agrarian economy” (Stetar, 1985, p. 326). Further, a new type of student was within reach, and educators adjusted curricula to serve society more effectively. Southern
universities “under the spreading aegis of utility were . . . seeking to reach the ‘public school, the factory child, the hand’s hire, the village library, the home, the field . . . the shop . . . with a more practical education’” (Stetar, 1985, p. 357). The Civil War had weakened many fraternities’ operations and caused fraternity leaders to cease efforts to open new chapters; however, when they were able to create momentum and open new chapters, these quickly emerged (Stetar, 1985, p. 357).

One man who played a large part in this rebuilding effort, R. T. W. Duke, represented a large population of Southern male society who were committed to improvement through academics (c Stetar, 1985, p. 357). Robert E. Lee, president of Washington College, also helped gain funding for instruction of the sciences and military training (Stetar, 1985, p. 1). Many men who attended these Southern colleges, as well as those who attended the University of Alabama, the University of North Carolina, South Carolina College, Louisiana State University, and the University of Mississippi, were responsible for developing the first post-Civil War Southern fraternities (Stetar, 1985, p. 357). Military men returning to college after the War created many organizations. For example, men who attended the Virginia Military Institute were responsible for founding Alpha Tau Omega, Kappa Sigma Kappa, and Sigma Nu in the years immediately following the Civil War (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. III-20, VIII-10–11, & III-123–127). Nearby, Kappa Alpha Order was founded at Washington College in Lexington, Virginia (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. III-55–59).

These organizations emerged after the War to “keep alive the spirit of chivalry, self-sacrifice, mutual helpfulness, and comradeship born of their recent experiences” (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 30). Each new society formed with a particular purpose in mind. For
example, a student with one year remaining before graduation formed Alpha Tau Omega at the Virginia Military Institute (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 30). He wanted to create a society not previously formed in the North or the South, focused on moral conduct and friendship (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 30). Sigma Nu formed at the Virginia Military Institute as an anti-hazing society to bring about change in the treatment of military cadets at VMI (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 30). Fraternities continued to form in the early 20th century. Most of these fraternities formed for specific purposes in this post-War period. Alpha Tau Omega members sought to unite Southern and Northern fraternity men. They formed 22 chapters in the South before 1881, when they finally formed a chapter in the North (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. III-20–25). Other post-War fraternities, however, limited their membership initially to men from the South; others limited their membership to specific academic groups, such as engineers, law students, or men studying agriculture (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. III-20–25). These fraternities formed to support these students’ academic programs while providing a social outlet.

Not all of the secret societies forming at this time were fraternities, and not all of them were formed with positive goals in mind. For example, six well-educated Confederate veterans created the first rendition of the Ku Klux Klan (Anti-Defamation League, n.d.). They made an effort to restore White supremacy in the South by roaming freely, burning houses, and publicly attacking and killing Blacks (Anti-Defamation League, n.d.). In 1867, early members of the Klan even met to attempt to create an organization that would have had local chapters reporting to a national headquarters (Anti-Defamation League, n.d.). They developed a loose hierarchy (which never flourished), a set of ideals called the *Prescript*,
wore robes and insignia, and became an oath-bound organization, similar to the Southern Cross and the Knights of the White Camelia (Anti-Defamation League, n.d.).

**The emergence of women in Greek-letter organizations.** Women’s organizations were also a part of the Greek-letter system beginning in 1851 with Alpha Delta Phi, founded as the Adelphean Society (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. III- 6–8). It was formed at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, an all-female college (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. III- 6–8). Pi Beta Phi was founded as the first national sorority in 1867 at Monmouth College in Illinois; when it began, it was a secret society (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. IV-58–61). The founders of Pi Beta Phi sought to create a secret society for women during a time when only five state universities were admitting women (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. IV-58–61). Monmouth College was established in 1853; its founders believed that equal education should be allowed for all who could benefit (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. IV-58–61). Monmouth admitted women and students of color, providing an ideal setting for a progressive women’s organization such as Pi Beta Phi (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. IV-58–61). Kappa Alpha Theta followed in 1870, which was the first Greek-letter society for women (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. IV-43–46).

Kappa Alpha Theta’s beginnings were slightly different, compared to other women’s societies, in the sense that the women were students at Asbury College in Indiana, which had just begun admitting women after the Civil War (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. IV-43–46). Women were not initially welcomed at Asbury, nor could they seek membership in any of the clubs or societies (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. IV-43–46). Bettie Locke, a daughter of one of the professors at Asbury, was asked by a fraternity man to wear his badge (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. IV-43–46). When she inquired about membership and was told that
she could not join, she decided (with the support of her father) to create such a club for women (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. IV-43–46). Because this organization met an early need nationwide, Kappa Alpha Theta quickly formed chapters across the United States and Canada (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. IV-43–46). Other sororities soon followed, including the I.C. Sorosis in 1867 at Monmouth College, Kappa Kappa Gamma at Monmouth in 1870, Alpha Phi at Syracuse University in 1872, Delta Gamma at the Lewis School for Girls in 1873, Sigma Kappa in 1874, Alpha Chi Omega at Depauw in 1885, and Delta Delta Delta at Boston University in 1888 (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, pp. I-12, I-14, I-17, I-21, I-16, I-18). In addition, Alpha Xi Delta was founded at Lombard College in Illinois in 1893, followed by Chi Omega at the University of Arkansas in 1895, Alpha Omicron Pi at Barnard College, Kappa Delta at the State Female Normal School in 1897, and Zeta Tau Alpha and Sigma Sigma Sigma at the Virginia State Female Normal School (now known as Longwood University) in 1898 (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-12). Alpha Sigma Alpha was formed in 1901 at Longwood University as well (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-13).

This rapid succession of sororities prompted the creation in 1902 of the National Panhellenic Conference, formed as a governing body for women’s fraternal organizations (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Members from Kappa Kappa Gamma decided to invite members from Alpha Phi, Delta Gamma, Delta Delta Delta, Gamma Phi Beta, Kappa Alpha Theta, and Pi Beta Phi to gather in Boston in 1891 (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). A few delegates from each chapter were probably present. These early organizational leaders discussed practices for “rushing” (recruitment) and decided that a woman who already belonged to another women’s fraternity should not be pursued by any other organization (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Delegates mainly used this meeting as
a means for the women to get to know more about one another’s organizations (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.).

Later, at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893, a more formal meeting took place between these organizations (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Several of the women’s fraternities combined their national conventions with the Fair. Men’s organizations were also present and met together, but had not yet approached forming the National Interfraternity Conference (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Because of the timing of the Fair and the organizations’ conventions, many more members of these organizations were present than were present in 1891. Members of Kappa Alpha Theta, Delta Gamma, Gamma Phi Beta, Pi Beta Phi, and Delta Delta Delta worked together to host a booth in the Women’s Building of the Fair (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.).

The official meeting started on July 19, 1893, in the Memorial Art Institute on Adams Street (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Approximately 300 fraternity members attended the morning session to discuss fraternities, fraternity histories, and finances. Later that day, the women’s organizations hosted a reception at the New York State Building. The next day, July 20, the morning session was dedicated to the women’s fraternities (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Topics included chapter houses, guidelines for membership, expansion, the fraternity system, and fraternity journalism (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Although many members from many organizations attended the 1893 meeting, it would be nine years before another productive meeting such as this would take place (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Lillian W. Thompson, member of Gamma Phi Beta, shared,

This sort of meeting was quite new to me. I had only the vaguest idea of what the delegates were expected to do; and having been brought up in the good old school in
which those who were not of were against us, I had no great desire to meet my friends the enemy. There was no time to debate, however, and nothing to do but to go, so one afternoon in September, I entered the lunch room at Mandels’ looking for a group of women wearing fraternity pins. I easily found them, introduced myself, and then racked my brains for topics of conversation which should be both polite and safe; for I had a most uneasy feeling that some fraternity secret might escape me unawares, and fall into hostile hands (as quoted in Beque, 2012, para. 2).

The representatives from each organization agreed to meet annually, elected a chairperson to organize future events, and promised to send a delegate each year (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Before the existence of the Inter-Sorority Council (ISC), every college fraternity system operated on its own without influence or governance from any other. The ISC decided in 1903 that for any college or university that had two or more national groups, a Panhellenic association should be established (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). In 1906, members drafted a model constitution for college Panhellenic associations (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Many early meetings included discussion about recruitment and membership practices, and many policies and guidelines created at these early meetings are still in place today (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). After the 1921 meeting, the membership of the groups in the NPC remained steady until 1947, when 11 organizations were granted associate status (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Six of these organizations were members of the Association of Education Sororities at the time. All of these organizations were granted full membership status in 1951 (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Although I did not find exact numbers or percentages of collegiate women affiliated with sororities, women’s college enrollment as a
percentage of young women in the United States between the ages of 18 and 21 was 17.9% during the 1950s (Solomon, 1986). This was a 5% increase from the 1940s (Solomon, 1986). In 1957, there were 32 women’s organizations in the NPC; 26 of those remain today, after mergers between groups occurred to maintain the size and integrity of women’s fraternities (Solomon, 1986).

**Purpose of women’s Greek-letter organizations.** The founders of Pi Beta Phi (originally known as the I.C. Sorosis) have been labeled “very serious” (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-12). In fact, the organization’s preamble stated, “Whereas it was deemed necessary, in order to cultivate sincere friendship, establish the real object of life, and promote the happiness of humanity, we, the undersigned ladies of Monmouth College do ordain and establish the following constitution” (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-12). The founders of this specific chapter also showed a great interest in helping others. Members of the early chapters of Pi Beta Phi were well known for their commitment to philanthropy and service. Apparently, during their early existence, members of the chapter purchased coal and paid rent for a poor man’s family, donated funds toward city relief efforts, gave money to the poor, and helped underprivileged people by participating in sewing bees (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-12). Another chapter of Pi Beta Phi focused on promoting literacy (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-12).

Prior to 1910, many chapters adopted local causes. War-related service and fundraising projects were an early expression of the commitment to service and philanthropy on a national level that sororities still maintain today (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). After World War I began, Delta Delta Delta supported a rest-and-recreation center in France and helped reconstruct a school in Guty, France, by sending a check to the American
Committee for Devastated France to cover the cost of a heating plant and other needs (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). This type of work done during World War I gave the existing NPC organizations a good base for future philanthropy efforts. Philanthropic and service efforts conducted by sororities mirrored societal expectations at the time for the types of activities acceptable for women (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.).

**Early resistance to Greek-letter organizations.** Although many Greek-letter organizations chose mottoes that expressed idealism, some people viewed these organizations with suspicion, and thus, members met with some resistance. “In the early decades of the 20th century, many public colleges in the South opposed the introduction of exclusive organizations of any sort” (McCandless, 1999, p. 142). Many national headquarters leaders will explain to their undergraduates that in the beginning, secret societies were meant to be literary societies. However, what they do not usually include in that explanation is that debate and literary exploration were not all the activities in which these young men were engaged. Many of these members also enjoyed being on the front lines of protests and revolts (McCandless, 1999, p. 142). Early college administrators opposed fraternities: “They charged that the societies conducted back-room dealings, played pranks, and sometimes drank” (Nuwer, 2001, p. 119).

Two major events took place at Williams College that highlighted the beginnings of resistance against fraternities. In 1834, the antisecret society movement launched at Williams College, followed by a religious revival in 1840 (Rudolph, 1962, p. 137). The religious revivalists pushed the fraternity men to reveal their secrets, and when they chose not to, it frustrated those involved in the evangelical religious revival (Rudolph, 1962, p. 137). In 1842, University of Michigan leaders and faculty condemned the formation of secret
societies (Rudolph, 1962, p. 137). A year earlier, the University of Miami Ohio had threatened expulsion for anyone involved in a secret society or fraternity (Rudolph, 1962, p. 137). The antisecret society gained strength and momentum, but ultimately proved to be unproductive.

In essence, the fraternity movement was institutionalizing new prestige values, the attributes of a successful man of the world, this world, at the expense of those various signs of Christian grace—humility, equality, and morality—which had long been the purpose of the colleges to foster. (Rudolph, 1962, p. 137)

At first, students with a religious background were mostly opposed to fraternities. Then, sons of ministers began to join them, and they were able to gain membership and popularity (Nuwer, 2001, p. 119). At this time, fraternities with very few exceptions were discriminatory in nature “against men of the wrong national origin, religion, and skin color” (Nuwer, 2001, p. 119).

Although many men who joined fraternities in the early days may have joined to participate in literary society debate, in the mid 1800s, some members of these organizations found themselves in trouble, participating in initiation stunts, crimes, and pranks (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 31). One reason for the decline in membership of fraternities between the late 1870s to the 1880s might have been fueled by a book published in 1874, in which the author attacked fraternities for “their immoralities and selectivity in membership” (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 31).

Between 1875 and 1890, over 191 chapters became inactive or closed altogether (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 32). Nearly half of the chapters that became inactive were at institutions that imposed regulations against fraternities (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 32).
Some universities even began requiring their incoming students to take a pledge or sign a form saying they would not join a fraternal organization (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 32). “During this time, the Populist movement influenced the passage of state laws that either banned the fraternity system or reduced its activities at state institutions” (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 32). Many schools developed policies that banned these organizations entirely.

By the early 1900s, the higher education student body had begun to include Jews, minorities, and Blacks. “Conversely, many of the traditional fraternities reacted by implementing exclusionary clauses, limiting memberships to white, male, Protestant students in order to ensure a homogeneous [sic] group of individuals of like mind, religion, and race” (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 38). In response to these new exclusionary policies, other organizations formed whose members believed that a true brotherhood or sisterhood should be made up of many different types of people (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 38). The first nonsectarian and interracial fraternity was formed in Pi Lambda Phi in 1895 at Yale (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 38). This organization formed as a protest against organizations that were not currently allowing Jews to join (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 38). Five other similar organizations formed by 1915 (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 38). As more students with religious affiliations came to higher education, they formed fraternities and sororities made up of these types of students (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 38). Lutheran fraternities, Catholic fraternities, and fraternities specifically for students who affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were formed (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 38). Rho Psi formed for Chinese students in 1916, and a Spanish American fraternity, Sigma Iota, formed in 1904 (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 38).
During the 1920s through the 1950s, fraternities dominated the American college system. “As part of the college experience, one became a member of a fraternity or sorority” (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 33). During this time, near one third of all college students in the United States were members of fraternities or sororities (Horowitz, 1987). One reason for this rapid expansion could be attributed to the need for more student housing. Student dormitories were losing money at the time and were at risk of being discontinued as a housing option at many institutions (Horowitz, 1987). More student housing was needed, and Greek-letter organizations could fill this void by housing students. Colleges even started to support the building and buying of fraternity and sorority houses, thus helping solve university housing problems. This was an example of the fraternity and sorority system addressing a problem that institutions were either unable or unwilling to address. One advantage the Greek-letter system provided during this time was its appeal for students from affluent families, who came from large cities and with more money (Horowitz, 1987).

Thus, the wealthier students who were joining Greek-letter organizations found themselves pressured into a certain lifestyle while on campus. For example, in the 1920s at the University of Michigan, more than a third of the student body belonged to Greek-letter organizations (University of Michigan, n.d.). These students also ran many key student organizations. This meant that college organizations reflected only the opinion of those who ran them—the male fraternity members.

Administrators and students were frustrated when prejudice among college students prevailed within the Greek-letter system during this time. Institutions had become increasingly open to Jewish students and Black students. However, many existing fraternities barred these groups from joining. Although Jewish men founded Zeta Beta Tau in 1898, and
Black college men founded Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, many students felt that rather than joining an organization specifically created for them, they would continue to push for all organizations to be open to diverse members. The issue came to a head in the 1940s and 1950s when membership practices still barred Blacks and Jews from joining: College newspaper editors began to actively campaign against fraternities and sororities. In 1948, the Phi Kappa Psi chapter at Amherst pledged a Black student. Although the alumni of Amherst supported this action, the national convention of the fraternity threatened to end the chapter’s charter if they admitted a Black man as a member (Amherst College, n.d.). The members at Amherst admitted the man anyway. Leaders at some colleges and universities required their fraternities and sororities to align with antidiscrimination policies. However, other institutional leaders feared they would face consequences to endowments and other alumni donations. Thus, even though fraternities and sororities nationally dropped their discriminatory clauses, much discrimination went underground.

**Black Greek-letter organizations emerge.** Knights of Tabor, formed in 1846, was an example of a secret society created for free and enslaved men of African descent. “In the United States, black benevolent societies and fraternals had to take increased precautions to maintain secrecy, even more so than white fraternals that also faced persecution for their secret composition” (Whaley, 2009, p. 50). The Knights of Tabor planned to free slaves in Atlanta by recruiting 4,000 men from slave-holding states (Whaley, 2009, p. 50). Members of the organization were called Knights of Liberty, but their effort was stalled by Civil War activities (Whaley, 2009, p. 50). After the Civil War, the Knights and Daughters of Tabor formed and carried on the same activities, attempting to serve the new status of Black Americans and the challenges they were facing (Whaley, 2009, p. 50). Other fraternal orders
included The Improved Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks, United Brothers of Friendship, Sisters of the Mysterious Ten, Mosaic Templars of Americans, and Sisters of Calanthe (Whaley, 2009, p. 50). In addition, orders of African American Freemasons and other similar orders emerged (Whaley, 2009, p. 50). Being one generation removed from slavery, Black students in higher education began to form social Greek-letter organizations, attempting to create a space for Black students and professionals to socialize and network.

The initial purpose of the formation of these organizations was to “serve as social organizations for a particular class among a still segregated racial-ethnic group” (Whaley, 2009, p. 52). The NPHC council began with the Black Greek-letter movement in 1906 on a predominantly White campus. These organizations were formed to “foster brotherhood and sisterhood and to serve as a conduit by which collective action plans could be coordinated” (Anson & Marchesani, 1991, p. I-42). For example,

BGLOs [Black Greek-letter organizations] formed on white campuses at the turn of the twentieth century may appear to embrace whiteness and white organizational structures because of their existence as Greek-letter societies. In actuality, their identity as Greek-letter organizations allowed them to obtain land grants in the name of the seemingly neutral organizations and to raise funds to build and buy small sorority and fraternity houses close to their respective campuses. (Whaley, 2009, p. 62).

Civil rights. In 1910, 32 college fraternities hosted over 1,000 active chapters (Brown et al, 2005). Black students attending institutions where fraternities and sororities were present did not receive invitations to join these groups (Brown et al, 2005). By founding "Negro Greek-letter organizations, black students sought to emulate their white counterparts
in organizational structure, while at the same time incorporating aspects of racial identification, cultural heritage, and social uplift” (Brown et al., 2005, p. 181). These fraternities came to be known as *The Divine Nine* (Brown et al., 2005). In 1905, Alpha Phi Alpha was formed at Cornell University when a group of Black students felt cut off from the mainstream of student life on campus. They originally called the group *The Social Study Club*, and its purpose was to discuss and address issues regarding social and academic pursuits, prejudice, and the discrimination of Black people (Brown et al., 2005). Alpha Kappa Alpha, the first sorority in The Divine Nine, was formed in 1908 at Howard University (Brown et al., 2005). From 1905 through 1963, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi, Delta Sigma Theta, Phi Beta Sigma, Zeta Phi Beta, Sigma Gamma Rho, and Iota Phi Theta were formed (Brown et al., 2005).

In 1952, six of these organizations were heavily involved in stimulating interest in supporting the American Council on Human Rights (ACHR). Alpha Kappa Alpha members worked with the ACHR to promote healthy initiatives before Congress, to increase the number of student nurses, and to improve the health programs at historically Black colleges (Alpha Kappa Alpha, n.d.). The NPHC’s involvement with the ACHR was important throughout the 1950s and 1960s as members drew attention to legislation concerning education, transportation, employment, and improving equality in the armed forces (Alpha Kappa Alpha, n.d.). The ACHR also helped to file civil rights cases before dissolving in 1963 (Alpha Kappa Alpha, n.d.).

**Greek Councils, Member Chapters, and National Organizations**

Today, several confederations have formed to provide leadership development, resources, standards, and consistency for Greek-letter organizations.

The National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), now comprising 26 member chapters, was established to “assist collegiate chapters of the NPC member groups, and to cooperate with colleges and universities in maintaining the highest scholastic and social standards” (NPC, 2014). A third governing body, the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) comprises nine National Greek-letter community service fraternities and sororities (National Pan-Hellenic Conference, n.d.). In 1930, these Black Greek-letter organizations (BGLOs) noted a need to form an umbrella organization, which became the NPHC. The NPHC monitors both federal and state legislative and activities along with other matters that concern NPHC organizations (National Pan-Hellenic Conference, n.d.). The NPHC also serves as a resource-
sharing body and conducts regional and national conventions for its member groups (National Pan-Hellenic Conference, n.d.).

**G.I. Bill.** The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, known as the *G.I. Bill*, caused an influx of returning war veterans who wanted to pursue an education. These veterans were not necessarily similar to those who attended the “characteristically rural, private, small, elitist, white, and Protestant” institutions (Greenburg, 2004, pp. B9-B11). These returning war veterans were seemingly regular, hardworking American citizens—gaining admittance to colleges encouraged the perception that college might be for more than just the elite. In addition, although they were not granted the same access as others, Jewish and Black students began to attend college in higher numbers (pp. B9-B11). The structure of the G.I. Bill challenged the belief that college was only for the elite; in addition, the Bill challenged the traditional racial and ethnic divides of higher education (Batten, 2011). However, although enrollment increased because of the G.I. Bill, state governments were reluctant to increase funding going to institutions to accommodate nontraditional students (Batten, 2011).

While the G.I. Bill was implemented, *Plessy v. Ferguson* was still in effect. *Plessy v. Ferguson* was the 1896 “separate but equal” doctrine. This meant that Southern states could still deny African American veterans access to all universities; thus, the law pushed Black students toward Black institutions. This means that while White schools in the South and North were rapidly expanding, many African American veterans were turned away in Southern states. Thus, only 12% of African American veterans were able to pursue a college education, while in contrast, 28% of White veterans were able to pursue a degree (Batten, 2011). As more students across the United States began to enroll, the experience of college itself was affected. With more men returning from war and enrolling in colleges, there was a
need for more housing, and many students began to be involved in political and civic organizations (Batten, 2011). Veterans who used their educational benefits participated in “fifty percent more civic organizations (such as fraternal organizations, parent-teacher associations, etc.) and engaged in thirty percent more political activity” (Mettler, 1998, p. 348). Veterans returning in such large numbers and their engagement in civic organizations led directly to a new phase of national expansion for Greek-letter organizations.

New phase of national expansion. The 1960s and 1970s were difficult times for fraternities and sororities; however, over 100 campuses hosted fraternal chapters for the first time (Torbeson & Parks, 2009). Although growth occurred, loss of chapters was extremely high: “More than 550 chapters went inactive at 236 colleges during this decade” (Torbeson & Parks, 2009, p. 36). A free-speech movement at California Berkeley spread to other campuses and created a social atmosphere and counterculture (Torbeson & Parks, 2009). However, someone who was not a part of this counterculture might still have opposed the draft or the Vietnam War. “Social fraternities and sororities tended to attract fairly conservative students who were more affluent. With these organizations viewed as part of the ‘establishment’—traditional, out of style, and prejudiced—they came under attack and lost much of their prestige” (Torbenson & Parks, 2009, pp. 36-37). It was no longer cool to be Greek on campus. The anti-establishment mentality took over.

The 1980s and 1990s brought other challenges for Greek-letter organizations, mostly caused by internal issues, including hazing, racism, sexual abuse, alcohol use and abuse, and other forms of discrimination (Torbeson & Parks, 2009). The Greek system as a whole continued to increase in popularity throughout the 1980s (Torbeson & Parks, 2009): “By 1990, fraternity and sorority membership had reached an all-time high of nearly 700,000”
(Torbenson & Parks, 2009, p. 37). Since that year, over 2,000 chapters have been established through the United States. Most of that expansion has been in organizations outside of the National Interfraternity Council. Since 1990, Zeta Beta Tau has established over 60 new chapters; two Hispanic sororities, Sigma Lambda Beta and Sigma Lambda Gamma, have both increased by over 50 new chapters each. In fact, the landscape of fraternity and sorority life nationwide has changed dramatically in its makeup.

By the year of 2000, the proliferation of new organizations and new chapters around the country had changed the fraternity landscape. Not only were there traditional fraternities and sororities on campus, but also a variety of other organizations could be found. Here were Latino and Latino, multicultural, religious, Asian, black, gay, and lesbian fraternities and sororities that offered college students options beyond the traditional organizations. (Torbeson & Parks, 2009, p. 37)

New types of students brought new potential members to campus for social Greek-letter organizations.

**Latino Greek-letter organizations.** The history of Latino Greek-letter organizations has consisted of four phases. The first phase, *principio*, took place in the late 1800s throughout the United States (NALFO, n.d.). The second phase, *fuerza*, took place from 1980 to 1990 (NALFO, n.d.). *Fuerza* stands for *force*, representing a time where extensive expansion occurred for Latino Greek-letter organizations (LGLOs), including appearing at Cornell, Rutgers, Ohio State University, and throughout California (NALFO, n.d.). The third phase, fragmentation, took place between 1990 and 2000, with over 17 LGLO sororities forming across the nation (NALFO, n.d.). Rapid growth raised issues for campus administrators who struggled to figure out how these organizations would fit into the current
Greek systems (NALFO, n.d.). In 1998, LGLOs entered the fourth phase, known as *adelante*, which means *moving forward* (NALFO, n.d.). The National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO) Council was established to promote and foster positive interfraternal relations for all Latino fraternal organizations through mutual respect, leadership, honesty, professionalism, and education (NALFO, n.d.). The NALFO is the “coalition of 17 Latina/o based sororities and fraternities in the United States” (NALFO 2015).

**Asian Americans in sororities and fraternities.** Few researchers have focused on the students groups within the Asian American college student population. Much of the current research has focused on the academic successes of these students, rather than what groups they have joined as social outlets. Very few Asian American fraternal organizations existed in the early years of fraternal organizations. From 1916 to the early 1970s, only 11 Asian American Greek-letter organizations were established (Chen, 2009). Exclusion of Asian Americans did not just occur within the social Greek-letter systems on college campuses across the nation.

The history of exclusion of Asian Americans from mainstream Greek-letter organizations was not isolated to just sororities and fraternities, but must be understood in the larger context of the exclusion, segregation, and marginalization that characterized the lives of Asian Americans prior to the legislation of civil rights. (Chen, 2009, p. 83)

The geographic locations of Asian American fraternal organizations reflects the locations where most Asian Americans lived (Chen, 2009). Most public California institutions did not charge tuition, which benefited Asian American families whose children could not afford to attend college otherwise. In 1926, Pi Alpha Pi fraternity formed for Asian
American men (Chen, 2009). Other Asian American fraternal organizations formed over time, including the Japanese American sorority, Chi Alpha Delta, and Sigma Omicron Phi (Chen, 2009). Chi Alpha Delta and Sigma Omicron Phi both became active during World War II (Chen, 2009). Many Asian American students, however, were forced into Japanese internment camps during the anti-Japanese movement in America (Chen, 2009).

Both Chi Alpha Delta and Sigma Omicron Phi were reestablished after the war, along with new Japanese American Greek-letter organizations (Chen, 2009). However, in the late 1960s many fraternities and sororities routinely denied membership to Asian Americans, African Americans, Jews, and members of lower socioeconomic classes (Chen, 2009). Even with the end of legalized segregation, these prohibitive organizations continued to grow and expand (Chen, 2009). Some fraternities became more ethnically pan-Asian, rather than identify with one particular ethnic group (Chen, 2009). Since 1990, the number of Asian American fraternal organizations founded for the first time has more than tripled to more than 32 (Chen, 2009).

**National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC).** Modern American colleges and universities are more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity than they were in centuries past. Student demographics have changed, but the diversity within the NIC and NPC has not changed at the same rate (Wells & Dolan, 2009). For example, Wells and Dolan (2009) noted that Greek-letter life at the University of Southern California (USC) exemplified this slow growth in 2004 when the white student population numbered only 47.5 percent; among the twenty-eight IFC and NPC groups, white membership still comprised 76.3 percent of total membership—a pace requiring thirty years to catch up with overall student diversity at the university. (p. 157)
In order to address the exclusionary nature of the NPC and NIC organizations, MGLOs began to appear on college campuses across the nation. Many MGLOs are mistaken for traditional African American, Asian, or Latino fraternities and sororities. The beginning of MGLOs can be traced to organizations with single-race members that were attempting to be inclusive, allowing pledging outside of racial guidelines (Wells & Dolan, 2009). From the late 1920s to the 1950s, a period of social protest prompted MGLOs to grow into a movement entirely their own.

The National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC) is an umbrella council for 12 multicultural Greek-letter organizations established in 1998 in response to the emergence of the multicultural fraternity/sorority movement that began in the late 1980s and early 1990s (NMGC, n.d.). The message of many of these new multicultural organizations has included the inclusiveness of all cultures, races, religions, and creeds (NMGC, n.d.). In 1998, 13 Greek-letter organizations came together to create a national multicultural council. One of the NMGC’s purposes is to

- provide a forum that allows for the free exchange of ideas, programs, and services between its constituent fraternities and sororities;
- to promote awareness of multicultural diversity within collegiate institutions, their surrounding communities, and the greater community-at-large;
- and to support and promote the works of its members. (National Multicultural Greek Council, n.d., Goals of the NMGC Section, para. 1)

**Native American Greek organizations.** In 1994, Native American Greek-letter organizations became part of the fraternal movement in the United States (NALFO, n.d.). Six organizations have developed over time, creating a positive image of Native Americans in
While the higher education environment. These organizations are unique for their inclusion of traditional beliefs, values, and traditional practices (NALFO, n.d.). In addition, Native American Greek-letter organizations have taken a strong stance against the use of alcohol. However, “a positive higher educational experience has been clouded by discrimination and prejudice for many Native Americans. A strong cultural capital for college aspirations has been thwarted by poverty, geography, lack of information, and other factors” (Kelly, 2009, p. 133).

The history of Native American Greek-letter organizations traces to North Carolina. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced many local tribes at the time to relocate to Oklahoma, in an event known as the Trail of Tears (Kelly, 2009). Even so, a large number of Native Americans remain in North Carolina. The majority of the Lumbee tribe, for example, resides near University of North Carolina Pembroke. Of the six Native American Greek-letter organizations that exist, four began at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and East Carolina University (Kelly, 2009). Two of these four now have chapters at UNC Pembroke (Kelly, 2009). The Native American fraternities lack a national governing council like the NIC, NPC, NALFO, NMGC, or NPHC; however, UNC Pembroke started a council called Hok Nosai. “Hok Nosai, taken from a Tutelo-Saponi phrase that means ‘all one,’ is the name the council selected” (Kelly, 2009, p. 140). The council was created several goals in mind, including promoting unity, cooperation, and friendship between Native American chapters and other Greek-letter organizations at UNC Pembroke (Kelly, 2009).

Membership practices. Over the last 200 years, a diverse array of Greek-letter organizations has formed. Some of these organizations are exclusive in policy and practice, while others are more inclusive. Some types of organizations have appeared in specific
geographic regions, while others have spread out as they expanded. Some groups have associated with particular religions, races, or ethnic groups. For example, early social fraternities came from groups of White, Protestant males, and then later admitted White female sorority members. Although diverse groups of students have enrolled in higher education institutions, the Greek-letter organizations on college campuses have for the most part remained exclusive in their membership practices.

The first sororities emerged to support women who found themselves a minority among the men at their respective institutions. Later, students of various racial and ethnic groups began to attend colleges as well. Black, Native American, Asian American, and Latino students found themselves in a situation similar to that of the first women in higher education. Thus, new types of social Greek-letter organizations formed to provide this type of social experience for students who were excluded from existing social Greek-letter organizations). Similarly, Greek-letter organizations affiliated with certain religious practices formed when members of those religions were being excluded from fraternities and sororities at the time. These issues were not new to Greek-letter organizations; at the time of this writing, they were also not in the past. As students who identify with various sexual orientations and gender identities have attempted to join social Greek-letter organization, the deeply entrenched exclusion practices have again become evident in the membership practices of social Greek-letter organizations.

**Legal policy changes---Title IX.** Although earlier patterns of exclusive fraternity and sorority membership practices simply reflected the way things had been done over a long period, the establishment of Title IX gave legitimacy and even justification for these exclusive practices. The exemption provided to social Greek-letter organizations means that
compared to other student organizations on campus, social Greek-letter organizations are allowed to discriminate based on sex. The Title IX Education Amendments of 1972 include a section aimed at social fraternities, sororities, and voluntary youth service organizations:

This section shall not apply to membership practices of (A) of a social fraternity or social sorority which is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of Title 26, the active membership of which consists primarily of students in attendance at an institution of higher education (United States Department of Labor, 2014, para. 6).

Although Greek-letter organizations have been exempted from Title IX, the exemption has not been without controversy. Title IX permits Greek-letter organizations to remain same-sex; however, members of many Greek-letter organizations, particularly NPC member groups, have taken the stance that Title IX requires them to remain same-sex.

**Gender identity and inclusion in Greek-letter organizations.** The area of gender identity policy currently lacks clarity. Many professionals in the field have offered support and guidance on Title IX issues specifically regarding protecting the right of these organizations to remain single-sex. The NIC, NPHC, and NPC councils all serve member groups on college campuses across the United States, and in some cases, in Canada. Because the vast majority of the national headquarters for these organizations have not created a policy stating whether the chapters can be inclusive to transgender members, the policy decision remains largely in the purview of the college students at individual campuses. In other words, the members of each fraternal organization may decide whom to include as a member. Fraternal organizations have a long history of defining their own membership requirements, and although they have become more inclusive over time, they remain one of the few college populations that have not stated as a national body of governing councils a
position on the inclusivity of transgender students. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA; 2011) enacted a nationwide policy to allow transgender students to participate in athletic competitions in accordance with their gender identities. Unlike the NCAA, not many member organizations from the NIC, NPC, and NPHC have made inclusivity statements that specifically address transgender inclusion (NCAA; 2011).

One important consideration is how these policies and practices relate to exclusive membership practices enacted over time in Greek-letter organizations. Although Greek-letter organizations removed language about excluding Black students from their membership practice policies in the 1950s, these organizations were still not necessarily inclusive to non-White students. Another point of contention emerged in the late 1940s when campuses such as the University of Connecticut forced chapters to disaffiliate from their national offices because they had discriminatory language in their national membership policies (Balserak, 2007). In 1953, Phi Delta Theta chapters at Williams College and Amherst College were suspended by their national office when they pledged “non-Aryans.” In 1954, only a year later, the national organization changed language in their membership selection policies from “fully Aryan blood” to “socially acceptable” (Balserak, 2007). Still, the suspensions of the chapters at Williams and Amherst were upheld (Balserak, 2007). Similar situations occurred with other organizations, for example, Delta Chi, Delta Psi, and Delta Theta Pi, when students at individual campuses pledged non-White students against the wishes of their national headquarters (Balserak, 2007). In the 1960s, Delta Theta Phi at Duke University disaffiliated from their national office so they could pledge a Black student.

A major case of cross-racial membership took place in the Stanford University chapter of Sigma Chi, whose members pledged a Black student in 1965; the chapter was
subsequently suspended by their national office (Hughey, 2009). Instead of giving the real reason why the suspension took place, the national office cited “contemptuousness for the fraternity and ritual” as the reason (Hughey, 2009, p. 655). Many national offices changed the language in their discriminatory policies, initially to be less offensive, and then eventually removed these discriminatory policies altogether (Hughey, 2009). However, even though the language was changed or removed, membership practices changed slowly over time to include non-White students (Hughey, 2009). Changing the language in membership practices has been symbolic and does not instantly lead to a culture change. Many of the attempts at making policy changes were seen as “hollow legal gesturing or political maneuvering” (Hughey, 2009, p. 657).

United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights statement on Title IX and transgender membership in fraternities and sororities. In November 2014, Douglas Case, Coordinator for the Lambda 10 Project for Fraternities and Sororities, wrote a letter to the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, requesting guidance regarding the membership of transgender students in social fraternities and sororities (Lambda 10, 2014). Specifically, Case requested confirmation that Title IX did not apply to the membership practices of social fraternities and sororities (Lambda 10, 2014). In December 2014, Catherine Lhamon, the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, explained that Title IX specifically excluded the membership practices of a social fraternity or sorority as long as the organization was exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code and its active membership primarily consisted of students at institutions of higher education (Lambda 10, 2014). Lhamon stated, “So long as a social fraternity or sorority meets these conditions, its membership practices are exempt from Title IX regardless
of whether that organization admits transgender students” (Lambda 10, 2014). This explanation was important. A social fraternity or sorority would not jeopardize its protection under Title IX, even if it decided to admit a transgender student. This clear interpretation provided by the Office of Civil Rights showed that social fraternities and sororities may decide on a national level what their membership practices will be regarding transgender students.

National Greek-letter organizations’ Title IX interpretations and stated membership practices. As described in the literature review, a small number of social fraternities and sororities have released their own interpretations of Title IX as it relates to their respective membership practices for students who identify as transgender. Of the hundreds of social fraternities and sororities that exist, however, only these few have actually clarified their statement on inclusivity of transgender individuals. Other undergraduate students, affiliated or not affiliated, are left to guess what their experience might be regarding transgender inclusivity and membership practices of other social fraternities and sororities. As of this writing, of the few organizations that have clarified their stance on transgender membership nationally, only three of the chapters established at EMU are part of that group: Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority, Alpha Sigma Tau sorority, and Delta Tau Delta fraternity. Many chapters currently present at EMU lack an interpretation of Title IX or any other stated policies and practices regarding membership of transgender students. The problem is that the nature of Greek-letter organizations in history has not been one of inclusion.

Challenges for Greek-Letter Organizations

Alcohol use and abuse. As mentioned, Greek-letter organizations have a long history on American college campuses. Many were founded on high ideals, focused on building
better men and women. Unfortunately, these organizations have faced many challenges since their inception; many have struggled to meet the expectations and standards set by their founders. Social disorder has been present since the earliest fraternal organizations appeared. High-risk alcohol use has been one of these challenges. The excessive use of alcohol at universities dates back to the founding of the first higher education institutions. Harvard students drank alcohol and then reportedly blew up buildings with gunfire around Cambridge in the early years of the institution’s existence. Fraternal historians reported that when fraternity membership numbers proliferated during the 1920s, a breakdown in values occurred (Anson & Marchesani, 1991). In 1933, educators at 14 colleges that had a heavy Greek-letter presence signed an agreement stating their commitment to eliminating harmful practices involving drinking and hazing (Anson & Marchesani, 1991).

Although hazing reports have been publicized over time, the media and the availability of the Internet have changed the way and the speed at which these stories are now reported. In response to the rising number of published stories of fraternity and sorority alcohol use, many entities, including national headquarters, the Association for Fraternity and Sorority Advisors, the NIC, NPHC, NPC, and the Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values, have worked together to develop strategies and programs to combat these behaviors. Campus leaders nationwide have adopted many policies, including policies promoted by the Fraternal Information and Programming Group (FIPG). The FIPG’s mission is “to promote sound risk management policies and practices, to be the leading resource of risk management education, programming and information to the broad constituency involved in all aspects of Greek Life” (FIPG, 2014). Although many campuses and 51 national organizations have
adopted FIPG’s guidelines for risk-management issues, a drinking culture persists in fraternities and sororities.

Even with stricter policies regarding alcohol at fraternity-hosted parties, “the organized hedonism of the fraternity—and its darker side of group violence—draws young men to the houses” (Horowitz, 1987). The battle between national headquarters and local chapters, and local chapters and institutional control persists, and Greek-letter organizations’ membership numbers are soaring.

**Hazing.** Fraternities and sororities have many rituals and engage in many traditions, part of fraternal life for over 200 years. As mentioned, rush or pledge practices developed in the mid-1800s. The first recorded hazing death in a fraternity took place in 1873 at Cornell University, where members blindfolded a pledge in the countryside for a ritual (Nuwer, 2001). The pledge was unable to get his bearings and stumbled into a gorge with two other members (Nuwer, 2001). The pledge, Mortimer Leggett, was killed; however, the fraternity, the Kappa Alpha Society, was allowed to continue on campus (Nuwer, 2001). In 1899, another pledge of this same chapter was killed in a pledging ritual when he and 20 other pledges were told to jump off a train into a canal (Nuwer, 2001). In the early part of the 20th century, stories detailing hazing practices began to be more widely published.

Writers such as Tennessee Williams published biographies about antics occurring in chapters they had joined (Nuwer, 2001). Williams remembered receiving a paddling he called “spine-breaking” as a member of Alpha Tau Omega at the University of Missouri, Columbia (Nuwer, 2001). Jack Kerouac and E. B. White released biographies with detailed accounts of hazing rituals (Nuwer). Documentation of hazing behavior appeared into the late 1940s, when *Time* magazine covered a rash of hazing deaths. “By the mid-70s, pledges (and
Greek members being punished for attitude problems) started dying in bizarre rituals, and press coverage of hazing began to increase” (Nuwer, 2001, p. 132). Horowitz (1987) described the shift in hazing activities that took place in the 1970s and 1980s: “Although fraternity hazing has largely shifted from physical to mental abuse, reports of deaths and injuries point to the persistence of older torments” (Nuwer, 2001). Fraternity violence, once monitored by housemothers or designated deans on campuses, took on new forms, through alcohol and drug abuse, hazing, and damaging property (Nuwer, 2001).

Influential alumni in the Greek-letter world spoke up. For example, Delta Tau Delta alumnus Frederick Doyle Kershner published an article on the history of hazing in the 1980s and condemned hazing in a report to the NIC (NIC, n.d.). In the 1990s, Frank Ruck, Jr., a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon, became the president of the NIC (NIC, n.d.). He focused his efforts on attacking “hazing, sexual harassment, poor academic achievement, high liability insurance costs, lack of adult involvement, dishonest academic behavior, property damage, poor recruitment standards, and the perpetual running of Greek organizations under crisis management” (Nuwer, 2001, p. 136). By the late 1990s, many of these influential leaders had retired or passed away. Change occurred in many national organizations and in the NIC, the AFA, and other Greek-affiliated organizations, which meant some individuals who had blocked hazing prevention efforts were replaced (Nuwer, 2001). Although a new leaders and reformers have continued to combat hazing, no one has claimed total victory over the practice.

**Relevancy and Future of Fraternal Organizations**

Over the last decade, some university leaders have questioned whether fraternities and sororities have a place on their campuses any longer. This is not a new question. As early
as the late 1870s and 1880s, an anti-fraternal movement had begun on college campuses across the nation (Stephens, 1874). *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, published in 1874 by J.F. Stephens, focusing on fraternities, their immoralities, and their selectivity in membership practices may have prompted this movement and subsequent decline in membership in these organizations (Stephens, 1874).

In 2002, leaders at Alfred University in western New York decided to ban fraternities on campus following the death of a student who was found in a creek after his fraternity brothers apparently beat him (Arenson, 2002). Alfred University is not an isolated case. However, rather than banning Greek-letter organizations altogether, other schools—Princeton, for example—have prohibited freshmen students from joining. In the fall of 2012, university president, Shirley M. Tilghman, announced her decision based on “recommendations from a student-faculty-staff working group on campus social and residential life that submitted its report” (Princeton University, 2011). At of this writing, freshmen cannot affiliate until they reach their second year at the university (Princeton University, 2011). The university writers identified a number of reasons for the decision, but also stated that the year during which freshmen cannot affiliate would give the university administration more time to strategize ways to work with Greek-letter organizations on campus (Princeton University, 2011). The task group wrote, fraternities and sororities “can contribute to social exclusivity and privilege and socioeconomic stratification among students” (Princeton University, 2011).

Not everyone would agree with the decisions at Alfred and other private schools to close Greek-letter organizations or with Horowitz’s (1987) opinion. Nuwer (2001) argued that problems with Greek-letter organizations do not go away when the organizations are
prohibited: “When you get rid of Greek organizations, they are going to stay there in some other form. They go underground. The problem doesn’t go away. It’s just the liability for the university that goes away” (Arenson, 2002).

For all the negative media reports on drinking and hazing in the Greek-letter community, a similar number of reports exist of Greek-letter organizations moving in positive directions. For example, for the past few years, Delta Upsilon International Fraternity, a part of the NIC, has focused on growing its Global Service Initiative, sending groups of undergraduate members and staff to Jamaica multiple times a year to work on building schools for area children (Delta Upsilon, n.d.). People may claim that the reason stories like this are not often featured is that philanthropy, service, and excellent academics are what fraternities and sororities are expected to do in the first place.

Greek-letter organizations have a long and storied history in the United States. Considering their roots as literary societies during colonial times and their current evolving role as social organizations, sororities and fraternities are a part of the history of the higher education system in America. However, questions about their relevancy may continue with all of the issues involving alcohol and drug use and abuse and hazing.

**Organizations resisting sexual identity barriers.** Although traditionally White sororities and fraternities have made efforts to include other races and ethnicities, multicultural and sexually diverse fraternities and sororities have formed in response to many forms of intolerance. Since 1980, a number of fraternal organizations have emerged that attempt to specifically address “questions regarding alternative sexualities within the fraternity and sorority institution” (Yeung, 2009, p. 185). Because deeply entrenched heterosexual norms permeate the organizational form of the fraternal movement, change will
require more than just simply modifying the structure of typical fraternities. A national fraternity, Delta Lambda Phi, is one of the fastest growing gay organizations in the country (Yeung, 2009). “Embracing the fraternal model for DLP brothers, also meant exclusion of women, being apolitical, and perhaps, being elitist” (Yeung, 2009, p. 187). This situation raises a dilemma wherein members must either embrace equality and inclusion or embrace the exclusion and oppression of differences. By looking at how different organizational models interact within a specific social environment, researchers can clearly see that students need more autonomy and encouragement to create new ways to form organizations (Yeung, 2009). “The defense of a single-sex model by DLP, as arbitrary as it is, indeed embraced an institutional logic that reflects how American campuses work” (Yeung, 2009, p. 202).

**Students seek answers.** Throughout the first three years of my time at Eastern Michigan University, students, chapter advisors, and other professionals have approached me with questions about how to be inclusive to transgender students interested in joining social Greek-letter organizations. In every case, students sought answers on how to navigate national policies, if policy statements existed at all. Students have always been interested in being proactive and being inclusive rather than exclusive. Students’ questions mostly involve what might be possible regarding membership practices. They want to know if they can offer a bid or recruit to individuals who identify as transgender without violating their national headquarter policies. They do not often contact their national headquarters first, because as undergraduates, they do not have much influence over national level actions.

In fact, structurally, outside of daily activities, students do not have control over much of anything that happens organizationally. Undergraduate students have little interaction with national offices during their undergraduate time. Undergraduate student focus on daily
chapter activities, including recruitment, holding leadership positions, raising money for a
philanthropy, performing service, being social with other fraternity and sorority members,
being involved on campus, and programming. Unless students become chapter president, it
is unlikely they are interacting with their national office at all. The focus of the
undergraduate experience is on local experiences and local policies. Boards of directors,
volunteers, and national staff members conduct national operations. Students are rarely
involved in organizational decisions regarding changes to organizational directions. In short,
there are written national policies, and then there are unwritten policies. When my students
have asked questions of their national headquarters’ staff, they are usually told no policy is
currently in place regarding inclusion of transgender members. Sometimes they are told “no,”
even though a policy does not exist that prohibits it. Many times, by not asking, they can
actually move forward with the inclusion of a variety of types of members.

When I have called, every national headquarters with a chapter at EMU has given a
different answer or no answer at all. There are no set policies in place or educational
resources offered that students can easily access to support members of their chapter who
identify as transgender. I believe the reason that policies are not yet in place in many national
organizations is that leaders of a single organization do not want to be the first to change.
Alternatively, the change process is so slow that many of these organizational leaders have
not been able to make that change happen. This is the nature of the problem. For the most
part, I advise students to recruit and initiate any student they want as long as they do not
violate a stated policy from their national headquarters. Then, I try to connect the chapter
president and members to different programs that can help educate members on how to be
more inclusive and supportive to a member who may or may not openly identify as
transgender. My colleagues and I have had to create our own approaches, which have been different for each situation in which a transgender student has joined a chapter. The trouble with this approach is that we lack support of leaders at national headquarters; in addition, students rarely find answers or support at the national level. The problem is the tension between the current situation and the potential benefits of Greek-letter life. In one case, a sorority woman who had already affiliated with a chapter at EMU decided to begin her transition and, as a result, no longer felt welcome or included in the chapter. Leaders at the national headquarters did not support the chapter or this particular student. The student ended up leaving the chapter. Students have been seeking answers, and as a professional who should be able to give them answers, I have been frustrated at the lack of readily available resources to offer students who are attempting to be inclusive and supportive to brothers and sisters.

Summary

When I arrived at Eastern Michigan University and found that students who identified in the LGBTQ spectrum were present within the Greek-letter community, I was happy to see that so much had seemingly changed since I had been an undergraduate student. I was happy because I had an idea of what the Greek-letter experience can be. I think it is possible for that positive experience to exist at an institution like EMU. This inclusion was not necessarily unique to EMU, but it certainly has not been the norm on a national level, and has definitely not been supported in many Greek-letter communities in the nation. It seemed that the current students in the EMU community were more interested in who would be a good member of their organization, rather than focusing on a student’s identity as a barrier to membership.
However, students began approaching me with feelings of helplessness and frustration when they did not know where to go with questions around transgender membership and educational resources. I was frustrated to discover students who were willing to explore issues and support their peers were either meeting with resistance, or worse, indifference from their respective national leaders. Given the United States Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights interpretation of Title IX and Greek Life membership, it seemed that students had finally received an explanation. They no longer had to guess who they were allowed to recruit or initiate as members. Even with this Title IX interpretation, however, students were still being given vague explanations about violations of “unwritten” rules, and resources from the national headquarter level that students could access to learn more about inclusivity remained unavailable. Additionally, even though a written policy exists, as exemplified by the history of Greek-letter organizations, change is not likely to come swiftly.
Chapter 3: Research Methods

Research Paradigm

In this qualitative study, I used a case-study approach to explore the role and function of Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). This approach can best be described as constructivist and interpretive in nature. The notion of understanding, or verstehen, first discussed by Max Weber, was central to the framework of interpretive research. My desire to understand, and in turn interpret, social realities within Greek-letter organizations at EMU guided my process. My approach was constructivist in the sense that my focus was on conducting an interpretive case study based on my belief that reality and interpretations of reality are socially constructed. I believed that until I could understand the nature of reality within the Greek-letter community at EMU, I would not be as effective of a professional in that context. “All knowledge, and therefore, all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and being developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 1998. I could not simply have asked my research questions and hoped to construct meaning. I had to actively observe and interact with others within this social context to create meaning. Table 1 shows paradigm positions on selected practical issues regarding constructivism.

This study focused on the Greek-letter community at Eastern Michigan University. It was important for me to focus on that specific social context. Collecting the individual experiences helped me understand that social context as it exists today and how it has existed over time.
Table 1

Paradigm Positions on Practical Issues Regarding Constructivism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry aim</td>
<td>Understanding; reconstruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of knowledge</td>
<td>Individual reconstruction coalescing around consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge accumulation</td>
<td>More informed and sophisticated reconstructions; vicarious experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness or quality criteria</td>
<td>Trustworthiness, authenticity, and misapprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Intrinsic; process tilt toward revelation; special problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>“Passionate participant” as facilitator of multivoice reconstruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Resocialization; qualitative and quantitative; history; values of altruism and empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>Incommensurable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hegemony</td>
<td>Seeking recognition and input</td>
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Research Design

Researchers who choose the constructivist–interpretive paradigm rely heavily on naturalistic methods like interviewing, observations, or analysis of existing texts. For this research study, I used an ethnographic approach to study Greek-letter organizations at EMU. Ethnography is the study of cultures through observation and interpretation. Wolcott (2008)
defined ethnography as the “study of the customary social behaviors of an identifiable group of people” (p. 241). Ethnographic research is used in many different fields, including anthropology, education, and political science (Wolcott, 2008). In fact, ethnography is one of the primary research methods used to conduct anthropological studies (Wolcott, 2008). Many ethnographic researchers complete their work in the field, within the culture they are studying (Wolcott, 2008).

Because ethnographic researchers use culture—customary social behaviors—as an organizing concept, it is important to consider the term culture. Kluckhohn (1985) offered multiple definitions of culture:

1. The total way of life of a people;
2. The social legacy the individual acquires from his group;
3. A way of thinking, feeling, and believing;
4. An abstraction of behavior;
5. A theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave;
6. A storehouse of pooled learning;
7. Learned behavior;
8. A set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men; and
9. A behavioral map, sieve, or matrix.

Geertz (1973) wrote, “Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun . . . I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning” (pp. 4-
Many ethnographers have defined culture in broader terms as simply patterned behaviors or a way of life (Geertz, 1973).

Wolcott (2008) offered three fieldwork methods for ethnographic researchers: experiencing, inquiring, and examining. Experiencing includes observing participants: Researchers gather data by observing and analyzing firsthand what they have seen and heard (Wolcott, 2008). Inquiring focuses on the actual interview process as a complement to observation conducted during experiencing (Wolcott, 2008). This process requires questioning and interaction between researchers and participants (Wolcott, 2008). Finally, examining focuses on analyzing research produced by others, including archival material, photographs, and documents (Wolcott, 2008). In some cases, examining allows participants to share items with researchers that may further inform the research beyond the experiencing and inquiring stages (Wolcott, 2008). In this study, I incorporated all three methods suggested by Wolcott. I used experiencing by observing the Greek community at EMU. I inquired by interacting with the Greek-letter community at EMU. Finally, I examined by analyzing materials from the archives, including photographs, documents, and other relevant records.

**Ethnographic study of Greek-letter organizations at EMU.** In this study, I sought to explore the subculture of students within the Greek-letter community at Eastern Michigan University. Conducting ethnographic research of this group permitted me to achieve consistent evaluation and synthesis of cultural elements (Merriam, 1998). My hope was that the result of this process would be the emergence of new data about the Greek-letter system at EMU, adding to the knowledge base of the culture of this group. Morgan (1997) wrote, “One of the easiest ways of appreciating the nature of . . . culture and subculture is simply to
observe the day-to-day functioning of a group or organization to which one belongs; as if one were an outsider (p. 129). I applied this approach to conduct this research study. I used ethnographic research methods for this study because of their suitability for studying the culture of students in the social Greek-letter system at EMU.

**Constructivist paradigm.** I conducted this study to learn more about the students within the EMU Greek-letter community. During the study, it was important for me to recognize the assumptions I made and consider how the assumptions might have affected my data collection, analysis, and construction of my interpretations. As a former undergraduate student at EMU, a member of an EMU Greek-letter organization, and an EMU graduate, I needed to identify and clarify my biases.

First, I adopted a certain research paradigm. This essentially meant that as a researcher, I adopted a particular worldview. I chose a constructivist paradigm as the most fitting to answer my research questions. Clarifying the paradigm I adopted was essential so that I operated from the paradigm throughout my research. Guba and Lincoln (1994) described paradigms as “sets of basic beliefs [that] . . . are not open to proof in any conventional sense; there is no way to elevate one over another on the basis of ultimate, foundational criteria” (p. 108).

While conducting this study, it was not my intention to propose or create any absolute truths or make a statement about the experiences of all students in the Greek-letter community at EMU. Guba and Lincoln (1994) noted that “the sets of answers given are in all cases human constructions; that is, they are all inventions of the human mind and hence subject to human error” (p. 108). The focus throughout my study was to make sense of the experiences of students who had been or currently were members of the Greek-letter
community at EMU in order to understand the Greek-letter community at EMU. My concern was not to attempt to use these findings for any other reasons than to inform my practice as a student affairs professional and to help provide possible resources and ideas for other student affairs professionals who may lack useful resources on the topic of inclusion in Greek-letter life. I was not seeking to criticize or validate current or past practices at EMU, other institutions, or national Greek-letter headquarters. I simply wanted to uncover and describe the experiences of students in the Greek-letter community at EMU by exploring how their experiences may have linked to the history of these organizations.

**Ontological position.** When discussing ontology, Schram (2003) asked, “What is the nature of reality and what can be known about it?” (p. 41). Ontology, for me, refers to my beliefs about the nature of reality. For this study, I describe my ontological beliefs as relativistic. Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated, “Realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based” (p. 111). Those who hold this ontological view assume that researchers will use their prior knowledge, theory, and concepts to make sense of the social world as it constantly emerges and evolves (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Ontologically, my aim was simply to describe accurately the observations I made about a social context, rather than making statements or claims about an absolute truth. This was meaningful to me, because as mentioned, I sought to understand the role of Greek-letter organizations at EMU. In order to accomplish my goal, I had to make sense of prior knowledge, theories, and concepts, as well as what I had observed. This ontological approach helped me accurately interpret and describe this social context.

During my research, my observations focused mostly on the social relationships between humans, and I worked to explain these relationships. These relationships and
observations were completely different from what observers might have seen in the physical world. I attempted to explain the relationships differently, compared to the observations I saw in the physical world, because they were different. Not only did I observe and interview human beings and interpret their experiences, but I also worked to describe accurately the events I read about in data collected from EMU archives, books, articles, journals, scrapbooks, and photographs. My aim was to understand and then accurately describe what I observed. I believe I have accomplished that goal in my research.

**Epistemological position.** When describing the epistemological position, Schram (2003) noted that people come to know the world by asking, “What is the relationship between the researcher and what can be researched?” (p. 41). Epistemologically, I describe my assumptions regarding how I obtained knowledge as transactional and subjectivist. Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated, “The investigator and the object of the investigation are assumed to be interactively linked” (p. 111). Although I contributed my assumptions about the purpose, function, and currently reality of Greek-letter organizations at EMU, my job during this research was to report accurately the reality of that setting as I learned about it. I believe that people in social settings constantly create knowledge. Thus, even though I may have begun this process with some initial hypotheses and biases, my duty was to report what I learned as knowledge emerged and reality unfolded in front of me. I believe I have accomplished this goal through my interpretations of the findings.

**Assumptions of causality.** In terms of examining causality, my assumptions aligned with the symbolic interactionist perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The theory of symbolic interactionism rests on the idea of meaning. Meanings emerge from the reciprocal interaction
between individuals within a particular social setting or context (Blumer, 1969). According to Blumer (1969), human beings form meaning in two ways:

1. Meaning is something attributed to objects, events, phenomenon, and so on.
2. Meaning is a “physical attachment” imposed on events and objects by humans

Thus, meaning is created because of the interaction between people and their interpretations of that interaction.

Human beings are unpredictable in the ways they interact with or react to others. Each of these interactions is unique; that means an event could affect a person differently, compared to the effects on another person. Two people experiencing the same event or stimulus could have different reactions and interpretations (Blumer, 1969). Humans experience a stimulus, and their responses occur based on the meaning or interpretation they first create from that stimulus (Blumer, 1969). Blumer (1969) claimed three ideas explain the symbolic interactionist:

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning things have for them;
2. The meaning of things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows; and
3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he [or she] encounters (p. 2).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated, “Multiple ‘knowledges’ can coexist when equally competent (or trusted) interpreters disagree, and/or depending on social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors that differentiate the interpreters” (p. 113). The creation of knowledge occurs in a process, which includes the inquirer as both participant and facilitator (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Knowledge is continually recreated and the “final aim is
to distill a consensus construction that is more informed and sophisticated than any of the predecessor constructions” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).

**Methodological position.** Methodology is the process by which people uncover knowledge they believe they can know. Guba and Lincoln (1994) described methodology for the constructivist as “the variable and personal (intramental) nature of social constructions suggests that individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction between and among investigator and respondents” (p. 111). For this study, I describe my methodological views as hermeneutical and dialectical. Methodology depends on the answers provided to the ontological and epistemological questions previously discussed. Methodologically, I engaged in an inquiry process to create knowledge. According to Annells (1996), this process is dialectically transacted, with the researcher’s aim being to describe and construct an accurate understanding of a phenomenon. I completed a case study; I believe methodologically my process of inquiry created knowledge.

**Case Study**

I used the qualitative case-study research design to conduct this study to understand the purpose and function of Greek-letter organizations at EMU. In a case study, researchers study a phenomenon over a specified length of time. Yin (1994) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13).

I selected this type of research design to focus on accurately describing the Greek-letter community at EMU. I found few studies related to my topic; thus, the logical place to investigate the topic was by exploring the emergence and persistence of Greek-letter
organizations at Eastern Michigan University over time. I incorporated the historical context of the Greek-letter community at EMU to clarify the current phenomena of EMU Greek-letter organizations. Because I focused my research on one case that evolved over a certain period, both past and present, the case-study research design was fitting and appropriate for making meaning of the Greek-letter community at EMU.

**Self as a Research Instrument**

Because of the qualitative case study methodology I chose, I was the primary research instrument. Given (2008) said, “The self is understood to be a research instrument bringing the researcher’s situational understanding, developed through previous action research, to bear on the analysis of social data” (p. 6). Of course, I had to consider the purpose of the study, reflect on my research approach, and honestly appraise how my choices could shape my findings.

My choice to carry out a study of this nature was rooted in the decision I made to pursue a long-term career in student affairs. I believe the undergraduate fraternal experience can be one of the most powerful and transformational experiences a student can have. I base my opinion on several elements, including the experience I had at EMU, the experiences I have seen others have at EMU, my national Greek-letter leadership experiences, and my interactions with other practitioners. I am motivated by my belief in the power of that experience, coupled with the belief that with the right tools and knowledge, I might make a real difference, not only for my students but also in the profession. Well-trained and informed practitioners can positively contribute to the undergraduate experience. This ambition led me to begin my graduate level studies in higher education, to work in Greek-letter affairs, and ultimately, to pursue a doctorate in educational leadership.
Early in my experience with Greek-letter organizations, I became aware of the myriad issues leaders and members of these organizations face. I was also acutely aware of how the complex history of these organizations has helped to shape the American higher education system. Thus, I became interested in what practitioners could learn from the history of these organizations. However, early in my academic career, I lacked the appropriate knowledge and skills to address the issues I felt existed in a meaningful way.

My graduate studies in higher education provided me with basic knowledge about history, policy, and professional language I could use when working in my entry-level position in higher education. However, it was not until I worked daily in a higher education setting that I began to ask critical questions about the purpose and relevancy of Greek-letter organizations or to understand the complexity of issues faced by leaders at Greek-letter organizations. Even after I had been in a higher education setting for some time, I was frustrated that the knowledge I had gained during my graduate studies did not seem to allow me to make my desired impact. I needed more information about specific student populations within Greek-letter life. I needed to keep up with current and fast-changing trends.

Some of the issues I attempted to address during my first year at EMU felt virtually impossible to address in a way that would make a meaningful difference. As my frustration mounted, I felt I needed to challenge myself academically and professionally to reach my goals. I decided to pursue this degree to prepare myself to address those issues. The problems I identified were not impossible to address; I simply did not yet have the knowledge or tools to make informed decisions, take action, or tell an accurate story of my experiences.

As I considered the long history of Greek-letter organizations in the United States, I felt frustrated at the lack of knowledge about how to support transgender students or their
peers who might want to join Greek-letter organizations. I cannot know if all chapter members at EMU want education and resources for supporting transgender brothers and sisters; however, members from each chapter where out transgender students are members have specifically asked me for training and resources. Thus, I often became the bridge between the campus and each chapter’s national headquarters when navigating issues involving membership policies and practices. I found myself searching for answers not readily available. I believed leaders at national headquarters were unwilling to provide clear statements on membership practices for transgender individuals to EMU students. I believed students who received no answers admitted transgender members into their Greek-letter organizations without education about how to support transgender individuals.

Greek-letter organizations have been extending the limits of what is possible on issues for better or worse for 200 years. Although they have been behind on certain issues historically, they have also been ahead of the trend at times on higher education issues. I wanted to see Greek-letter organizations be trend-starters regarding the issue of transgender inclusion. My desire to motivate a shift in membership practices, to prompt discussions on the matter within the field, and ultimately, to provide my students with answers prompted this study. Although my campus administrators have supported the inclusion of all individuals into Greek-letter organizations, to date, leaders at national headquarters have provided inconsistent answers, if any. A clear statement from national headquarters would look much like the Title IX interpretations from Sigma Phi Beta and Delta Xi Phi Multicultural Sorority. These organizations have explicitly stated their stances on transgender membership. In contrast, only a handful of organizations from the National Panhellenic Conference, the Interfraternity Conference, and the National Pan-Hellenic Council have done
the same. On a daily basis, I felt stuck because of national Greek-letter leaders’ lack of involvement, the lack of published work on the subject, and my own gaps in knowledge. At the same time, I felt energized and hopeful when students who were simply seeking answers about vague membership policies set forth by their national organizations asked me how to be inclusive. Although I was energized by their interest in inclusivity, I was still without answers on how to move forward.

Further, considering student affairs is my profession, it was important for me to help contribute to the field, support my students, and ask questions when membership practices seemed out of date or out of line with students attending college today. As described in Chapter 4, early Greek-letter organizations formed from the desire of students to supplement the classroom experience by providing a setting outside of the classroom for discussion on topics that curricula did not cover. Their purpose was to advance the student experience and provide something institutions lacked. Thus, when I observed tension regarding membership practices, I concluded that exclusion was not in line with the current purpose of Greek-letter organizations. My desire to see Greek-letter organizations thrive as a positive force on campus motivated me to discern the changes needed for members at EMU Greek-letter organizations to learn about transgender inclusion and to equip themselves with the skills necessary to support transgender brothers or sisters who might join chapters.

In addition to the desire to be able to address issues I faced in my daily work, I also hoped that by becoming more knowledgeable myself, I could share that knowledge with colleagues and students at my institution, as well as within the Greek-letter life network outside of EMU. As I approached this study, I was face-to-face with the issues at hand on a
daily basis. Because of this, I admit it was nearly impossible to distance myself from the research in a way that would allow me to disconnect emotionally from the research.

**Moral, Ethical, and Legal Issues**

**Moral standards.** As a student affairs professional and a researcher, it is important for me to be dedicated to establishing new knowledge within the field, rather than simply to finding answers to personal questions I may have. Although the desire to commence this study emerged from my own frustration about the lack of guidance on the matter, I also recognized the importance of being open to whatever results may emerge. It was important to consider all possibilities. Although the goal of this study was to find answers to the research questions, it was also important to identify my own ethical stance and adhere to ethical standards throughout. As the primary research instrument, it was even more important for me to conduct my research with integrity. I identified my ethical standards by considering many different ethical viewpoints.

**Ethical standards.** To ground this study in appropriate ethical frameworks, I adopted two codes of professional ethics for conducting research. First, the Association of Fraternity and Sorority Advisors (1993) provided the disciplinary code of ethics that guided my research. Second, the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE Principles of Ethical Conduct, 2003) provided the professional code of ethics to which I adhered throughout this study. Both helped me form a cohesive body of research, conducted with a high level of ethical consideration. ASHE’s principles involve integrity, credit, honesty, accuracy, responsibility, originality, respect, fairness, advancement, responsibility to clients and to the public interest, and conflict of interest (paras. 2–11).
In addition, I studied disciplinary background for ethical standards and practice. When conducting my study, I made a number of difficult decisions. I thought critically and carefully about what I chose to include and what I decided was not relevant to the study. That required integrity. I conducted research in a way that maintained the integrity of all people involved, the student affairs field, and any publications, references, or collaborations I used. I also gave credit to any past researchers, publications, or individuals who became part of my study. Honesty and accuracy were important to maintain. I consulted multiple sources before I presented something as factual or true. I was also honest about what I learned, while being careful not to damage anyone’s character. I was responsible for my work and my research; I was responsible with the information I had learned.

Originality was an issue as I created my own work while ensuring I contributed to the field and referenced others’ work. When making decisions about what to include and what to exclude in my writing, I tried to be conscious of fairness. This meant considering my biases and ensuring they did not interfere with what I chose to report. One of my goals in completing this research was to contribute to the field of higher education in a way that would benefit its constituents. Aware of my responsibility to people I interviewed, as well as to the public interest, I made decisions about including or withholding information that could potentially be damaging to individuals, the institution, or the field. I did so with the interest of individuals and the public in mind. Finally, I continued to be honest about any conflicts of interest that emerged through the research process. I dealt with any conflicts of interest that arose from knowing people I interviewed or when presenting information about the institution for which I worked.
Ethical considerations. In order to determine and communicate my ethical views during my research, I read about a variety of ethical theories. May (1980) described a reality of ethics: “It would be pretentious, condescending and false for the applied ethicist to assume that he or she can operate deductively and derivatively from abstract ethical principles and rescue practitioners from any and all of their difficulties” (p. 358). I realize that simply stating my ethical stance does not mean there are no flaws in my research; however, I want to clarify the ethics I practiced during my research, data analysis, and interpretation. Although I read about the teleological ethic, the utilitarian ethic, the categorical imperative, and the covenantal ethic, I identified most with the critical theory and advocacy theory as a guiding framework for my own ethical principles and beliefs.

May (1980) suggested that advocacy research requires the researcher to make a positive contribution to the well-being of those researched and implied that this commitment takes precedence over obligations to the wider community or other special communities. Because I researched a specific group of students within the EMU Greek-letter community—a group that could be vulnerable—it was important that I not just write about this particular group of students, but write on their behalf. Because of the history of Greek-letter organizations, both nationally and locally, I felt this ethical theory was most appropriate. Proponents of the advocacy model have claimed society can be divided into two groups: the oppressors and the oppressed. The students who participated in this study needed to trust that I would study them honestly and report an accurate account of their experiences to create knowledge that could lead to social change. Traditionally, the role of the researcher is simply to transmit the truth, not to apply it (May, 1980, p. 365). In this case, on behalf of the students I wanted to learn more about, it became important to me to break with that tradition.
to ensure that whatever knowledge I gained would be presented honestly and in a way that accurately represented the experiences of these students, positive or negative.

When approaching and conducting this research project, it was not my intention at any point to present only one point of view or to promote a particular side of an issue related to inclusivity in the EMU Greek-letter community. Although I wanted to be able to use my research for good, I could not predict in the beginning what findings my study might reveal. To attempt to promote only one side of that experience or to conduct only research based on my biases would violate the ethical codes I chose to follow, as well as go against my personal values. Doing so would have compromised the integrity of my entire research project. May (1980) claimed, “The moral life does not reduce itself entirely to one’s commitments to a host population to the exclusion of all other considerations” (p. 369). I chose to adhere to the critical philosophy and advocacy theory for my research, which required me to consider the importance of not only doing what was right for the researched, but also for the research, in reporting an accurate account of the experiences of these students.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

First, I determined and defined the unit of analysis prior to conducting my research. I defined a case using the definition given by Miles and Huberman (1994): A case is “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p. 25). The purpose of this study was to understand the role and function of social Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University. In order to accomplish this goal, students’ experiences helped to inform the understanding of the cultural environment and social context at Eastern Michigan University. Therefore, the unit of analysis was the social Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University.
**Data collection.** Much of the data I collected and analyzed was historical in nature, gathered from the EMU archives. I used many different types of sources from the archives to learn about the history of the Greek-letter community at EMU and of the institution itself. I used primary sources, including meeting minutes from various organizations, member scrapbooks, photos, yearbooks, letters, student conduct reports, alumni newsletters, and various other documents. Most of the time, I photocopied these documents so I could further analyze them. When documents or photos were too fragile, I used a camera to capture an image of them and then printed a copy for analysis. When I could not take a photo or make a photocopy, I took detailed notes in an organized, systematic way to use later to draw conclusions. The secondary sources used included a small group of historical texts written about the history of EMU; the city of Ypsilanti, Michigan; the early education system of Michigan; campus life at various institutions over time; and the history of normal schools. When using these historical texts, I bookmarked important information and made notes about the items related to my research.

I completed participant observation as part of my research. I connected with different alumni who have been Greek-affiliated during their undergraduate years at EMU. I arranged informal conversations with them and analyzed the data from those conversations. To add to my understanding of the topic, I also spoke to faculty and staff at the University who provided information on the transgender community.

**Data analysis.** As I collected data from historical documents and personal interviews, I separated the two processes of data collection and data analysis. Much analysis occurred while I collected data. During analysis, I generated more data by making notes about ideas, patterns I noticed, and relationships among concepts and theories. Next, I designed a system
to organize the data I collected. This systematic organization helped me tell a story about the
emergence, persistence, purpose, and function of the Greek-letter organizations at EMU.

Next, I spent a significant amount of time reviewing the data, notes, ideas, categories, themes,
and patterns. I set aside data that were not useful for this particular study. Finally, I used my
conceptual framework to help me make sense of the data I had collected. This helped me
identify the connections I made between my chosen conceptual framework, the data collected,
and other related material. Creswell (2003) described data analysis as an “ongoing process
involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos
throughout the study” (p. 190). Data analysis in this study continued throughout all phases I
have described.

Validity

One of my main objectives in reporting results of this research was to ensure accuracy
of the results. Because I viewed myself as the main instrument in this research, a lot of the
accuracy of results depended on my ability to report those results accurately. This study,
being qualitative in nature, was different in the sense that it did not rely on a specific research
instrument, other than me. This means that validity for this type of research had different
meanings than validity concerns would have had for a quantitative study.

Triangulation. During this study, I used primary and secondary sources, as well as
observations and oral histories to build my narrative as I described the role of Greek-letter
organizations in higher education, and specifically, the development of these organizations at
EMU. The secondary sources about EMU and the Greek-letter organizations that have been
present or are currently present on campus generally mirrored historians’ accounts or records
submitted to the EMU archives. Many of the primary sources may have been unique to EMU
and may have reflected the knowledge I have developed as a professional staff member during my time working at EMU. I kept the data from the primary sources consistent with the data from the secondary sources, when applicable.

**Subjectivity and bias.** It was important for me to acknowledge my own personal biases in order to preserve the integrity of my research. I have a strong connection to Eastern Michigan University; I attended as an undergraduate student from 2003 to 2007. During that time, I joined a Greek-letter organization. After graduation, I worked as a Coordinator for Greek Life at Case Western Reserve University before coming back to Eastern Michigan University. At the time of this writing, I had worked at EMU for four years. I worked with many Greek-affiliated students on a daily basis. I acknowledge those close ties did in fact create a bias for me. However, my passion for the subject matter and my strong tie to EMU may have actually motivated me to guard the integrity of the research more closely.

**Disconfirming evidence.** Throughout this study, I searched for evidence that might have disconfirmed what I believed to be true about the purpose and function of Greek-letter organizations at EMU. My biases centered on my beliefs that Greek-letter organizations should provide a certain type of experience. I also made an effort to search for disconfirming evidence even after I completed my data analysis. I believe this was central to the integrity of my research. By acknowledging my biases and by searching for all disconfirming evidence, I reported the most accurate description of what I learned throughout this process.

**External validity.** The purpose of this study was to learn about the role of Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University. External validity has to do with whether, and the extent to which, my research would be generalizable to other Greek communities. I recognized that the experience of students at EMU was not the same as the experience of
students at other institutions. Just as the experience of one transgender student at EMU was not the same as another transgender student’s experience at EMU, I was not able necessarily to generalize my findings to other institutions. However, it may be worthwhile considering the experience of these students in terms of programming or initiatives that could be implemented at other institutions to improve the experience—not only for students who identify as transgender within Greek-letter organizations, but for students who identify as transgender at colleges and universities across the United States.
Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this case study was to understand the role and function of social Greek-letter organizations in the context of inclusion of transgender students at Eastern Michigan University. In order to accomplish this purpose, I developed a contextual understanding of Greek-letter organizations operating in the United States. In addition, I examined some of the Greek-letter organizations that have been on campus at Eastern Michigan University since the inception of Greek-letter communities.

Michigan State Normal School (MSNS)

Normal schools. The beginnings of normal schools date back to the establishment of Abbe de la Salle, a school for teachers, which opened in 1681 in Rheims, France (Putnam, 1899). In America, in 1823, Reverend S. R. Hall developed a private school in Concord, New Hampshire, designed to train teachers for the public schools (Putnam, 1899). In 1837, a Michigan school superintendent outlined a report referring to normal schools in Prussia, but did not necessarily recommend that this type of institution be opened immediately in Michigan (Putnam, 1899). The initial hope was that a branch at a university could take on the task of training teachers (Putnam, 1899). Another Michigan superintendent, Mayhew, referred to normal schools as “indispensable to the perfection of any system of national education” (as cited in Putnam, 1899, p. 54). In 1849, a previous state superintendent, Comstock, was made chair of the committee on education in the Michigan House of Representatives (Putnam, 1899). Early that year, a bill emerged from this committee for establishing a normal school in the state (Putnam, 1899). That bill became law in March 1849, along with a supplementary act. In 1850, the normal school was organized and opened under the new act, which combined the two that had been approved in 1849 (Putnam, 1899).
The legislation that helped to establish the normal school also created the Michigan State Board of Education. Michigan Board of Education members’ initial duties were to select a location, provide plans for buildings, and control the direction and future of the organization (Putnam, 1899). In 1849, a meeting was held with the goal of locating and selecting an appropriate site for the normal school (Putnam, 1899). During the next meeting, the board members spent time examining proposals from cities and townships, including Ypsilanti, Jackson, Niles, Marshall, and Gull Prairie (Putnam, 1899). After carefully considering the proposals from all five sites, the board members selected Ypsilanti (Putnam, 1899). A formal dedication of the first building of Michigan State Normal School took place in 1852 (Putnam, 1899). The institution’s first term occurred in March of 1853 and lasted 17 weeks (Putnam, 1899).

**Michigan State Normal School.** The original building of Michigan State Normal School (MSNS) included a room for the model school, with seats and desks for up to 80 students, a room for physics and chemistry, a library, a cloakroom, and an entire second floor, with desks for 208 students, along with many recitation rooms (Putnam, 1899). The third story contained one large room and several smaller rooms for individual classes (Putnam, 1899). In 1859, this original building burned, and almost nothing was saved (Putnam, 1899). A restored version of this building reopened in 1860 with improvements on the design of the original building (Putnam, 1899). Over the next few years, a gymnasium was built, which burned down, and the Conservatory of Music building was erected (Putnam, 1899). In 1897, as attendance increased in the late 1800s, Board members added Starkweather Hall and expanded the front and rear of the property and the main building (Putnam, 1899). Finally, a new gymnasium building was erected along with a training school building (Putnam, 1899).
Early students at MSNS were mostly from lower-income families in nearby communities (Putnam, 1899). Although some sought to become teachers, many were simply looking to study in an academic program (Putnam, 1899).

Curricula were designed around classical languages and study of English (Putnam, 1899). The Board of Education adopted a code of rules, outlining the powers and duties of the MSNS Principal and the Board of Instruction (Putnam, 1899). Admission requirements and procedures were also outlined, with the focus on admitting students who were training to become teachers. While Mayhew was principal, new departments were added. Board members Estabrook and Putnam visited several of the best normal schools in the East to find ways to improve instruction and create a more formal professional training track for students (Putnam, 1899). As new principals took over MSNS, curricula were consistently revised and reestablished (Putnam, 1899). Advanced studies were also considered once curricula had been more definitively established (Putnam, 1899). The advanced studies led to a course specifically designed for graduates of colleges; in the last few years of the 1800s, more courses for advanced students were established, and master’s degrees were offered (Putnam, 1899).

The Board of Education established rules and regulations for MSNS. The rules included the requirement for regular faculty meetings, outlined the duties of faculty and the orders of business during their meetings, outlined office hour and teaching requirements, and set forth guidelines for the government of normal school students (Putnam, 1899). Although students came from out-of-state to study to be teachers, the majority came from nearby areas in and around Michigan (Putnam, 1899). The enrollment records from 1892 to 1897 indicate that a large majority of the students were women (Putnam, 1899). Additionally, the
hometowns were included in the records—most simply listed a city because the majority of the students came from Michigan (see Figure 3). Very few were enrolled from out of state. Places like “Ypsi,” “Saline,” “Grand Rapids,” and “Brooklyn” appear on page after page in these record books (Eastern Michigan University, 1892, 1896).

Figure 3. Enrollment records, 1892-1897.
Source. “Enrollment Records,” 1892, 1896, EMU Archives, Ypsilanti, MI.
**Early societies at MSNS.** Student activities emerged soon after the inception of the Michigan State Normal School (MSNS). A school paper, *The Normal News*, was established by action of the faculty in 1881, followed by the first publication of *Aurora*, the annual yearbook, in 1893 (Putnam, 1899). However, the first real society for students appeared much earlier, in 1853, only one month after the opening of the first term of the school (Putnam, 1899). This society was called the Lyceum. Putnam (1899) noted,

> Societies are an essential element in the life and development of any institution of learning. They usually afford a tolerably reliable index of the tone, taste, and general culture of the student body, and, inferentially at least, of the teaching and governing bodies. (p. 215)

Although many early societies existed, only those that lasted for an extended time may have influenced “the intellectual, moral, and social life of the institution as a whole” (Putnam, 1899, p. 215). By 1875, the Lyceum was described as a society that met weekly on Friday evenings, was open to everyone, and was considered an “excellent field in which to train upon budding lawyers and to exercise in the manly art of politics, but unwieldy to be used for general literary work” (Goodrich, 1898).

The Lyceum was organized when students and teachers came together to form a society to promote the literary improvement of students at MSNS (Putnam, 1899). The initial list of members included both men and women (Putnam, 1899). Although administrators stated that the Lyceum was open to all, the description implies the society was formed for men to gather and engage in conversation about law and politics. Preference of male members was implied through some of the early minutes from these meetings, which indicated that both men and women could be members but only men could “vote” on issues
after oratory debates (Putnam, 1899). For example, one author noted, “The following resolution was debated for a whole session and finally adopted: ‘That for ladies to speak in this Lyceum is right, proper, and expedient’” (Isbell, 1971, p. 218). Clearly, different levels of membership participation existed. The formation of this society was interesting, considering MSNS had been created to train teachers and enrolled mostly female students. The difference in status between men and women within the organization was certainly a reflection of society at the time. The Lyceum was the first clear example of exclusion in student organizations in EMU’s history.

Lyceum members discussed many topics over time, including the dissolution of the Union, female participation in the Lyceum, various political topics, the acquisition of Cuba, the decision in the Dred Scott case in the Supreme Court, the issue of slavery, and many other topics relevant at the time (Eastern Michigan University, 1853). Members wrote, “The object of this Society shall be to afford to its members the means of literary improvement by encouraging and sustaining literary composition and discussion” (Eastern Michigan University, 1853). Students were eager to participate in discussions and have access to literature and social activities not found in their regular courses of study (Eastern Michigan University, 1853). In 1860, with the advent of the Civil War, many men attending MSNS were no longer able to participate in the Lyceum, and activities dwindled (Eastern Michigan University, 1853). Discussions within the Lyceum reflected wartime issues.

Many guest lecturers were present throughout the early years of the Lyceum. Putnam (1899) included a description of the early years of the Lyceum:

Its sessions are held in the Normal chapel on each Friday evening, and are preceded by an informal meeting for social intercourse. The regular exercises consist of debates,
original papers, declamations and vocal music. Once a month, men of ability from abroad deliver lectures on various topics of interest to the students. Connected with the Lyceum is a library from which all its members are entitled to draw books. The Board of Instruction are happy to recommend this society to all future normal students, as having answered, in an unusual degree, all the objects of its organization (p. 221).

This sentiment was reflective of the type of student activity taking place at other higher education institutions. Literary societies like the Lyceum had been present on college campuses since the mid-1700s—for example, the F.H.C. opened at William and Mary as early as 1750 (Potter, 1944). As MSNS grew in size, so did the size of the Lyceum. Younger students began to feel it was nearly impossible to participate with the older students controlling the direction of the society. “In 1876, the society was incorporated and the membership limited to 400. The unwieldiness of a large membership, as the school grew, led in time, to the formation of several other societies” (Isbell, 1971, p. 333). When the Lyceum itself dissolved, it split into other groups: the Adelphic, Atheneum, Olympic, and Crescent (Putnam, 1899). In late 1881, shortly after splitting into this new structure, a new constitution was drafted. “The number of divisions of the Normal Lyceum shall be any number that the welfare of the students may require” (Eastern Michigan University, n.d.). To be elected to any one of these divisions, a member had to be voted in by other members, be an enrolled student at MSNS, and pay a membership fee of $0.50 for a membership badge (Eastern Michigan University, n.d.). A student could not hold membership in more than one division of the Lyceum at any given time (Eastern Michigan University, n.d.). This example
represents a second, more subtle example of early exclusionary practices. Figure 4 shows the divisions of the early Lyceum at MSNS.

![Figure 4. Early divisions of the MSNS Lyceum](image)

**Michigan State Normal College**

Many other societies formed, including a new Lyceum and the Independent Lyceum (Putnam, 1899). One of these societies, The Pleiades, was established by women at Michigan State Normal School around the same time its all-male counterpart, The Normal Zealots, was launched (Putnam, 1899), indicating that exclusion was an issue in these early societies. Women were not fully included in the Lyceum and thus chose to form their own literary society (Putnam, 1899). This is another example of students choosing (or being forced) to separate themselves into like groups. Both societies focused on literary improvement and parliamentary procedure (Putnam, 1899). The R. H. Society, the Scientific Society, the Mock Congress, and the Athletic Association were other early societies directed at students
with specific interests (Putnam, 1899). In the late 1800s, as Michigan State Normal School became Michigan State Normal College, other groups emerged, including the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club, the Arm of Honor, the Monday Club, the Normal Educational Society, the Graduate Club, and the Alumni Association (Isbell, 1971, p. 333).

Students sought social opportunities to connect with their peers outside of the classroom. Many were away from their families for an extended time and wanted to connect with peers with common interests to build a community. Thus, students formed into student groups with other students like them. Isbell (1971) noted,

The extracurriculum as constituted by the student organizations at Normal
represented not only a rebellion against the traditions and values of their elders but
also an awareness on the part of the faculty of the limitations of the formal curriculum.
(p. 241)

Thus, students may have been searching for ways to connect with some peers but not others. Forming these organizations created an opportunity to connect with a select group of peers while being a part of a group that may have excluded some students. Students at MSNS were influenced by what students were doing at other institutions. “To understand organized student life at Normal, one must look to the winds that brought tidings from the prestigious colleges and universities of the East” (Isbell, 1971, p. 331). Many early clubs at MSNS may have been formed mirroring what students were doing at schools that had been established for a longer period of time.

The Lyceum had a definite impact on Michigan State Normal School. In 1882, the school newspaper at the time, *The Normal News*, began to dedicate a section to organizations on campus called “societies” (*The Normal News*, 1881). In 1881 and 1882, writers in *The
Normal News started to mention the Lyceum’s four organizations, as well as other groups, including The Summit Street Boys and the Students’ Christian Association (Normal News, 1882).

Students who were graduating from MSNS at the time played a role in starting similar societies on other campuses. The Normal News in 1883 featured articles about students who had graduated from MSNS and started similar organizations at other institutions. Around the same time, students who were members of these MSNS societies started to enter their own announcements and updates in The Normal News. Student organizations were quickly becoming a permanent force and presence on campus. Members included early athletes, children of faculty members, and faculty members themselves. Figure 5 shows the only early clubs available to students at MSNS. There were no Greek-letter organizations at this time.

![Student Organizations 1880's](image)

*Figure 5. Early student organizations at MSNS*
Members of early societies at MSNS/MSNC. Literary societies came first; social organizations started to form next, with the focus on providing a social outlet for interested students. Students who joined these early organizations usually joined out of a mutual interest. For example, the Student’s Christian Association was made up of students who had common interests in Christianity and doing Bible study. Students who joined the Lyceum and other literary societies wanted to participate in the study of literature not presented in the classroom. The students confined themselves to the narrow social groups from which they already had identified with before coming to the institution.

One author described the type of students attending Michigan State Normal School as “the normal girl” (Eddy, 1898). Another author described “the normal boy” (Aurora, 1898). The author described the women who attended Michigan State Normal School by classifying them into

- those who want to get bicycles, those who want “positions,” or want to “pass structural botany.”
- Still others are content with wishing for more moderate achievements, as “to get through,” “to pass teacher’s grammar,” “to get a five years’ certify,” and it is even rumored that some want to get married. (Eastern Michigan University, 1898)

Alice Eddy described the “normal boy” in the Aurora: “If he has a fairly good opinion of himself, deem him not responsible for it; it is the fault of his surroundings” (Eastern Michigan University, 1898). Eddy attributed this false sense of confidence to the fact that there were only 200 men and 800 women. In addition, the author described different varieties of normal men: one type was “the callow, would-be lady killer,” and “another variety may be termed the sweater class. The sweater class is composed of good material,
however, and may be depended on to produce startling results in the way of class yells and effective athletic work” (Eastern Michigan University, 1898). The *Aurora* authors may have been writing in jest or exaggerating slightly, but they were describing a typology of students at MSNS/MSNC at the time. Students were coming to the school for an education, but their experiences on campus could have taken several different paths. That means if students had the resources to join a student organization, they likely had a very different experience than did students who went to class with the goal of simply passing and getting a job. The formation of student organizations meant that students organized themselves in a way that was inherently hierarchical. By sorting themselves into a variety of organizations, students had to figure out where they fit, if at all.

**Greek-letter societies formed from student organizations.** Greek-letter societies at Eastern Michigan University began long before it became a university. Although the Lyceum was fraternal in nature, the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club was the first organization whose members explicitly identified a need for a club that was more social in nature (Eastern Michigan University, 1892). In 1892, the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club started from a gathering of boys from the normal school, when they assembled with their classmate Paul Cowgill to share a package that he had received from his parents. A member known as Jennings said,

> The generosity of the host, the delicacies of the repast, the stories, the toasting, and the pleasanting together suggested the idea that an organized club with regular times of meeting would be such a social factor that the Normal school had long needed. (Eastern Michigan University, 1892)
The men who initially formed the club remembered George Washington’s fondness for social gatherings and his love for storytelling and speeches; they decided to form a club in his honor and with many of the same practices. In 1899, the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club changed its name to the Greek-letters, Phi Delta Pi and continued on as a Greek-letter organization on campus. The stated purpose of this newly named club was “as of many other organizations, is to cultivate this subordination of self to the will of many—that is, the development of the individual in society” (Putnam, 1899, p. 223). The purpose of the club was to become a part of something bigger than an individual’s self.

It is interesting to note, as occurred with the Lyceum, social groups for men formed quickly and early, compared to social groups for women, even though most of the students at Michigan State Normal School were women. Again, this trend reflected the different privileges that men and women received on campuses across the nation. Women were not necessarily welcome in higher education; men could start societies without needing to ask for approval or faculty sponsorship, whereas women’s groups usually required a “patroness” who was either a faculty sponsor or the wife of a prominent male faculty member. The garnering of social prestige through association was much stronger for men and much easier to attain. Thus, the different experiences of men and women as Greek-letter members were another example of the ways that Greek-letter organizations began to be exclusive, reflecting exclusionary practices present in society. Not all who wanted to be a member of a Greek-letter organization would have had access to the same Greek-letter organizations or experienced Greek-letter life with the same rules or practices.

Although many of the first fraternal societies, such as the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club, for example, started with non-Greek-letter names, they quickly took on
Greek-letter names as other organizations like these were forming around the country. Having Greek-letters as a fraternity or sorority name made these organizations recognizable as fraternal clubs, social in nature, and not some other student organization. This allowed the organizations to set themselves apart from the school and apart from the other student organizations in existence at the time, as well differentiating some students from other students.

Students joining these fraternal groups wanted to differentiate themselves from other students, even though the organizations were operating as open systems (Scott & David, 2007). Scott and David (2007) defined organizations in open systems as “collectives of interdependent flows and activities linking shifting coalitions of participants embedded in wider material-resource and institutional environments.”. These students were Michigan State Normal School students first, but wanted to appear as a different type of Michigan State Normal School student. For example, students joining The Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club sought a type of social interaction wherein socializing came first, and the study or debate of literature was secondary. One member wrote, “Its first declared purpose was the mutual enjoyment of the members” (Eastern Michigan University, 1908). College had become the first place to build meaningful connections and acquaintances outside of students’ hometowns.

**Members of early Greek-letter organizations.** Students who arrived at MSNC may have come mostly from the local area, but they wanted to participate in activities that connected them to what students were doing on campuses around the country. Early members of these organizations consisted of athletes, daughters and sons of faculty members, and members or leaders of other on-campus student organizations and literary societies.
Early Greek-letter organizations connected them with students of their own kind. This type of member gave prestige and heightened social status to these early groups. The members who joined were MSNC students from mostly southeastern Michigan communities. At the time, these fraternal organizations closely reflected the student body at MSNC because they were made up of students who were coming from these local communities, had similar experiences growing up in terms of wealth and status, and were likely the first of their families to attend college. However, the makeup of fraternity and sorority membership at Michigan State Normal School did not always resemble the characteristics found at other institutions across the country. At larger well-established institutions, where students may have come from outside the local area, fraternal organizations did not always necessarily reflect the general student body of their home institution. Thus, fraternities and sororities constituted a way of sorting students by wealth, status, and gender.

This first fraternal organization and other student organizations formed to serve the social interests of the students. The coursework alone at MSNC was not going to create opportunity to connect with other similarly minded students. For example, attending a psychology class together did not allow students to choose with whom they might connect. The students took it upon themselves to organize the opportunity to connect with like-minded students outside of the classroom. In addition, students were aware of events at other schools around the state and the country: Some institutions had student organizations, fraternities, and sororities; others had literary societies. After realizing making connections outside of the classroom was necessary, students at MSNC started to form student organizations to serve their social interests and to connect with their peers. However, they wanted to have college experiences similar to the experiences of students who attended University of Michigan,
other normal schools, and colleges throughout the country. Having similar experiences would confi
confirm social prestige as part of the college experience. Isomorphic pressures were at play in the sense that college students craved being able to have an experience they believed was normative in nature.

Students at MSNS/MSNC began to imitate the activities and clubs in which others students participated on campuses across the country. Additionally, they sought ways to connect with students who were like them, had similar interests and points of view, and that they could be comfortable around. Having these organizations brought legitimacy to the student experience—the students could claim to have experienced college in ways similar to their peers at other institutions nationwide, thus confirming their prestige. These early organizations were exclusionary in nature simply in the sense that they did not include all students. In addition to having disposable income and extra time to dedicate to membership in these clubs, students had to be accepted. The paradox of Greek-letter organizations is that they are both exclusive and inclusive in nature. They cannot be one without the other.

**Women’s Greek-letter organizations at MSNS/MSNC.** After the 1892 formation of the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club, 1894 signaled the beginning of women’s fraternal organizations at Michigan State Normal School. A group of nine women formed a secret club and called it J.P.N., which some remember as standing for *Jolly Petticoats Nine*, and others remember standing for the *Just Progressive Normalites*. Other sororities across the nation had been formed as secret societies, like J.P.N. “Sororities, had, from the beginning, the difficult objective of proving the viability of coeducational studies. That women could perform academically as well as or better than men while maintaining the Victorian ideals of womanhood was a tall order” (Turk, 2004, p. 260). Women were not taken seriously at
higher education institutions, and many sororities like J.P.N. met in secret because they feared their male peers would ridicule them for trying to participate in the same activities they did.

In November 1894, the women discussed the lives they were leading at Michigan State Normal School. They overwhelmingly agreed that even though mathematics, language, and sciences were important, they also needed social interactions. Just like occurred in the men’s groups formed before, socializing became the focus of the women’s organizations. In a way, forming the J.P.N. organization was confirmation of the social prestige that came with mutual association. They organized the J.P.N. as a group of like-minded women and then were recognized as a legitimate student organization by the administration and their peers. In 1896, the 13 current members of the J.P.N. decided to remove any mystery about what type of organization they really were. The 1896 Aurora featured a page about the J.P.N. One member wrote,

What are we? Just Progressive Normalites! [emphasis original] At last the cloud of mist rises and our name stands revealed! Not without misgivings does our modesty permit us to thus appear before the critical eyes of the world, even after a year of vigorous and steady growth; but to prove the fallacy of the various conjectures of some of our Co’eds (?) and to allay the curiosity of all, which we have so unintentionally aroused, we disclose the meaning of the mystic J.P.N. We have concealed the name thus far only to demonstrate that girls can keep a secret, at least until a fit time for its revelation [emphasis original].

The use of the word progressive is interesting. These women, in attending a higher education institution, were already progressive in many ways. For example, at a time in
society when women were not necessarily welcome in higher education, Michigan State Normal School provided a place for women to study. However, it was still progressive for these women to be getting a college education at all. Evident in the language the women used to describe themselves was their desire to represent themselves as a different type of woman, one that society had failed to recognize as the norm. In 1897, J.P.N. transitioned into an organization with a traditional Greek-letter name, Pi Kappa Sigma. Again, similar to the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club, Pi Kappa Sigma provided the women from J.P.N. with a name that allowed them to be recognized as a sorority, not just another student organization. They were now visible on campus as a group of women wearing the same letters, participating in the same activities, and appearing like other sororities around the nation. In 1876, University of Michigan students had already seen the formation of the first sorority using traditional Greek-letters. The women at MSNS began to use traditional Greek-letters to make it clear that this was a social sorority for women.

The purpose of early Greek-letter organizations at MSNS/MSNC. Many early fraternal organizations at Michigan State Normal School shared the same stated purpose for their members. The Washingtonian Toastmasters’ aimed for “improvement in our selves socially (and) intellectually” (Eastern Michigan University, 1898). Members of J.P.N., the first sorority at Michigan State Normal School, felt “a need for social life and its aim became social and literary culture, but it has also served to cement friendships into the true spirit of sisterhood” (Eastern Michigan University, 1898). Members of early fraternal organizations noted a need for socializing and interaction outside of the classroom at MSNC. They believed their purpose was to provide something the daily course offerings were not providing. Regarding the purpose of fraternal organizations, a member named Lamport stated,
“In addition to the educational opportunities it affords, the fraternity provides a means of expression of the social instincts, and relieves the faculty of the necessity of looking after the social life of the students” (Eastern Michigan University, 1908). This relationship between the fraternities and the institution was an example of a cooperative strategy, as described by Thompson (2003): “With respect to the task environment, the organization must demonstrate its capacity to reduce uncertainty for that element.” Fraternities were seen as a welcome presence at Michigan State Normal School—they played a part in supporting the students when the institution could not.

The courses the students took and the faculty they met could not provide them with the social experiences they desired. They sought the college experience they had likely heard about, which would have been easy enough to learn about by looking down the road at the University of Michigan. Students attending MSNS/MSNC were responding to isomorphic pressures, in terms of normative pressures to be like other college students at more established institutions, such as the University of Michigan. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) explained the goal of adhering to normative pressures, noting the desired outcome is to gain legitimacy. Attending school and learning about teaching was not enough for some students. The students wanted friendships and sought social identities that would set them apart from their peers, and perhaps, their past. Joining a student society gave them the social prestige they sought and perhaps helped them feel as prestigious as students attending the University of Michigan. Joining gave them a new status. The mere fact that these students attended college already separated them from others who could not. College had become the place to broaden social circles, network with other students, and build instrumental connections that would serve students beyond their college experiences.
The spread of fraternal organizations at MSNS/MSNC. Although early Greek-letter organizations at Michigan State Normal School all shared the same basic purpose and function, members of each felt their organizations were different from the others, or that they belonged to the best of the fraternal organizations on campus. A pattern began to emerge after the first fraternity formed exclusively for men. Women formed the first sorority. Then, students who were not included in J.P.N. or the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club began to form their own Greek-letter organizations. In an Aurora entry for the Arm of Honor from 1898, a student claimed to have “always ranked with the strongest students of the college and have enjoyed the respect of all . . . Success has crowned its efforts” (Eastern Michigan University, 1898). Similarly, an entry from 1898 for J.P.N., a student stated the society “claims rank as the peer of any like organization of the Normal College which exists at the present time or has existed in the past” (Eastern Michigan University, 1898). Thus, students began their own social process of sorting and selecting with whom they would associate. This process of selection was an example of buffering. Buffering can occur when an organization conducts coding or sorting, which is a way to classify environmental inputs before they reach the technical core (Scott, 2003). Similarly, Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club members claimed that since they had formed, “dozens of the best boys who have come to the Normal have lifted up their voices to ‘solemnly swear’ allegiance to the club” (Glasbie, 1898).

Before launching J.P.N. and the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club, students had determined they needed to create new clubs, the best clubs, to serve the best students at the school. Members sought and claimed prestige as exclusive groups that provided a better service than did any other student organization or the institution itself. Therefore,
organizations sought students who would give them social prestige. Likewise, students sought membership in organizations that would give them social prestige or social identities. The relationship between member and organization was a transaction, which each hoped to benefit from. Being the best was important to members of each organization, especially because many more began to form. For example, Arm of Honor, a men’s organization, claimed many MSNC athletes as members. Arm of Honor members sought out athletes to be potential members because the athletes had already gained a certain level of social status.

In fact, students who came with established status were the first students invited to be members of early fraternal organizations at MSNS/MSNC. Being able to differentiate an organization and its members from all others meant that members were simply better—better, compared to other students; better compared to other organizations; and certainly, members were better people and students than they were when they first came to Michigan State Normal School. This process was instrumental in creating social networks with other students who shared the same values, beliefs, and assumptions about the world. This was the act of staging for life outside of college in a stratified social world. These attempts at trying to be the best, and consistently trying to be better than similar organizations on campus, were early visible evidence of the institutionalization of Greek-letter organizations at MSNS and MSNC. Hughes (1936) explained, “Human beings so obviously behave in response to the behavior of each other that what the individual does can be understood only by using collectivity as a point of reference.” Organizational members at MSNS/MSNC began to respond to the behavior of members at other similar organizations.

**Early issues concerning exclusion of women at MSNS/MSNC.** Michigan State Normal School was created to train teachers. Because the majority of the students at
MSNS/MSNC were women, many organizations like Pi Kappa Sigma formed in rapid succession. However, women’s fraternal organizations took longer to begin forming than did men’s organizations. This reflects a national pattern of fraternities forming first at higher education institutions dominated by men; in addition, evident in this pattern was the idea that women in higher education needed to be monitored more closely, protected, supervised, and guided by faculty.

Male students had more autonomy and privacy, compared to female students, especially in terms of societies and organizations not connected to learning in the classroom. In fact, at MSNS and during the early years of MSNC, although there were far more women than men, the early publications of Aurora listed men as the presidents and vice presidents of almost every club that was also open to women. This was noteworthy—so few men attended at the time. As reported in the 1898 issue of Aurora, enrollment stood at 200 men and 800 women; yet, if a club was co-ed in nature, only men served as presidents or speakers. This was another example of the exclusion of women from social activities, even at an institution that primarily served female students. Figure 6 shows student organizations at MSNS in the 1890s. There were now both men’s and women’s fraternal organizations.
Figure 6. Student organizations at MSNS in the 1890s.
Continued formation of Greek-letter organizations at MSNS/MSNC. After the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club evolved into Phi Delta Pi, followed by J.P.N. becoming Pi Kappa Sigma, many other Greek-letter organizations formed in rapid succession. Although sororities formed in larger numbers than did fraternities, and in a shorter time, organizations for men and women each increased in number during the late 1890s and early 1900s. This growth was happening at a time when sororities were relatively new to the American higher education system. The first national sorority had been formed less than 30 years before, in 1867 at Monmouth College. It should be noted, I considered a chapter a “national organization” if it had chapters on more than one campus that used the same set of standards, governing documents, and organizational name.

Early sorority life at MSNS/MSNC made sense, given the number of women who were attending to learn to be teachers. Large numbers of women congregated in one place, experiencing higher education for the first time together. Many were away from their families and sought a social outlet and support system made up of women like themselves. They were not joining a sorority to meet women who were different; rather, they joined to be a part of group that would allow them to feel a sense of familiarity and a network of shared assumptions and values.

Following the formation of Pi Kappa Sigma, another local sorority, Delta Phi, formed in 1895, along with another local fraternity called Arm of Honor. The men who formed the Arm of Honor, feeling the need for “more culture in extemporaneous speaking,” met at the opening of the 1894–1895 school year and formed the society (Everett, 1895). The society quickly became popular and had to limit its membership soon after formation. The Arm of Honor entry in the 1901 Aurora indicated one Arm of Honor initiate as not being “beyond
the strength of his physical endurance he is usually impressed with the depth of its purpose” (Eastern Michigan University, 1901). The initiation exercises were not meant to detract from students’ studies; rather, they were “so well regulated as to detract nothing from the dignity of the society, but rather to impress upon the candidate the depth of its purpose” (Eastern Michigan University, 1901). These initiation exercises were meant to sort students who would stay in the organization and be accepted from the students who would ultimately be excluded. The rituals gave the members of the chapter a reason, an excuse, and a formal opportunity to vote to exclude potential new members. This was another early example of buffering techniques used by these organizations, even before they associated with a national headquarters or outside influence. Scott (2003) discussed buffering mechanisms as a way to protect outside influence on the core of an organization.

The early members of the Arm of Honor were “always ranked with the strongest students of the college and have enjoyed the respect of all” (Eastern Michigan University, 1901). At the time, the male students who were “ranked with the strongest” were athletes on the MSNC football team. Arm of Honor members almost exclusively recruited athletes who would join the organization already having status on campus. This status was beneficial to the chapter as well. They continued to sort potential members by considering the status the potential members were bringing before joining.

**MSNC provides a unique setting for women’s fraternal groups.** The surge in the number of fraternal organizations may not be unique, but the significant growth in the number of women’s organizations at one institution this early was unique. This is, of course, attributable in part to the large number of women attending MSNS/MSNC at the time. There were simply more women available to create, join, and sustain these organizations than there
were men. These organizations developed at a rapid pace during the same time that MSNC was no longer struggling to justify its existence as an institution. “The enrollment of the Normal School had increased from a few hundred students in the 1850s to well over 1,000 in 1899, while the total number of teachers teaching in the state had increased from 11,014 to more than 16,000 over that same period of time” (Flowers, 2006; Putnam 1899). The public school system was expanding statewide, and the need for teachers had increased.

Although women at MSNC shared a common goal, and many shared career aspirations, divisions existed among the female student body. Some women believed that their respective organizations had higher or greater social status. Others had different religious or academic departmental affiliations and chose to organize around those common ideals. Student organizations, in particular, and fraternities and sororities, were present on many college campuses across the country. In order to have that traditional or typical college experience, students at MSNC organized into similar student groups. Many of their early entries in *Aurora* indicated a spirit of competition and the interest in “being the best.” Being the best implied they had attained a higher level, above unaffiliated students and other Greek-letter organization members. The members of these organizations had already set themselves apart by coming to college and then again by joining a Greek-letter organization. However, to set themselves apart from other Greek-letter organizations and continue to move up in a hierarchical structure, they had to search for ways to confirm their claims of being “the best.” That spirit represents the driving force behind the continued formation of Greek-letter organizations. Another local sorority, Sigma Nu Phi, formed when “six merry girls united for the purpose of promoting a continuous enthusiasm and creating a kindly interests and fellowships in our Normal College” (Eastern Michigan University, 1897). The women
focused of the organization on social interests as a way to supplement their studies at Michigan State Normal College. In fact, Sigma Nu Phi still exists at Eastern Michigan University today. Sigma Nu Phi, over its existence, has had to resist choosing to become nationally recognized a number of times. The sorority members have faced isomorphic pressures both in the forms of coercive pressures and normative pressures. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) described three levels of isomorphic pressure. Coercive isomorphic pressures occur both formally and informally from entities upon which the organization depends (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As many other fraternities and sororities at MSNC, and later, EMU were absorbed by national organizations, Sigma Nu Phi chose to remain independent.

Culturally, members were being pressured to conform to national norms through local governing documents and social events. Sigma Nu Phi members’ choice to remain local has been a benefit to them at times, but has also caused struggle. The organization does not receive the same resources or support that a national organization does. However, not giving in to isomorphic pressures and the norms presented by other sororities affiliated with national headquarters has given Sigma Nu Phi the ability to create many of its own standards and guidelines, rather than adhere to those issued by a national organization. This decision has also given members the ability and flexibility to chart their own course forward.

**Students search for others like them.** Regardless of which Greek-letter organizations early students chose to join, they were joining groups of like-minded individuals. They were stepping back into their comfort zone, finding familiarity, and surrounding themselves with others who shared their assumptions and values about the world. Groups typically form around a bias. For example, Schattschneider (1960) explained, “By the time a group has developed the kind of interest that leads it to organize, it may be assumed
that it has also developed some kind of political bias because organization is itself a mobilization of bias in preparation for action” [Emphasis original] (p. 30). Students sought membership in organizations whose members presumably held the same biases they held. In addition, Schattschneider (1960) said, “Unification and division are part of the same process” (p. 64). Thus, students united with groups of students who were like them and further divided themselves from a study body that was less like them.

In 1898, writers for The Normal News began to mention Greek-letter organizations on campus in addition to the Lyceum. One writer in 1898 asked why students could not have more societies like this at MSNS. These organizations functioned as social outlets for students who felt the time they spent studying was not providing the connections or experiences they craved. The administration supported having organizations at MSNS that were similar to those at other higher education institutions because these organizations attracted students to MSNS who craved the college experiences other students were having. Early fraternal organizations at MSNS brought legitimacy to the life of early students. At the least, institutional leaders committed to being involved (if not actually supportive of) these groups. For instance, many prominent faculty members were listed as honorary members and early advisors. Thus, faculty could be involved but still exert some control over students’ activities outside of the classroom in an attempt to keep them engaged enough during their college experience to bring them back semester after semester. Thompson (2003) described this type of relationship as a cooperative strategy. Thompson explained that in order for power achievement to be effective, there must be an exchange of commitments between Person A and Person B, thus reducing potential uncertainties in the task environment. The organizations benefited by having the reputations of these prominent faculty members
attached to their organizational status. At the same time, the faculty members were able to exert some type of power or control over the organizational activities, which benefited the institution.

**Greek-Letter members at MSNC were different from other schools’ members.**

Although Greek-letter organizations existed at other institutions within the state, the students coming to MSNC were different from the students who attended nearby University of Michigan at the time. Students from MSNC were coming from nearby, while students attending UofM were coming from regions across the country.

By the end of the nineteenth century, half the students attending the University of Michigan came from out-of-state and represented a class of students who could afford the preparatory work necessary to qualify for university education. The “Normalites,” on the other hand, were represented by few who came from anywhere other than the towns and villages that surrounded the Ypsilanti campus. (Flowers, 2006)

Students at schools similar to the University of Michigan may have pledged allegiance to a Greek-letter organizations for other reasons, including for the prestige or group affiliation expected to accompany certain majors or athletic teams. Students at MSNC may have simply been looking for a social outlet, to enjoy the college experiences outside the classroom they had likely heard about. However, over time, students in MSNC Greek-letter organizations started to label themselves in ways that set them apart from even their Greek-letter community peers. Students coming to MSNC were already different from those attending University of Michigan or other elite institutions of higher education. They were not seeking a liberal education; they were coming to MSNC either to learn how to be a teacher or simply to access an academic environment not available to them elsewhere. They were coming to
gain common skills at a normal school. “Our students are working men and women, who earn their little money by the hardest toil,” wrote Principal Sill (Isbell, 1971).

Although students who attended MSNC were different from students seeking education at the University of Michigan, they mimicked the student activities that were taking place in Ann Arbor and at other elite higher education institutions. Mimetic processes are the second mechanism through which isomorphism might occur at the institutional level (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Mimetic processes occur when there is uncertainty within an organization, and thus, the organization models itself after other organizations. By doing what Greek-letter organizations were doing at elite institutions, the students, faculty, and staff involved with Greek-letter organizations at MSNC could have the sense that they were getting a part of that elite experience while still pursuing education at a normal school. Through this process, they had become collegiate.

Many elite institutions, including the University of Michigan, had Greek-letter organizations on campus long before these organizations were present at MSNC. This meant that those elite institutions also began to interact with national fraternities and sororities sooner than did MSNC. Larger, elite institutions like the University of Michigan had larger student bodies to choose from and often served students who had more disposable income than did MSNC students. This income disparity likely meant that sorting students and being selective about with whom to associate would have been even more important to student organizations. National chapters’ early members consisted in large part of students from elite higher education institutions. When students at MSNC began to interact with national fraternity and sorority chapters, those national chapters had been working with other elite higher education institutions for some time. Thus, in many ways, these national organizations
were shaped through the actions of students who were quite different from MSNC students. Although affiliating with a national organization may have given some of these students prestige, it also meant they felt the impact of elite institutions’ influence on the standards and expectations of national organizations.

**Mirroring other Greek-letter organizations.** Mimetic processes continued as MSNS/MSNC organizations began to mirror other Greek-letter organizations nationally. In 1899, Phi Delta Pi changed its name from the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club to a Greek-letter name, following the lead of Pi Kappa Sigma, formerly called J.P.N. (Eastern Michigan University, 1899) The fraternity then chose to duplicate the actions of other fraternities when they moved into a fraternity house (Eastern Michigan University, 1899). Fraternity houses had been present at University of Michigan since 1846—Chi Psi fraternity had lived in a “lodge” type building almost since its formation at University of Michigan in 1845 (University of Michigan Greek Life, n.d.). Fraternities across the country chose Greek-letters as their names and lived in fraternity houses; most groups at MSNC began to do the same. In fact, Arm of Honor was the only non-Greek-letter organization at MSNC. Greek-letters made these organizations recognizable to anyone as fraternities and sororities and clearly differentiated them from other student groups, which meant that the members of these organizations experienced a different level of social prestige on campus. Their members appeared to be like members at many other Greek-letter organizations forming on college campuses throughout the United States.

**Rapid sorority expansion at MSNC.** The rapid growth of Greek-letter organizations continued through the turn of the century when Zeta Phi and Alpha Sigma Tau formed in 1899. Both organizations were formed for women, whose aims were good scholarship, true
culture, and social gatherings. Alpha Sigma Tau is still open at EMU; the chapter has never closed (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1899). By 1899, three sororities had opened at MSNC that had a lasting impact on the institution, and two had an impact on sorority life nationwide. During the early years, women were not allowed to form organizations without a faculty advisor or sponsor; in contrast, men could organize and then choose their advisor. This disparity meant that the men’s organizations had more freedom to establish membership guidelines and purposes to their organization, but the women received more oversight and guidance.

Women’s organizations began with Pi Kappa Sigma. Women continued to form new, similar organizations at MSNC during this time, indicating that students still felt a need to organize into groups. In 1900, a Conservatory of Music sorority opened called the Harmonious Mystics (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1900). When the Harmonious Mystics first formed, they listed Mrs. Frederic H. Pease and Ruth Putnam as patronesses (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1900). Other sororities formed within the Conservatory. For example, Kappa Psi formed in 1901 (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1900). Although the Harmonious Mystics later changed their name to a Greek-letter name, Alpha Mu Sigma, members of the Harmonious Mystics and Kappa Psi enjoyed sorority life for years. Eventually, as MSNC gained a Panhellenic Association, the two sororities affiliated with that organization as well. In 1903, yet another Conservatory sorority joined the ranks at MSNC, called Treble Clef, which was eventually absorbed by a national organization called Pi Delta Theta (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1903). Figure 7 shows the women’s fraternal organizations that were on campus during the 1890s and the different categories they would be organized into.
Figure 7. Women’s and men’s fraternal organizations.

Source: Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1894-1903

Many women studied in the Conservatory; they formed sororities just like the women who were not studying within the Conservatory. Although the student body mostly comprised women during this time, divisions existed among the students according to their fields of study (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1903). There were also clear divisions
among social groups. Even within the Conservatory, women saw a need to organize with other women like themselves, forming many organizations with similar purposes to one another. Seven women’s sororities formed before another men’s fraternal organization was formed. In fact, only Tau Kappa Theta and Kappa Phi Alpha were formed for men in 1901 and 1902, respectively (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1901 and 1902). Thus, these two fraternities represented the extent of fraternity formation at MSNC during this time, a number likely attributable to the larger number of women attending MSNC.

**Early exclusionary practices continued.** One early sign of exclusionary or differential treatment was that all early women’s groups at MSNC had patronesses, who acted as official sponsors. Men’s groups also involved faculty sponsors as advisors and sometimes granted them honorary membership. For many years, women’s fraternal groups were required to have patronesses, whereas the men’s groups had the choice to ask or “honor” a faculty member to serve as an advisor. It is important to recognize that not all the patronesses for the women’s groups were academics; in contrast, the men’s groups could access male faculty as their sponsors and choose whether to involve them. Members of the sororities often invited the wives of prominent male faculty member to be their advisors.

The institution supported these organizations, but that support comprised guidance for the women’s groups and autonomy for the men’s groups. In other words, the men’s groups were taken seriously; the women’s groups were allowed to exist, but under different standards and expectations. That trend continued as the Greek-letter community and student body at MSNC expanded to include new groups of students. The trend also appeared on campuses nationwide. Thus, even at campuses where the majority of the students were women, men were still taken more seriously, even within the context of social fraternities and
sororities. It is important to recognize that the driving forces behind the early efforts by sororities to organize and set standards may have been a response to this trend. In order to be seen as professional and legitimate, like their male counterparts, sorority women had to organize and act in a formalized way.

**Some local organizations became national.** One important aspect of Greek-letter organizations at MSNC was that some were considered local in nature, and some were considered national. Good reasons prompted sorority and fraternity members at MSNC to seek affiliation with a national organization, rather than remaining a local organization. For example, many MSNC students had probably never experienced prestige or superior social status before their collegiate experience simply because of where they had grown up or because of their parents’ socioeconomic backgrounds. Enrollment records from the late 1800s showed a clear pattern of students’ origins. Most came from rural areas in and around the state of Michigan (Eastern Michigan University, 1892, 1896).

These early students were likely the first in their families to attend college. Becoming members of groups that were present on prestigious institutions across the country carried meaning. Being in highly regarded MSNC organizations created social prestige for members, and consequently, these organizations had to be exclusive in terms of membership selection. That is, in order to be perceived as prestigious and high social status, these organizations had to set themselves apart from the rest of the unaffiliated student body, and in addition, from the local Greek-letter organizations. Attending college was a step toward achieving an elevated social status, but connecting with a national organization recognized by other students and seen as socially elite was a step further in differentiating students from the public and the rest of the student body.
Two specific chapters at MSNS/MSNC formed locally before forming other chapters nationwide: the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club and the J.P.N. These two chapters exemplified the way organizations transitioned from local to national in the context of MSNS/MSNC and the Greek-letter organizations on campus. Both chapters still exist today in some form, and both were influential in the spread of Greek-letter organizations at MSNS/MSNC and elsewhere. When the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club formed, the chapter started the first society founded after the Lyceum that was intended to be literary and social in nature (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1892). When women on campus heard about this club forming specifically for men, a small group decided to do the same, forming J.P.N. When the women formed J.P.N. in the 1893–1894 school year, they formed in secret because they believed their peers would ridicule them (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1894). No other organizations were exclusively for women at MSNS at that time.

**Key faculty members assisted in organizational growth at MSNC and beyond.**

Before the turn of the century, J.P.N. and the Washingtonian Toastmasters took Greek-letters as their names and incorporated. This was the first step in moving beyond being a local organization. Both organizations chose this action to make it clear they existed at more than one campus. The Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club became Phi Delta Pi fraternity, and the J.P.N. became Pi Kappa Sigma sorority. Alice Eddy was Pi Kappa Sigma’s first president (Seaton, 1949). Alice Eddy was invited back to MSNS to teach Latin in 1897 after graduating from MSNS in 1895 (Seaton, 1949). The invitation allowed her to teach as well as to join organizations on campus. She was invited to become a member of J.P.N. in 1897, and she helped guide the organization through the name change (Seaton, 1949). “The proposal was met with the approval of the members, and thus the ‘Normalites’ became Pi Kappa
Sigma, Alpha Chapter, the first social-educational organization in the pedagogical field” (Seaton, 1949, p. 18).

In 1899, Alice Eddy married Albert Snowden, and she moved to Alva, Oklahoma, where her husband had taken a job at a normal school (Seaton, 1949). This move created an opportunity for Alice to establish the Beta chapter of Pi Kappa Sigma (Seaton, 1949). Two years later, Mr. Snowden moved to Cheney, Washington, for work; Alice established the Delta chapter at the normal school there (Seaton, 1949). In 1904, Alice returned to Ypsilanti and had the “honor of being the first recipient of the Bachelor of Arts in Education from that Normal College” (Seaton, 1949, p. 18). Thus, the early spread of Pi Kappa Sigma to other normal schools across the United States can be attributed to Alice Eddy Snowden as she moved to the various institutions at which she and her husband taught.

The early membership of this organization, first at MSNS and then at MSNC, was limited to women who were studying to be teachers. This meant that early membership was limited to White women who could afford both the time and the money to commit to being a part of an organization like Pi Kappa Sigma. Because of the location at which the organization initially formed, and because of the person responsible for opening new chapters at other normal schools, the membership of Pi Kappa Sigma nationwide remained homogeneous. Figure 8 shows how chapters formed second, third, and fourth chapters, becoming national organizations. Eventually, these national organizations merged and created national umbrella groups.
Like Pi Kappa Sigma, the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club took on Greek-letters in 1899 and became Phi Delta Pi (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1899). The fraternity members received guidance from Charles O. Hoyt, who had served as a patron of the fraternity and continued as patron for another 15 years or so (Eastern Michigan University, *n.d.*). Hoyt was a faculty member at the time and served in an advisory capacity. Using Greek-letters as a name clearly identified the organization as a fraternity and not a secret society.
society or literary organization. In 1901, a second chapter, Beta, formed in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, followed in 1925 by a third chapter, Gamma, at Colorado State Teachers’ College (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1925). The Beta and Gamma chapters were only open into the late 1920s before closing following the loss of membership during WWI (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1900).

The Alpha chapter of Phi Delta Pi was one of the only fraternities on campus for the first 20 years of fraternity existence at MSNC. Some Phi Delta Pi members were prominent campus athletes, members of other student organizations, student government officers, and leaders on campus. The members were White men who at the time were studying to be teachers, and later, school district leaders (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1912). The annual fraternity bulletin and directory, “The Extended Somewhat,” detailed all known current and alumni members (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1912). In 1912, this publication listed many men who had graduated from MSNC who had become principals and superintendents across the nation. Few were classroom teachers. Phi Delta Pi was one of a few social Greek-letter organizations present on campus for a long time. Students believed Phi Delta Pi members would become important leaders in education across the nation because the fraternity recruited the “best” undergraduate men on campus (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1912). Recruiting a certain type of man on campus showed Phi Delta Pi had begun to shape its membership standards toward becoming exclusive. Members made it clear the type of man they would accept: men who brought prestige to the organization (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1912). In fact, these men were already elite, compared to their hometown peers and family members who did not attend college.
Additionally, on campus, they were well known, socially connected, and academically excellent.

After a local organization such as Pi Kappa Sigma or Phi Delta Pi had established chapters outside of MSNC, they were technically considered a national organization. National organizations began to form in this way across the country, usually beginning regionally or at other institutions similar in function to the first campus. Networks of national organizations spread all over the country by the late 1800s and early 1900s. This expansion led to a new type of oversight through the formation of national umbrella groups.

**The need for oversight of networks of national fraternal organizations.** While sorority activity was taking place at MSNS/MSNC in the late 1800s and early 1900s, national conversations were being held to form what is now known as the National Panhellenic Conference, founded in 1902 (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). As more women across the country joined sororities, women from national organizations felt standards were needed. As more women appeared on college campuses, and as more women joined sororities, women who were interested in joining had to compete with one another. This situation prompted the women of the national chapter of Alpha Phi to invite members from eight other national chapters to Chicago on May 24, 1902 (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Group leaders saw a need for standards particularly related to how organizations would gain new members (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Creating an umbrella group was expected to bring another level of oversight and standardization to traditional sororities across the country (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). These initial groups recognized the benefits that would come along with the compromise of more oversight. More standards meant that chapters competing for the same women would have to follow certain rules and
guidelines, allowing all groups to continue to exist and achieve parity (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Selznick (1949) described this cooperative strategy as a coalition. The term *coalescing* “refers to [creating] a combination or joint venture with another organization or organizations in the environment.”. Thus, this group of nine sororities formed a coalition; however, it would require future joint decision making to bring them toward common goals.

This meeting occurred after a productive meeting regarding rushing practices and other standards at the World’s Fair of 1893. The initial conversations resulted in a decision not to compete for members who had already been invited to join other organizations (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). This decision was intended to make rushing practices “fair,” the first of many conversations about how sororities recruited and competed for membership (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Competition was growing among groups that were recruiting new members on every campus where more than one sorority existed (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Because so many of these sororities sought the same type of women (wealthy and White), it made sense to create membership practices upon which all organizations could agree. Each organization would have the opportunity to recruit all the women in whom they were interested. A process was designed to detail a timeline for recruitment periods on campuses where these chapters existed (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Chapters were required to follow these guidelines in order to remain in good standing with the umbrella group (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.).

In order to help all groups survive and thrive, the conversations turned to setting a timeline for offering women invitations to join. This timeline would allow all sororities on a given campus to have a chance to recruit women before any one individual received a bid. The meeting minutes from 1920 contained the following guideline for offering bids to
potential new members of sororities: “That all bids be left in the office of the Dean before 9 a.m. Monday, November 22—the same to be mailed or delivered by messenger at a given hour upon the same day.” Another guideline followed: “That Rushing functions (Formal Rushing) be restricted to the week ends of November 5th–12th – and 19th – 1920” (Eastern Michigan University, 1920). Organizers intended these guidelines to distribute the “right kind of woman” evenly to all sororities that were a part of national organizations or to any organization on an individual campus recognized by their local Panhellenic governing council.

Many new national organizations were forming during this time. Although local sororities were still present on many college campuses, turning an organization “national” had become the norm. Scott (1987) discussed this form of institutionalization: Organizations “do not necessarily conform to a set of institutionalized beliefs because they ‘constitute reality’ or are taken for granted, but often because they are rewarded for doing so through increased legitimacy, resources, and survival capabilities” (p. 498). People were likely unaware of local organizations outside their respective campuses. Being a part of a national organization came with status recognizable to potential new recruits. With so many new national organizations forming, there was a fear that without standards and guidelines, many of these organizations would not be able to compete. The organization leaders knew it was in their best interest to work alongside other like-minded sororities so that they all could thrive and participate in standard setting. Two of the original nine organizations were unable to attend, but the remaining seven met, and this meeting resulted in the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), the first interfraternity association and the first intergroup organization on college campuses (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.).
None of the original member groups of NPC was present at MSNC at the time of the formation of the NPC in 1902. These NPC groups were not forming at normal schools; instead, they were forming at more traditional college campuses (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Because MSNC was a normal school, MSNC organizations in the early years became members of the Association of Pedagogical Sororities (APS; Seaton, 1949). The APS formed on July 10, 1915, and became the Association of Education Sororities in 1931 (Seaton, 1949). Per meeting minutes from 1917, the purpose of the group was to “establish definitely professional standing in Hellas” (Eastern Michigan University, 1919).

Thus, an effort emerged to bring professionalism and standardization to sororities at normal schools around the country (Seaton, 1949).

This second coalition of sororities formed to bring national oversight and standardization to the sorority movement. Many of the women in sororities believed that if they could bring structure and standards to their organizational status and follow many of the same expectations their male fraternal counterparts followed, they would appear more professional, and thus, have a place on campus (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Additionally, this standardization in membership selection procedures helped solidify the exclusionary nature of these organizations. Being affiliated with a national organization and a national umbrella group came with more oversight. National rules dictated the way members were selected and sorted within individual organizations. In addition, members now had a way to sort and select organizations based on membership in national umbrella groups, thereby ensuring the organizations they sought to join were the “right kind.”

The member groups of the Association of Education Sororities (AES) were mostly sororities located at state schools and normal schools where women were specifically
studying to become teachers (Seaton, 1949). Sigma Sigma Sigma and Alpha Sigma Alpha were the two founding member groups. Although Sigma Sigma Sigma was not present at MSNC in 1917, the sorority (founded at Longwood College in 1898) came to MSNC in 1917 (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1917). Alpha Sigma Alpha came to MSNC when it absorbed the local Zeta Phi chapter in 1924 (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1924). After Sigma Sigma Sigma and Alpha Sigma Alpha formed the AES, they invited Pi Kappa Sigma, the chapter that had originated at MSNC in 1894 (Seaton, 1949). In 1925, they invited Delta Sigma Epsilon and Theta Sigma Upsilon (Seaton, 1949). By this time, Delta Sigma Epsilon was present at MSNC, having formed its Eta chapter in 1914; similarly, Theta Sigma Upsilon had formed its Beta chapter at MSNC in 1923 (Seaton, 1949). Finally, the AES invited Alpha Sigma Tau in 1926—Alpha Sigma Tau had originated at MSNC in 1899 (Seaton, 1949).

**Historical significance of single-letter chapters at MSNC.** Many single-letter chapters at MSNC comprised the member groups in the Association of Education Sororities (AES). A single-letter chapter was one that formed early in the existence of a national organization. For example, the Alpha chapter of Alpha Sigma Tau formed at MSNC. Alpha Sigma Tau became a national organization as part of the AES, and eventually, was granted membership in the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC; *National Panhellenic Conference*, n.d.). The chapter’s position as the first chapter at MSNC was reflected in its name—Alpha, the first letter in the Greek alphabet. Many other early MSNC chapters were named with single Greek alphabet letters. These were called single-letter chapters. For example, although not associated with the AES, the Upsilon chapter of Theta Lambda Sigma formed in 1912 at MSNC, as well as two other local organizations formed in 1914 called Kappa Gamma Phi
and Mu Delta (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1914). The membership in these chapters still comprised White women studying to be teachers (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1914). In fact, only White women were members in these organizations for many years. Thus, not every student at MSNC could join an AES-affiliated sorority. The only women who could join or start these early organizations were White women, and of those White women, only those who could afford the membership dues were welcomed. This was another example of membership sorting.

The local chapters may have attracted a different type of student, compared to those attracted to national chapters. Affordability likely determined early membership in these organizations, making the national organizations more select. Local members did not have to pay the same level of dues that members of the national organizations had to pay.

**World War I.** From 1903 to 1925, the number of local and national sororities increased at MSNC. In 1903, a local chapter called Theta Chi formed, followed by a local chapter named Zeta Tau Alpha (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1903). By the time the United States became involved in World War I in 1917, enrollment had risen steadily to 1,816 students (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). The students at MSNC were still mostly from nearby areas, from families of more modest incomes. They were still mostly coming to MSNC to become teachers, drawn mostly from southeastern Michigan rural areas.

Past administrators such as Principal Sill (as cited in Flowers, 2006) described the type of student coming to MSNS as seeking

an intermediate level of school that, as the Normal began, was not available in other regions of the state. While many attended in order to prepare themselves for the work
to be found in the common schools of the state, as the common schools of the state advanced, so too did the aspirations of the students enrolling in the Normal.

In 1917 and 1918, enrollment dropped to 1,387, and then to 946 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). A major reason men’s organizations did not form at the same pace as women’s sororities was that the United States became involved in war, calling many of the few men at MSNC away from their studies (Isbell, 1971). The institution itself was also undergoing many changes. Just before WWI, Charles McKenny began his presidency at MSNC, where he would remain for many years (Isbell, 1971). He began to change the physical campus immediately. During WWI, McKenny oversaw the completion of several projects, including a men’s gymnasium, a nursery for plants, a health cottage, an auditorium-conservatory, and gymnasium renovation (Isbell, 1971). McKenny focused heavily on the importance of teachers and education during tumultuous times. His focus on developing the physical campus, combined with the fact that there were fewer men on campus because of the War, meant sororities and fraternities were likely not a priority for many at MSNC who were not already affiliated.

War is no longer a contest between men on the battlefield but a struggle between the inventive, constructive, administrative, and moral capacities and forces of nations. Victory will finally come to the side in which these capacities and forces are strongest, and while it is not so evident it is just as certain that peaceful contests between nations for leadership in the world will be determined by the same factors. The world will appreciate education and schools as it has never appreciated them before and the nations after this war will make one of their first considerations the reconstruction,
where necessary, and up-building everywhere of public education. (Isbell, 1971, p. 172)

Even after the conclusion of WWI, sororities continued to form new chapters into the 1920s, without their fraternal counterparts doing the same. MSNC President McKenny noticed. In a story in The Normal News, he stated having four fraternities for men was not enough (Eastern Michigan University, 1920). There was no indication of why President McKenny felt this way, although the number of MSNC fraternities was fewer than the number at the University of Michigan, only a short distance away. He may have felt that after the War, men would return and want opportunities to engage with their fellow male students outside of the classroom. Although no clear records exist of the exact ratio of men to women in the early 1920s, from photographs in the 1920 Aurora, women still made up the majority of those enrolled (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1920). On nearly every page showing students at MSNC from each class, women make up about 80% of those pictured (Eastern Michigan University, 1920, pp. 43-84). With fewer men to start with at MSNC, it would have been more difficult to sustain more than a few men’s fraternal organizations at this point in time. Figure 9 shows a list of fraternity members and MSNC students who were involved in World War I.
Fraternity expansion came to a halt. Only sororities expanded during WWI. In 1921, Delta Phi Epsilon sorority established a chapter, Theta Sigma Upsilon, followed in 1923 with its Beta chapter (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1923). A local chapter, Kappa Mu Delta, was established in 1923 (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1923). Alpha Sigma Alpha’s national headquarters absorbed the local Zeta Tau Alpha in 1924, and a
local chapter named Pi Delta Theta opened in 1925 (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1925). Sigma Sigma Sigma and Alpha Sigma Alpha were founding members of the Association of Pedagogical Sororities (APS). These chapters formed to include women who were students at MSNC and who could afford to pay the membership dues. Additionally, members of each chapter sought out women for membership whom they believed would add to the social status and value of the organization.

I found the number of single-letter chapters forming at MSNC in the first 25 years of the 1900s astounding. Five national chapters opened some of their first chapters at MSNC. National organizations absorbed some local MSNC chapters during this time. Although some of these single-letter chapters may have been able to launch with their own local membership standards, after the chapters became national, many layers of governance quickly ensued, causing these organizations to become exclusive like many of their peer organizations at other institutions, even if members had wanted to be inclusive. Some of the single-letter chapters that formed at MSNC may have been unique at the time of their forming, but eventually they reflected the exclusive nature of other Greek-letter organizations on campus and across the nation.

Sororities such as Theta Sigma Upsilon had operated chapters at MSNC for an extended time. An enormous amount of growth occurred for sororities during this period, and faculty and staff on campus took notice. An article in a 1926 issue of *The Normal News* included a debate on the value of these organizations on campus. Many issues of *The Normal News* from this period featured articles about fraternities and sororities at MSNC being exclusive in nature. A 1927 article in *The Normal News* featured an article titled “Social committee studies students in organizations.” The writer stated, “There is no tendency for the
student body to over-organize [but the] present organizations could serve more students” (Eastern Michigan University, 1927). Later, in 1929, a newspaper staff member and fellow student cautioned students against joining fraternal organizations and urging them to focus on academics first:

It is almost imperative that the departmental club in which the student majors should be considered first. In general, membership means very little to the group and the member when the student cannot contribute by serving on committees, attending the regular meetings, or fulfilling the necessary financial obligations. (Eastern Michigan University, 1929)

Clearly, the perception among some on campus was that sororities and fraternities had become too social in nature and that their activities may have been detracting from the focus on academics. In addition, the writers in the news indicated that the organizations were being exclusive and could have included more students, especially considering the large number of sororities available to the many female students. In 1929, 14 social sororities served between 10 and 25 members each (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1929). There were also seven fraternities. In 1929, 2,069 students were enrolled at MSNC (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). The majority of these students were women. According to the rosters in the 1929 *Aurora*, 331 active sorority women were members of 14 chapters on campus (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1929). Only about 6% of the majority female student body affiliated with a sorority. By keeping membership low and the number of sororities relatively small, these organizations were able to remain exclusive and project the desired social status.
**Early role of MSNC faculty in Greek-letter organizations.** Regarding the makeup of early chapter membership, I was interested to note the presence of faculty members in their ranks. For example, in 1930, Pi Kappa Sigma listed four women as patronesses—all faculty members or wives of faculty (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1930). These women had the same level of membership, but often acted in an advisory role. This was another way for chapter members to set themselves apart, persuade peers to take them seriously, and demonstrate a level of prestige. Often, men or women who were current undergraduate members asked faculty members to join as an honorary member. This invitation represented faculty members’ need to organize and set themselves apart from their peers, just as the undergraduate students were doing. Faculty members’ acceptance demonstrated their support for these selective organizations. The Alpha chapter of Pi Kappa Sigma had generated enough alumni by this point to have a strong alumnae chapter of women in Detroit, Michigan. These alumnae attended annual events and interacted with current active members of the chapter. Many of these early alumnae had been founding members of chapters throughout Michigan and across the country, and current undergraduates would likely have valued their opinions. In addition, these alumnae would likely have had some influence on the chapters, including about which students would become members.

Because there were so many Michigan Pi Kappa Sigma chapters, many women were members of the Detroit Alumnae chapter. The alumnae planned philanthropic events, social events, and participated in service projects, much as they had done as undergraduate members). They were also heavily involved in planning early regional meetings and national conventions. For example,
In June 1921, the Detroit Alumnae Chapter again had the coveted privilege of entertaining the national convention of Pi Kappa Sigma. By 1922, the first alumnae chapter was well organized had established several traditions and formulated a definite program of business, social activities, and philanthropy. (Seaton, 1949, p. 111)

These national conventions and regional meetings included voting on national governing documents and membership requirements. Each alumnae chapter had to send a delegate to these meetings to have a say in membership requirements. “As delegate to the national convention the chapter is sending Louise Trevegno Connine” (Seaton, 1949, p. 112). If alumnae felt the national organization was not moving in a positive direction or recruiting women to a certain standard, pushback and peer pressure would certainly have occurred.

Between 1929 and 1930, Pi Kappa Sigma had added 14 new chapters and alumnae clubs to its membership. The sorority had truly become a national presence at normal schools across the country (Seaton, 1949, p. 297).

Phi Delta Pi also had faculty members as their patrons. These men were highly regarded, carefully selected, and invited by the undergraduate men. At a time when critics were calling chapters exclusive and criticizing them for not including enough of the student body, Phi Delta Pi had faculty members acting as advisors. The undergraduates were not making membership decisions alone—the faculty supported this policy of exclusivity. Thus, in the early 1930s, the membership of both Pi Kappa Sigma and Phi Delta Pi had grown in numbers but not in diversity. Photographs in Aurora and lists of names in chapter newsletters from this period showed that only White men were initiated as members in the chapter. The chapters consisted entirely of White members who could afford the membership dues and who were able to give the time necessary to chapter activities, meetings, and social outings.
(Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1908). Figure 10 shows the roster of Phi Delta Pi in 1908.

Figure 10. Phi Delta Pi rosters, 1908, 1910.


Although data were not available on each individual man, many of their last names reflected the last names of families who lived in the area, sons of faculty members, or prominent local families. Their names were recorded in early documents and newsletters.
Many members were also graduate students at the time, indicating they could afford to continue their education beyond their undergraduate experience.

To receive an invitation, these men would also have needed social connections and social status, either from being an athlete or from holding another leadership position elsewhere on campus. During this time, it is likely that the members of these organizations did not need to hold part-time jobs to pay membership dues. The student members would have experienced opportunity costs. For example, they could dedicate their time and energy to the social aspects of Greek-letter membership, a privilege that excluded students who could not afford to join. These organizations, central to undergraduates’ social lives, included socializing with prominent faculty members and wives of male faculty members.

**Early organization of national governing organizations and standards.** While the NPC and the AES began to form as national umbrella groups, organized meetings of the sororities took place at MSNC. The earliest meeting minutes filed in the University archives showed the groups gathering in September 1919 at a meeting of sorority representatives (Eastern Michigan University, 1919). Meetings in the first few years took place only once a term, held at the houses of faculty, including Mrs. Priddy and Miss Putnam (Eastern Michigan University, 1919). The early resolutions recorded and discussed were mostly about rushing practices and appropriate behavior of women at parties and dances (Eastern Michigan University, 1919). In 1925, the group of sororities changed their name to the Intersorority Council. The Council consisted of a variety of sororities, including those affiliated with NPC, AES, and local organizations (Eastern Michigan University, 1925). The desire to organize likely came from guidance from sponsors Mrs. Priddy and Miss Putnam. This campus governing body for sororities created some specific policies that would affect
who could join. For example, at a meeting in the 1926–1927 school year, the council members laid out the following policies for all member groups of the Intersorority Council at EMU in an excerpt from “The Report of the Constructive Policy Committee, Accepted at Panhellenic Meeting,” dated Wednesday, June 5, 1927:

1. Each sorority is to devote a number of meetings to definite programs suggested by Panhellenic.

2. In these programs, the study of practical social forms shall be included.

3. Each sorority shall be supplied with a good reference book on social usage.

4. Each sorority girl shall pledge herself to a definite set of social forms recommended by a Panhellenic Committee.

5. Whenever a girl’s grades fall below a “C” average, or drop conspicuously, she shall be penalized, the penalty to be decided by a Panhellenic Committee.

6. Each sorority shall have a definite fund set aside for some worthy cause.

7. There shall be a Panhellenic Committee to work with the Dean in gathering material for talks to Freshmen women.

8. Sororities shall be more business-like and more prompt in their relations with the Dean, their matrons, and among themselves. (Eastern Michigan University, 1927).

At this same meeting in 1927, the Committee on Social Form made recommendations. One recommendation indicated how often sorority women should practice their exercises on social form. “Each sorority to have at least once a month drills on social forms, discussions and questions box, a faculty advisor or patroness to assist if she will” (Eastern Michigan University, 1927). These early versions of policies and recommendations on social form began to separate the way sorority women behaved and appeared from the rest of the student
body. The policies on GPA expectations, social form, and required activities also set an expectation of recruiting women who already met many of these standards.

These early meetings on campus represented bridging tactics employed by the sororities at MSNC. The sororities at MSNC knew they were competing with one another and that national oversight would soon affect more than just rushing policies. Members decided to begin meeting as a local council of sororities to work together to establish policies that would affect all of them. This was a form of cooptation. Cooptation is “the process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy—determining structure of an organization as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence” (Selznick, 1949). By coming together as a council to determine many of these policies, the sororities cooperated, but it would come with a cost.

As a national umbrella organization, AES leaders would have encouraged groups to meet on campus regularly to discuss guidelines or practices that had been recommended nationally (Seaton, 1949). These guidelines or handbooks were usually mailed to each campus that had AES-affiliated chapters. Early versions of these handbooks provided advice to sorority women on how to behave, how to host a scholarship luncheon or dance, and what type of women to seek when recruiting (McPherson, Grose, & Sharp, 1935). Figure 11 shows a description of the Sorority Council at MSNC in 1918.
Although a “type” of woman was not explicitly outlined in the handbook, a section existed on how an ideal college woman should behave (McPherson, Grose, & Sharp, 1935). Thus, current members of these sororities received this handbook and learned what an “ideal” college girl was and was not. Minutes from the 1931 school year showed 14 sororities on campus (Eastern Michigan University, 1931).

A list of policies affecting sororities appeared with the 1931 minutes. Most of the policies related to appropriate procedures for hosting and decorating for parties. Sororities could host two dances each year—the total cost could not exceed $275.00—and parties could not occur on study nights (Eastern Michigan University, 1931). Sorority women were also required to consult with the Dean of Women before accepting an invitation to an affair by in-town or out-of-town alumnae (Eastern Michigan University, 1931). Parties could occur only between 8:40 p.m. and 11:40 p.m. These guidelines did not appear for men in early minutes of fraternity meetings (Eastern Michigan University, 1935). The experiences of the female
undergraduate sorority member were still largely determined by expectations and policies written by campus administrators and national governing body guidelines.

**The formalization of national umbrella group influence.** The Panhellenic Handbook from 1934–1935 reflected the same groups being present on campus and covered similar policies (Eastern Michigan University, 1949, p. 2). In 1938, the Intersorority Council, the local governing council of undergraduate students at MSNC, received a handbook titled *Social Precedents and Sorority Ethics* from the AES (Eastern Michigan University, 1935). The handbook was sent to each campus that hosted AES sororities. The handbook was meant to teach women in sororities about proper etiquette, including conversation, social correspondence, entertaining, table manners, general behavior, personal charm, dress, traveling and tipping, and brevities (McPherson, Grose, & Sharp, 1935). A section was included on acceptable behavior within the sorority.

A final section of the handbook was titled “The Ideal College Girl.” The ideal college girl spoke politely, made sure that the man she was dating was happy, and behaved in a way that did not draw negative attention (Eastern Michigan University, 1935). As a governing organization, AES leaders felt a need to dictate how women members of their organizations should behave. These “ideal” women would teach their sorority peers the “right” way to behave. In addition, they would recruit other women who would behave the way they had learned to behave. This handbook and other guidelines dictating behavior for women was a way to exclude certain types of members and include only those who could fit the mold of the “ideal college girl.” It became clear that to be recruited to join nationally affiliated sororities at MSNC, women would need disposable income, social connections, and manners outlined in these handbooks. In a section titled “Brevity,” AES leaders outlined the way
women should behave at social functions, specifically, how to be an appropriate date to a football game:

Football --- If you want to be a popular football date, learn something about the game. No one wants to stop in the middle of a tense moment to explain plays. A man wants his partner to understand the importance of being on time for the kick-off and staying until the end of the game. No going home in the middle of the fourth quarter. Be a good sport. Clothes must make for rough and tumble, for dirty steps, snow or drizzling rain. The weather mustn’t daunt you. If your partner is a man from a rival college and you are sitting on his side of the field, don’t embarrass him by standing up and cheering for your team. It isn’t done when he pays for the tickets. (Eastern Michigan University, 1938)

There were clearly stated expectations even about how women should behave when out socializing with a man.

**Umbrella group influence dictated membership of MSNC sorority women.**

Because many of the early sororities on campus were affiliated with the AES, the archives of what is now the EMU College Panhellenic Council contain mostly AES governing documents and notes. Until 1947, the Constitution for the AES was referenced for governing documents of the sororities at MSNC; however, the group was being called the Panhellenic Association. These guidelines and suggestions for the “ideal” college girl or “ideal” sorority woman would certainly have influenced the way sororities at MSNC employed buffering tactics (coding and sorting) to determine whom they would allow to join.

Until 1947, a woman who wanted to join one of these organizations had to be enrolled at MSNC, be in good financial standing with the College, be able to afford
memberships, be able to attend regular chapter meetings, be able to engage in social events that cost money, and maintain a minimum GPA. In 1947, leaders at the NPC and AES worked together to address the existence of two governing bodies. These groups often competed, and some women joined two sororities on one campus. This practice upset leaders at national organizations. A woman who was a member of two different organizations learned the rituals and secrets of both, and her loyalty in attending events and meetings was spread between two organizations. On November 12, 1947, the six national AES member groups were accepted unanimously into membership with the NPC (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Five other sororities were also admitted at the same time (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Since that time, three of the original AES member groups merged with other NPC national groups on the national level, leaving Alpha Sigma Alpha, Sigma Sigma Sigma, and Alpha Sigma Tau as the three remaining national sororities that had helped to found the AES (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.).

In 1917, the Association of Pedagogical Sororities (APS) changed its name to the Association of Education Sororities (AES) to appear more professional (Seaton, 1949). These member sororities were considered “teachers’ sororities,” and because they had all formed at other teacher preparatory schools or at colleges of education, the sorority members formed an association as a way to create a sorority brand. This decision helped expand their chapters to schools across the country. It made sense that many of the sororities that belonged to the AES would be present at MSNC, because the College served teachers, and many women were present on campus. For chapters, affiliating with the AES brought legitimacy, which elevated status. This would not have been the case if a chapter remained local.
NPC and AES merger. During the early years of the AES, the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) operated chapters at some of the same campuses at which the AES operated chapters (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). The NPC was another umbrella group for sororities that had gone from being local to national, much like the AES. The NPC and the AES both operated as umbrella groups for sororities across the country at the same time for many years. Each group aimed to set sorority women apart from other college students and offer an exclusive experience that women would want to join. The NPC and AES sought to offer experiences that would attract women who had the financial means, the social status, and the academic ability to meet their respective organizational standards. If they failed in this effort, sororities would be simply collections of women who reflected the characteristics of the rest of their peers. Leaders at NPC and AES wanted more than that. They wanted sorority women to reflect an elevated social status and prestige. However, having two umbrella groups providing guidelines and standards for national sororities, sometimes on the same campuses, created confusion and mixed messages regarding the goals of the two umbrella groups.

The first 50 years. The first 50 years of Greek-letter life at MSNC were shaped by the institution and its students, as well as by the national organizations operating chapters on campus. As previously described, the students initiated the first fraternal organization through the literary society, the Lyceum. Fraternities appeared first, even though the majority of the student body comprised women studying to be teachers (Eastern Michigan University, 1892). Sororities followed closely behind, and before the turn of the century, a number of sororities and fraternities had formed with the support of the faculty (Eastern Michigan University, 1893). As new social organizations formed on campus and across the nation,
groups that had become national in nature began to seek standardization for undergraduate chapters. This effort turned into the umbrella groups called the Association of Education Sororities (AES), the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), and the National Interfraternity Conference (NIC).

The formation of these umbrella groups affected chapters at MSNC, mainly in the ways they began to search for students who fit the guidelines prescribed by their national officers and umbrella group leaders. World War I halted fraternity expansion, although sororities continued to form on campus and across the nation. After WWI, fraternities expanded in large numbers as men returned to campus and new types of students began to attend MSNC. Black students began to arrive in larger numbers as the need for Black teachers grew in the nearby city of Detroit. The NPC and AES merged; the NPC became the sole umbrella group for women’s sororities at MSNC (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). NPC-affiliated chapters on campus were not interested in including Black women; thus, two Black sororities formed in the late 1940s (Eastern Michigan University, 1949). As the first 50 years of Greek-letter life at MSNC ended, the existing chapters in the community were segregated by gender and race. This was only the beginning of exclusion within the Greek-letter community at MSNC and nationwide.

**Impact of a national umbrella group on MSNC.** Beginning in 1947, leaders at the NPC considered offering associate membership status to six of the AES sororities. One of the stipulations for the AES dissolving and joining the NPC was that the chapters of the AES at unaccredited colleges had to close (Seaton, 1949). This agreement was intended to ensure consistent professionalism among the groups; chapters opened in the future could only form
at accredited colleges (Seaton, 1949). Further, women who held memberships in both an NPC group and an AES group had to choose which membership to keep.

In 1949, records stated clearly that any sorority at MSNC was to affiliate with the National Panhellenic Conference (Eastern Michigan University, 1949). A note to rushes appeared in the beginning of the 1949 Panhellenic Handbook: “This union of fraternity women exemplifies high standards of personal, academic, and cultural life and is pledged to contribute to the welfare of the local college community” (Eastern Michigan University, 1949). In addition, this move changed who could become a member. Although standards still existed regarding paying membership dues and being in good financial and academic standing, women joining sororities would no longer solely consist of those studying to teach. This change at MSNC reflected the changes happening around the country.

The days of the normal school were numbered. Colleges and universities now offered programs that extended well beyond studying to teach. This meant that the student body at MSNC and other normal colleges had expanded to include students studying many other things. The NPC as a governing body never governed organizations founded at early normal schools for women. Members’ experiences of NPC groups were different from the experiences of women who had previously been members of AES-affiliated groups. With new types of students coming to campus, including Black students studying to be teachers for Black schools, the changes in standards for the sororities on campus again determined who could and who could not become members. That same year, two new organizations joined the sororities on campus. These organizations did not belong to the NPC nationally, but were required to affiliate locally with the Panhellenic Association at MSNC.
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., the first sorority organized for Black women, founded at Howard University in 1913, came to MSNC in 1949 (Eastern Michigan University, 1949). The same year, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., also founded at Howard University in 1913, came to MSNC (Eastern Michigan University, 1949). Both organizations affiliated with the Panhellenic Association locally for years, but Black women were not allowed to join the groups associated with the NPC. Thus, sororities segregated into those with Black students and those with White students. Figures 12 and 13 show photographs of the membership for both Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. at MSNC in 1949.
Figure 12. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Aurora photo, 1949.

Source: “Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.” [Photograph], Aurora, 1949, EMU Archives, Ypsilanti, MI.

Figure 13. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Aurora, 1949.

Source: “Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.” [Photograph], Aurora, 1949, EMU Archives, Ypsilanti, MI.
**Black students joined the Greek-letter community at MSNC.** In 1949, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. formed at MSNC. Both sororities had originated at Howard University, Alpha Kappa Alpha in 1908, and Delta Sigma Theta in 1913 (Alpha Kappa Alpha, n.d., Delta Sigma Theta, n.d.). Before these two chapters established at MSNC, no Black fraternal organizations had previously existed on campus. The development of Black Greek-letter organizations at MSNC over 50 years after the historically White organizations was not necessarily surprising. Although some Black students attended MSNC before 1949, the rising population of Black residents in Detroit throughout the first 50 years of the century may have influenced the number of students able to attend MSNC. Prior to WWI, Detroit was the 13th largest city in the nation (Booza & Metzger, 2002, p. 8). The Black population at the time was around 4,000, only 1% of the city’s total population (Booza & Metzger, 2002). The increased demand for workers during WWI coincided with the halt of immigrants from Europe; thus, employers had to hire U.S. citizens (Booza & Metzger, 2002).

**Detroit’s demand for teachers brought more Black women to MSNC.** Between 1910 and 1930, the city’s population grew over 230%; the Black population grew from 6,000 people to 120,000 people in that same period (Booza & Metzger, 2002, p. 9). This huge wave of Black migrants from the southern United States marked Detroit’s “great migration,” bringing Black families from the south to Detroit in large numbers (Booza & Metzger, 2002). Although some stagnation of migration occurred during the Great Depression, another major period of migration occurred between 1940 and 1950, as workers came first to work in the bomber factory, and later, in the auto industry factories throughout the greater Detroit area (Booza & Metzger, 2002). Detroit’s population grew by more than 600,000 people during
this time, with Black people accounting for one third of that growth (Booza & Metzger, 2002, p. 11).

The arrival of more Black women prior to 1949 at MSNC made sense—there was a need for Black teachers in and around Detroit (Kraut, 2016). Although Ypsilanti leaders technically desegregated schools in 1919 when a desegregation case was won in Judge Sample’s Circuit Court, Black teachers were needed to teach in schools still attended by high numbers of Black students throughout Washtenaw and Wayne counties (Kraut, 2016). I found no evidence to show that administrators upheld or enforced the desegregation decision in Ypsilanti schools.

By 1949, enough Black women attended MSNC to support the founding of two separate National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) organizations in one calendar year (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1949). Many women’s fraternal organizations were present at MSNC in 1949; however, they were not inclusive of Black women (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1949). Membership photos in the 1949 *Aurora* support this claim. The National Pan-Hellenic Council photo showed Black women serving on the Council, but the individual organization photos showed chapters that were either all White (CPC) or all Black (NPHC photo; Eastern Michigan University, 1949, pp. 190-208). Thus, just as the schools served by MSNC teachers were segregated, so too was the MSNC campus. The campus environment itself provided a context for activism and service for students through affiliations with clubs and groups that served special interests, but not all clubs and groups included students of color.

**Different levels of access for Black students at MSNC.** For Black students, simply being present on campus did not equate to be included with the rest of the student body. “The
black Greek-letter tradition was the product of the African American struggle for recognition and respect” (Washington & Nunez, 2005, p. 171). The women founders of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. at MSNC may have recognized this struggle, choosing to limit their membership to the educated, Black elite.

Even as they began to establish their presence in elite institutions of higher learning, they faced isolation and exclusion on white campuses of the North and white paternalistic control on the campuses established especially for them. In the context of this pervasive alienation, they turned inward for social intimacy, mutual support, and status. (Washington & Nunez, 2005, p. 171)

**Black men began to organize at MSNC.** Historically Black sororities formed before their male counterparts at MSNC. Soon after, in 1952, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. opened a chapter at MSNC (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1952). *The Normal News* reporters covered the opening of the new chapter: “The new fraternity, first Negro fraternity to be recognized at MSNC, was also accepted by the Interfraternity Council and is now a member of that organization” (Eastern Michigan University, 1952). Another NPHC-affiliated fraternity followed in 1955 when Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. was chartered on campus (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1955). Before 1949, there had been no Black fraternal organizations on campus; over only six years, four chapters were established. A short time later, in 1959, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. opened the fifth NPHC-affiliated organization on campus (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1959). This was the last NPHC chapter to form at EMU until the 1970s. Only three NPHC organizations formed local chapters at MSNC prior to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954; however, after the decision was handed down, other groups formed in quick succession as more Black students
began to attend MSNC while it transitioned to EMC and then to EMU. “With the crumbling of official segregation barriers in the South and the relaxing of non-legal barriers in the North . . . Blacks began to enroll in historically white institutions in unprecedented numbers” (Epps & Haniff, 1991). The G.I. Bill may have also had an impact on the number of men, and more specifically, the number of Black men who attended MSNC, which soon after became Eastern Michigan College (EMC), drawing more enrollment and offering new departments.

Clearly the G.I. Bill was a crack in the wall of racism that had surrounded the American University system. It forced predominantly white colleges to allow a larger number of blacks to enroll, contributed to a more diverse curriculum at many historically black universities, and helped provide a foundation for the gradual growth of the black middle class. (Herbold, 1995)

Enrollment was growing, and so was the number of Black students, and in turn, the number of NPHC organizations that joined the Greek-letter community. The national governing body of Black Greek-letter organizations, the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), had been created in 1930 at Howard University (National Pan-Hellenic Council, n.d.). During the time that the two sororities chartered on campus, the two Greek governing councils at MSNC were the Panhellenic Council and the Interfraternity Council. These councils comprised chapters whose memberships were almost entirely White at the time.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. affiliated with the Panhellenic Council in 1949, without another option. The Panhellenic Council allowed the NPHC sororities to affiliate. This was an example of coupling. Glassman (1973) described loose coupling as a strategy employed by organizations, which “allows some
portions of an organization to persist [and] . . . lowers the probability that the organization will have to—or be able to—respond to each little change in the environment that occurs” (p. 6). The Panhellenic Council locally at MSNC allowed the affiliation of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., to avoid having to make any further changes in membership policies (Eastern Michigan University, 1949). Thus, these two historically Black sororities could be a part of the MSNC Greek-letter community, but could not be members of the MSNC White sororities.

**The growing impact of NPC as an umbrella group on campus.** Not until 1954 did an original NPC-affiliated organization arrive on campus. Alpha Xi Delta, a national women’s sorority, arrived at a time when a number of the organizations founded in the early days of MSNC had either closed or been absorbed by other chapters. Some of these closures and absorptions resulted from the merger of the AES and NPC. Only two local organizations still operated—Sigma Nu Phi and Kappa Mu Delta. Other local organizations that had thrived into the 1930s and 1940s had closed. There were no longer Conservatory sororities because the Conservatory was no longer a major part of education for women at MSNC, and the other independent local sororities also closed.

Eastern Michigan College became Eastern Michigan University in 1959. The University was changing quickly in its academic offerings and the types of students it attracted. Many local chapters struggled to compete with nationally affiliated groups. NPC as a national umbrella group offered resources for recruitment, membership education, scholarships, and a large network of alumni beyond the collegiate experience. However, with national affiliation came the requirement to adhere to national standards. National groups had the advantage of staying open, but at the cost of losing their local identities. Local chapter
members had to work harder to recruit women who were interested in joining a sorority at MSNC, operating without extra resources while still having to follow some of the policies handed down by the national groups.

By this point, national groups had begun to dominate sorority life on campus. Nationally affiliated groups were beginning to solidify a brand of sorority woman. In other words, with national affiliation came assimilation. A sorority that chose to nationally affiliate literally lost its identity. With isomorphic pressures shaping national sorority life through normative pressures and cultural pressures, nationally affiliated sororities at MSNC began to operate, look, and act the same. Yet, although some local chapters may have retained some independence, to remain legitimate, their members made attempts to look like national affiliated chapters or at least to mimic their behaviors and activities.

The arrival of new national standards for sororities on campus right around the same time that Black students arrived on campus in larger numbers was intentional. NPC-affiliated national chapter members wanted to protect the identities they had worked so hard to form by maintaining White chapters made up of the “right” type of women. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) described these changes occurring within the organizational environment as “strategies for bringing stability and certainty to their environments.” They noted that organizations “may restructure the organization to avoid instability or its consequences; stabilize exchange relationships; or restructure the set of exchange relationships to enhance stability.” With more national oversight, groups that had formed at MSNC made up of students from southeastern Michigan families began to adhere to national expectations of membership. They also began to follow both written and unwritten policies about the racial makeup of membership.
Once the dissolution of the AES was finalized in 1947, the NPC became the official national governing body for sororities at MSNC. At this time, Alpha Xi Delta was the only sorority on the list of nine active organizations that was not either local, or originally a part of the AES (Seaton, 1949, p. 478). The makeup of the groups changed quickly. In 1955, Delta Zeta came to campus, adding a second NPC organization; Kappa Mu Delta closed as a local chapter (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1955). This began the transition in the membership of the types of organizations present at MSNC going forward. Although the NPC leaders offered to absorb the AES member groups, NPC leaders saw the NPC as an umbrella group for different types of sororities.

**New programs of study brought different types of students to MSNC.** No longer were women attending college simply to learn to teach. Women in NPC groups were members of chapters at campuses that offered experiences that AES groups had not been able to offer. Up until the late 1940s, with only the AES and local chapters at MSNC, women at MSNC had not really seen a true reflection of NPC chapters on campus. National organizations like Alpha Xi Delta and Delta Zeta had chapters across the country at elite institutions like the University of Michigan. Students at schools like University of Michigan had access to different curricula, compared to students who had been studying at institutions where the AES was present. These national sororities aimed to open chapters at schools that reflected their chapters at elite institutions of higher education, even if the context did not necessarily provide for that type of student or experience.

Thus, the AES leaders faced a challenge in the sense that their original member groups had formed as educational sororities. As higher education institutions added new programs and curricula, colleges formed specifically to train teachers no longer provided
members of AES chapters with similar interests. Members of the national AES group knew that the organization’s days were numbered. In order to continue the history and legacy of the AES in some way, AES leaders agreed to the NPC merger (Seaton, 1949).

This was a difficult time for chapters like Pi Kappa Sigma, leading to overall membership losses. Pi Kappa Sigma remained an NPC-recognized organization only until 1959, when Sigma Kappa absorbed the organization on a national level (Eastern Michigan University, 1959). Pi Kappa Sigma was no longer able to sustain itself as an organization that had heavily relied upon chapters opening at teachers’ colleges. Like other AES-affiliated groups, Pi Kappa Sigma had lost some of its identity as an organization for future teachers. Gone were the exclusive teacher sororities as affiliation with sororities from “traditional” universities became the norm.

In 1959, Sigma Kappa absorbed Pi Kappa Sigma nationally and took over the local chapter at MSNC (Eastern Michigan University, 1959). Pi Kappa Sigma, which had originated as the first sorority at MSNC in 1894, known as J.P.N., was now an NPC-affiliated chapter in the form of Sigma Kappa (Eastern Michigan University, 1959). This meant that existing chapters of Pi Kappa Sigma everywhere would take on the rituals, traditions, insignia, and practices of Sigma Kappa chapters in order to continue to exist. This process of transmission of cultural values and norms of Sigma Kappa onto current Pi Kappa Sigma chapters was an example of cultural persistence. Zucker (1977) defined transmission “as the process by which cultural understandings are communicated to a succession of actors” (p. 729). Although completely changing the traditions and rituals of an organization could be difficult, transmission can occur relatively easily as one actor communicates something as an objective fact to an actor within the system who receives and accepts it (Zucker, 1977). Thus,
women who were members of Pi Kappa Sigma at Eastern Michigan College were now members of Sigma Kappa, receiving entirely new sorority identities. From its origin in 1894 at Michigan State Normal College, Pi Kappa Sigma had grown into a national organization that had helped women learn to be educators and engage in social practices for over 60 years. After Sigma Kappa absorbed Pi Kappa Sigma at EMU, membership standards automatically changed. All absorbed chapters of Pi Kappa Sigma had to agree to take on Sigma Kappa’s membership standards and recruit women who were likely quite different from the women Pi Kappa Sigma members would have recruited.

**Becoming “national” changed chapter purpose and membership standards.** The Sigma Kappa sorority has been a national organization since its founding in 1874 and a member of the NPC since 1905 (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). As a national organization, Sigma Kappa had many years to organize and set specific membership standards. Those standards reflected what had been set forth by the NPC as a national umbrella group. Not surprisingly, as a national organization, Sigma Kappa operated differently than did Pi Kappa Sigma. Sigma Kappa established a chapter at MSNC in 1953 (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1953). After its national office absorbed Pi Kappa Sigma’s national chapters, the Sigma Kappa chapter at MSNC absorbed the Pi Kappa Sigma chapter at MSNC in 1959, the same year that EMC became EMU (Eastern Michigan University, 1959).

As the organization’s leaders tried to establish an identity at EMU, they sought to follow the same trend as other organizations with national affiliations in choosing to exclude women whom a local organization would have recruited. As a member group of the NPC with chapters at elite institutions across the country, Sigma Kappa sought women who
reflected the type of women joining their chapters elsewhere. In its early years, Sigma Kappa had operating chapters at school Brown University, Stanford University, Indiana University, The Ohio State University, University of Minnesota, University of Tennessee, and the University of Wisconsin Madison (Sigma Kappa, n.d.).

The students attending EMC, and later EMU, differed from the students attending elite institutions. Based on their long history of establishing chapters at elite institutions, Sigma Kappa leaders wrote membership standards that reflected students at those elite institutions. Sigma Kappa, even after absorbing the women of Pi Kappa Sigma, no longer reflected the general student body at EMU. Its membership now reflected the standards of their national office and the NPC. Aurora yearbooks at EMU published in the first decade of Sigma Kappa’s existence showed photos of the chapter indicating it was for White women only. The fact that Sigma Kappa was an NPC-member group also meant that the women would be required to pay membership dues, live up to expectations for behavior and social status, and excel academically. Although Sigma Kappa leaders had been willing to absorb all national chapters of Pi Kappa Sigma, the history of Pi Kappa Sigma as a teachers’ sorority was soon lost in the history of Sigma Kappa. Figure 14 shows a description of the absorption process of Pi Kappa Sigma by Sigma Kappa. Figure 15 shows a woman who had been a member of Pi Kappa Sigma sorority who was being initiated as an alumnae member into Sigma Kappa sorority during the absorption of Pi Kappa Sigma on a national level.
Figure 14. Sigma Kappa excerpt from the 1960 Aurora.

The end of the local sorority. Many other NPC groups formed over the years, and many are still active today. However, every local chapter that has attempted to form since Kappa Mu Delta in 1954 has either closed or been absorbed by another national organization. Chapters from the original AES group also closed. In the 1960s, Zeta Tau Alpha and Alpha Epsilon Phi formed, both NPC-affiliated sororities (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1967). As the women who formed these chapters graduated, no new students appeared to support the chapters. Both remained active for only a few years. In 1970, a reemergence of
local chapters occurred, but none of the groups remained. The only group that remained after forming during that time was Sigma Delta Tau, an NPC-affiliated sorority. Since then, to date, no new sororities have formed at EMU. The sorority council on campus still consists of NPC-affiliated groups, with one local chapter remaining.

**National oversight has slowed freedom of association for women.** One major reason that expansion has not occurred since 1992 in the Panhellenic community at EMU is that the NPC’s Unanimous Agreements and Guidelines have made it difficult for groups to expand unless all currently existing chapters are similar in size and number on all campuses. The 26 member groups of the NPC follow the Unanimous Agreements (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). This coalition, formed long ago, makes it difficult for any individual or group to make changes to policies and norms of the NPC. The NPC leaders have claimed their purpose is “to assist collegiate and alumnae chapters of the NPC member organizations in cooperating with colleges and universities and to foster interfraternal relationships” (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). However, the Unanimous Agreements have a significant impact in terms of governance over member groups of the NPC.

When NPC groups exist at a campus, other NPC groups have not been willing to expand to that campus until all the other NPC groups are at or close to the maximum campus total (i.e., the number of members possible on that campus; National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). This policy means that new national groups have not been able to form. To a certain extent, the NPC can control the types of women that join sororities today by imposing standards and regulations on individual NPC-member groups. NPC leaders intended the Unanimous Agreements to protect each individual existing national group from closing, while preventing new national competitors from organizing. By agreeing to NPC standards
and guidelines through affiliation, organizations benefit from the protection that comes with it but must also work within the confines of those set standards. Thus, NPC-affiliated sororities’ institutionalization over time has produced a high level of resistance to change. Resistance to change is another aspect of cultural persistence. Zucker (1977) described resistance to change, noting that when highly institutionalized acts are transmitted, actors’ personal attempts to change them will fail.

Campus total is a set number that designates the maximum number of members any one group can have (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Each group wants to achieve parity before allowing another NPC affiliated group to expand on a particular campus. This ensures that the financial investment made by the national organization will pay off. In addition, setting a campus total ensures that the existing NPC groups have a chance to thrive, rather than having to compete against new groups. A couple of chapters at EMU currently have consistently fewer members than the others. Until those groups are large enough to be affected by recruitment rules and guidelines, no new groups will vote to come to campus. Further, the Council would not consider adding any new local organizations. This NPC methodology is called release figure methodology (RFM). Table 2 shows an example of RFM in use during a sorority recruitment process.
Table 2

*Release Figure Methodology Sample for NPC Recruitment*

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<td>Meghan</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>*Meghan is cut from 2 of her top 3 choices, but still gets to attend her 2nd and 3rd choices.</td>
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“National” vs. “local” resources differed dramatically. Local organizations tend to be smaller than national organizations because of the resources available to them. When groups are not similar in size, no new NPC groups can form, and the current ones on campus cannot grow in size until all groups have achieved parity. Additionally, it is in the financial best interests of the NPC groups to have as few “local” groups on campus as possible. Local groups recruit women who could otherwise be joining nationally affiliated chapters. Local chapters also tend to attract women who are different from the women the nationally affiliated chapters would consider the “right type” for their chapters. Nationally affiliated chapter members prefer not to recruit this type of women. Sigma Nu Phi, as the only remaining local chapter at EMU, follows all NPC policies outlined in the College Panhellenic Council Constitution and Bylaws but is not ruled by a national headquarters as are the rest of the chapters.

A group of organizations like the 26 NPC sororities can exert a large amount of control when all agree to follow a set of standards. Although NPC leaders do not consider the NPC a governing body, chapter members make many decisions based on the suggestions and guidelines set forth by the NPC; thus, the NPC certainly fits the description of a coalition. When all sororities on a college campus reflect the standards and values of one umbrella group like the NPC, little diversity in membership occurs. This inherently leads to exclusion. All 26 NPC groups follow the Unanimous Agreements. Most of them agree on membership guidelines and standards, which are reflected in each of their chapters on college campuses across the nation. When one umbrella group dictates, formally or informally, who can and cannot be a member of these sororities, many women are excluded. To join an NPC sorority
chapter today, a woman must meet the standards of not only the national organization, but also the standards of all 26 NPC member groups.

**The impact of absorption at MSNC/EMC/EMU.** The early history of Greek-letter organizations is filled with stories of groups of students coming together to form societies and clubs around particular purposes. Although not all were originally named with traditional Greek-letters, many of them, such as the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club or J.P.N., transitioned to Greek-letter names to follow tradition and gain the brand name recognition that came with Greek-letters. Like many other institutions around the nation, having Greek-letters as chapter names made them easily recognizable as fraternities and sororities to incoming students. Having a chapter on campus connected to a national fraternity or sorority represented a link to something outside of MSNC, which many students attending MSNC could not have experienced otherwise. As both national and local groups formed on campus, governing councils for different types of groups became active on campus, and local fraternities and sororities affiliated with these groups. For example, women’s sororities, (both those with local chapter status and those with national affiliations) became part of the local Panhellenic organization. Whether these groups were national or local, they still had campus standards and policies to meet and follow.

Fraternities and sororities that opened chapters on other campuses in addition to their chapters at MSNC were considered national organizations. Because these national groups made up the large majority of groups on campus by the time local governing bodies like the Intersorority Council and the Interfraternity Council formed in the early 1920s, the national groups influenced much of what occurred in these local governing bodies. The local governing campus Panhellenic group at MSNC governed rushing practices, gave guidelines
for parties, and set other membership standards for the member chapters. The groups that had national affiliation also had national guidelines and standards to follow. In addition, groups across the nation that had national organization status also affiliated with a national umbrella organization, either the Association of Education Sororities (AES) or the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) for women and the National Interfraternity Conference for men. Over time, local fraternity and sorority groups struggled to remain open. Many of the men’s groups struggled to operate during post-war periods because of low membership after both WWI and WWII. After the merger of the AES and the NPC in 1947, many of the AES-affiliated chapters were absorbed at a national level by NPC-affiliated chapters. AES-affiliated chapters had a smaller number of chapters nationally to begin with because they were often only present at normal schools. As these institutions began to serve different groups of students and offer studies outside of teaching, many AES groups struggled to maintain membership on their individual campuses. Only two of the original AES founding groups remain open today at EMU. NPC groups absorbed the others on a national level.

**Forced to affiliate or close.** Local groups often sought a national organization affiliation as a means to survive. This process happened frequently throughout the 1950s. Although group members knew they would likely lose much of their local identity, national affiliation allowed them to continue their legacy rather than close. National organizations provided resources and supports that local organizations could not provide. National organizations also brought a type of brand name recognition to Greek-letter life at EMU, which helped prospective members perceive the Greek-letter system at EMU as similar to other Greek-letter systems across the nation. National organizations carried specific membership standards, many of which were more exclusionary than the standards local EMU
groups’ governing documents would have included. This meant that prospective members may have perceived these nationally-affiliated groups as having specific types of practices and carrying social prestige that the institution’s local Greek-letter organizations could not. This assumption alone made by potential members of Greek-letter organizations created an exclusionary environment, wherein nationally-affiliated chapters and local chapters were viewed differently.

To join a nationally-affiliated fraternity or sorority at EMU, prospective members needed the financial means to pay dues to three levels: local chapters, national organizations, and national umbrella groups. Prospective members also needed a minimum GPA, social status and social connections, and the ability to dedicate the time to the social activities of the chapter. In contrast, to join a local organization, members needed only the money to pay local dues and the level of social status that particular local organization required. Having national affiliations enhanced the group objective of building larger social networks.

Figure 16 shows the different types of women’s fraternal organizations present at MSNC in 1925. There are four different categories of sororities that exist during this time period.

Figure 17 shows the absorption of AES-affiliated groups by NPC as a national organization. This is the point in time where the AES agreed to merge with the NPC, allowing the NPC to grow as an umbrella group.

Figure 18 shows women’s fraternal organizations at MSNC in the late 1940s. At this point, there are only two categories of sororities. There are local groups that only exist at MSNC, and NPC-affiliated groups that have other chapters nationally.
Figure 19 shows the process of an individual national sorority absorbing another individual national sorority and all of its affiliated chapters. This is what happened when Sigma Kappa nationally agreed to absorb all groups of Pi Kappa Sigma.

Figure 20 shows the sorority system at EMU in 1959. Now, there are three categories of sororities. There are NPC groups, local organizations that only exist at EMU, and NPHC affiliated chapters.

**Women’s Fraternal Organizations 1925**

![Diagram of Women’s Fraternal Organizations 1925]

*Figure 16. Women’s fraternal organizations, 1925.*
Figure 17. NPC absorbs AES-affiliated groups and grows as an umbrella group, 1947.
Women's Fraternal Organizations 1947

Local Organizations
- Sigma Nu Phi
- Zeta Phi
- Kappa Gamma Phi

NPC Organizations
- Delta Phi Epsilon
- JPN/ Pi Kappa Sigma
- Alpha Sigma Tau
- Sigma Sigma Sigma
- Delta Sigma Epsilon

Figure 18. Women's fraternal organizations at MSNC in 1947.

Example of large NPC organizations absorbing smaller national NPC organizations

Large national NPC organization ex. Sigma Kappa

Smaller national NPC organization ex. Pi Kappa Sigma

All national Pi Kappa Sigma chapters now become known as Sigma Kappa chapters on their respective campuses. At MSNC, this happened in 1959.

Figure 19. Process of a national sorority absorbing another national sorority.
Figure 20. Women’s fraternal organizations at EMU in 1959.

Locals continued to struggle during absorption and new national oversight.

Local chapters at MSNC continued to experience absorption. As the local governing bodies became more structured and formal, many local organizations struggled to meet those standards. In the 1940s and 1950s at MSNC, many local groups either closed or were absorbed by national organizations. By 1959, only two local sororities and four local fraternities were still operating. The rest of the chapters on campus had affiliated with an NPC, NPHC, or NIC member chapter. National organizations and national governing bodies
provided resources to help with academics, scholarships, recruitment support, and intellectual development. National organizations also had great influence on policies and practices at individual campuses where they had member groups. Some of this influence affected local groups so extensively that they could no longer compete. In fact, members of already established local groups at MSNC sometimes purposely and proactively sought national organizations to absorb them to allow their legacy to continue in some form without being lost entirely.

In addition, absorption provided these groups with more legitimacy. The organizations seeking national absorption were practicing bridging tactics through cooptation. Scott (2003) noted bridging involved actions wherein organizations move beyond their boundaries and “actively seek the disturbance so as to minimize the negative effects of the disturbance.” Selznick (1949) called this particular bridging strategy cooptation. Cooptation includes bringing new elements into the leadership or policy. Cooptation was ultimately constraining for all MSNC and EMU fraternal organizations that decided to seek national affiliation. With this constraint, however, came the appearance of legitimacy and the ability to survive.

Some of that legitimacy came with the opportunity to be more exclusive in ways that were not only acceptable to the national organization but also expected. This practice had been around since the beginnings of many of these organizations. After the Civil War, for example, many men attending higher education institutions were looking for ways to connect with other men like them. This led to the creation of many southern fraternities. For instance, men who attended the Virginia Military Institute founded Alpha Tau Omega, Kappa Sigma Kappa, and Sigma Nu in the years immediately following the Civil War (Anson &

**National affiliation may have meant exclusion.** Many national organizations had constitutional documents that explicitly stated who could and could not be members of their organizations. For example, Kappa Delta Rho’s 1926 constitution stated, “The active members of a chapter shall be duly enrolled undergraduate male white Gentile students of the institution where the chapter is located” (Daigle, 2014, p. 4). In addition, many chapters had unspoken policies on membership: “As the policies were not tied to any concrete document, ‘gentlemen’s agreements’ allowed a fraternal society to proceed, act, and/or discriminate in whichever way they chose, with virtually no incriminatory evidence” (Daigle, 2014, p. 4).

This example was from the 1920s; however, many of these governing documents from national organizations did not remove language that excluded other races for decades. For example, Phi Delta Theta’s national office suspended a chapter at Williams College in 1953 for pledging members who were not White (Quinlan, 2016). In 1954, the national office changed their membership clause from “full-Aryan” to “socially acceptable” (Quinlan, 2016).

As new types of students began to appear at campuses across the nation, fraternities and sororities faced the question of whether to include those groups of students. Allowing Black students, veterans, and other minority groups to join threatened the ideals of social fraternities and sororities that had been founded by and for White men and women. Members of traditional fraternities and sororities joined to gain social prestige and further segregate themselves from not only minorities, but also from other White college students who were
not affiliated with fraternal organizations. Many national organizations explicitly stated in their standard membership documents that they would only accept people of the Aryan race. Local group members at EMU struggled to decide whether to include or exclude new types of students—the EMU student body was not like those on traditional campuses. Ultimately, if they wanted to continue to survive, compete with other Greek organizations, and keep social prestige, members needed to be more exclusive than ever. Having national organization affiliation gave them permission to do so. Some membership standards actually excluded non-White, non-Christian students (Quinlan, 2016). Some local groups simply closed rather than admit undesirable members. Articles in *Aurora* from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s showed that only White men and women were initiated into NIC- and NPC-affiliated sororities and fraternities.

Additionally, even local fraternities and sororities that were historically White continued to initiate only White members. These local groups still had to affiliate with a local governing group of students and needed to reflect the standards of those groups to stay in good social standing on campus, no matter whom they chose to initiate into their chapters. National groups reflected national trends, and many local groups needed to emulate those national groups to survive and compete. In other words, if a chapter did not join a national organization, its members should act as if they had in order to remain open. National organizations also benefited from absorbing local groups on campuses such as EMU. Homogenizing sorority and fraternity life across the nation led to less variety in types of fraternities and sororities. The prestige of membership in these organizations was questioned less if fraternities and sororities were more similar.
National organizations that absorbed local organizations operated already established groups and thus did not have to spend the time or money they would have spent going into institutions and starting groups from scratch. When a group is absorbed by a national organization, they are asked to get rid of all existing chapter symbols and traditions, including apparel, songs, practices, and anything else linked to the original group. Currently, only one local group remains at EMU—Sigma Nu Phi, a sorority that has been at EMU since before 1900. Two other local fraternities survived into the early 2000s and eventually closed because of judicial issues.

**Men’s fraternal organizations expanded at MSNC.** It was not until 1928 that another men’s fraternity opened at MSNC. In the 10 years following the low 1918 enrollment, enrollment climbed to 2,217 students in 1928 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). The founding of fraternities at MSNC began again with Zeta Chi Sigma, a local fraternity, in 1928 (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1928). It was the first time since 1914 that a men’s society like this had been proposed at the college. The first members charged a $3.00 membership fee (Qualman, 1948). Those who could pay were members, and those who could not initially afford the fee automatically became pledges (Qualman, 1948). Zeta Chi Sigma operated during some important national events, and documents written by members during these times reflected the challenges the organization faced, especially during the Great Depression and the Second World War.

In 1929, Sigma Mu Sigma, a national fraternity, founded its Iota chapter at MSNC (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1929). The fraternity was originally only open to Master Masons (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1929). In 1935, Tau Kappa Epsilon absorbed Sigma Mu Sigma on a national level. Interestingly, the chapter members of Sigma
Mu Sigma at MSNC did not want to take on the national affiliation of Tau Kappa Epsilon, choosing instead to stay open without national support. Tau Kappa Epsilon closed only five years later because it could not compete with the other nationally affiliated fraternities at MSNC. Another fraternity founded a single-letter chapter at MSNC in 1934, Phi Sigma Epsilon (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1934). In 1934, Phi Sigma Kappa also established a chapter at MSNC (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1929).

This boom of fraternal organizations paused until the late 1940s, post-WWII. The men’s fraternities organized at this time included specific groups of men in each respective organization. For example, according to data in issues of the Zeta Cry and in military service records, men who were members of Zeta Chi before the War served in the military, returned to campus, and recruited other veterans upon their return (Eastern Michigan University, 1949). Master Masons were members of Sigma Mu Sigma, which had been formed specifically for Masons who were students on campus (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1935). The Masons had been around for a few years longer, compared to fraternities in America. Their practices of forming lodges around common interests and activities were similar to the practices of Greek organizations in their use of exclusionary practices. Black students had to form their own lodges when a Masonic lodge rejected them in the early 1800s. These exclusionary practices continued over time, and eventually, Sigma Mu Sigma, a national organization formed and only included Masons as members.

Phi Sigma Epsilon was more social in nature for men arriving at MSNC after the War. Therefore, these organizations served particular groups of men during this time, which helped set them apart from other groups and provide an identity. Some organizations served military veterans. Others served athletes. Some served Masons. A few organizations still
attempted to serve students reflective of the general student body, but this became more
difficult as the student body changed and more national organizations arrived. The new
organizations forming on campus were nationally affiliated and served a new type of student
arriving at MSNC: men who had not been at the institution before or during WWI. These
new men came to higher education during a time of surging popularity of college athletics.
‘Popularity was the proliferation of huge football stadiums—most of which were named
‘Memorial Field’ (Thelin, Edwards, & Moyen, 2017). Figure 21 shows the different
categories and names of men’s fraternal organizations at MSNC in 1948.

**Men's Fraternal Organizations 1948**

![Diagram of Men's Fraternal Organizations 1948]

*Figure 21. Men’s fraternal organizations, 1948.*

*Source: Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*,* 1948.*
Enrollment surged at MSNC during this time as well. In the five years following WWI, enrollment grew from 946 in 1918 to 2,675 in 1924 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). National organizations still dominated the fraternal scene on campus until after WWII, when students who were more diverse enrolled at MSNC in higher numbers than ever before.

New expectations for fraternities. Although no further fraternal expansion took place until after WWII, fraternities continued to be active at MSNC consistently throughout the late 1930s. In fact, as relevancy on campuses had begun to be questioned, men from fraternities all over the state of Michigan convened in East Lansing in 1939 to discuss abolishing “rough stuff” related to hazing and “hell week” traditions (Eastern Michigan University, 1939). This meeting reflected the fraternities’ attempt to create standards and remain active on campus, as well as to shift membership requirements, similar to actions taken by sororities as they began to affiliate with national umbrella groups. At annual meetings like the one convened in 1939, discussions took place about new standards for pledging new members (Eastern Michigan University, 1939). At this particular gathering, the men wrote a program to be implemented at campuses across Michigan. “One of its prime objectives [was] the attainment of . . . higher scholastic averages” (Eastern Michigan University, 1939).

Additionally, the men discussed updates to the pledge training programs: “Such a system eliminates the former, useless, often dangerous, methods and substitutes one in which the pledge receives necessary education which he fails to gain otherwise” (Eastern Michigan University, 1939). In the same school year, the fraternities on campus had implemented a new standard wherein students were not eligible to pledge a fraternity until they had completed at least one term of college level courses. “The decline in pledging is explained by
the new ruling, which requires a man to have completed at least one term on campus and to have a C average” (Eastern Michigan University, 1939).

Fraternity men met to discuss abolishing hazing and to set standards for membership, such as improving academic performance, enrolling in a certain number of credits, and swearing to live according to certain values. These meetings were early indicators of fraternity members’ need or desire for standards across the state and nation for fraternal organizations. These meetings were also a response to cultural and normative pressures the organizations were encountering. These men were searching for a higher caliber of male student to join their chapters, especially as new types of men began to arrive on campuses nationwide. Affiliating with national organizations was expected to bring prestige, legitimacy, and support, just as affiliation had done for the women’s groups. The men began to mimic the behavior of the women’s groups in the hopes of benefitting in the ways the women’s groups had.

World War II. In 1941 and 1942, The Normal News began to feature articles about war; mentions of fraternities in the paper were few. The fraternities that remained active on campus had to compete for membership because fewer men remained on campus for fraternities to recruit as pledges. Many male students from MSNC left the campus to serve during wartime. As had occurred during WWI, fraternities at MSNC struggled to maintain membership during WWII, and no new chapters were formed. In fact, members of some chapters already in existence at MSNC turned to larger, national organizations to absorb their membership as they struggled to operate. A larger national network of support could help them survive in the post-War years. Students who had worked hard to establish chapters at MSNC did not want to see their chapters disappear entirely, but many knew they could not
maintain or reestablish chapters after WWII. The negative effects of the War temporarily caused membership numbers to decline.

Rather than trying to survive alone, leaders of local chapters turned to strong national fraternal organizations and petitioned them to absorb the local chapters so that they could live on in some form. The implications of this unfolded over time as many local groups disappeared and took on national identities. Members now had to adhere to national standards and policies, rather than enjoying the freedom of operating under only campus policies and expectations. Some of the national organizations dictated membership standards excluding men based on race (Ross, 2016). Many of these organizations had been formed by military veterans who had served in the Confederate forces (Ross, 2016). Three chapters had formed at the Virginia Military Institute immediately following the Civil War. Those chapter members brought their beliefs and assumptions to their fraternal affiliations. Ross (2016) explained,

The DNA of these organizations, if you go back, these predominantly white fraternities in particular were created after the Civil War with the expansion of college to non-aristocratic students. Organizations on those campuses, they started to put restrictive clauses that restricted membership to white Christians and sometimes they would say you had to be “Aryan,” so it was a long fight just to get African Americans to join their organizations.

Chapter members on campus had to adhere strictly to these membership standards, even if members disagreed. These standards changed the organizational structures of fraternities on the EMU campus forever. Fraternities no longer had autonomy regarding whom they selected as members. With national oversight from a headquarters or umbrella
organization, multiple parties were involved in selecting which men at MSNC would be welcome in the Greek-letter community. Thus, the men had utilized cooperative strategies (Scott, 2003), just like their female counterparts. They benefited from these strategies, but lost much of the autonomy they had previously experienced.

**Enrollment had a significant impact on membership.** Enrollment at MSNC dropped from 2,257 in 1938 to only 675 in 1944 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). Data showing the breakdown of enrollment by gender were not available until 1948; however, with a total enrollment of 675, it is likely that the majority of these students were women during wartime. Dwindling enrollment made it more difficult to recruit or maintain fraternal membership. The 1941 *Aurora* showed 194 fraternity men (Eastern Michigan University, 1942, pp. 149-157); only 152 were listed in 1942 (Eastern Michigan University, 1942, pp. 153-161). Thus, in only one year, nearly 50 fraternity men were gone. Only one group was featured in the 1944 *Aurora*, showing a total membership of only 11 men (Eastern Michigan University, 1944, p. 95). Only eight fraternity men were listed in 1945 (Eastern Michigan University, 1945, p. 90). In only four years, the fraternity community at MSNC had almost disappeared.

Overall university enrollment had also been greatly affected, decreasing from over 2,000 students in 1938 to only 675 in 1944 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). By 1945, enrollment had reached over 1,000 students again and continued to increase slowly through the rest of that decade (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). During this time, many fraternities did not maintain regular operations. MSNC records showed by 1946, 58 fraternity men had served (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). This is important, because as they
returned to fraternities on campus, if they returned at all, the character of these men had changed.

War also changed the type of men fraternities recruited to join after the War. The students coming to MSNC after the War did not necessarily have access to education before the G.I. Bill. In fact, the students now attending many higher education institutions across the country at that time were coming to campus because the G.I. Bill gave them the financial ability to attend. “For at least a temporary period, this generous and flexible financial aid program enabled an unprecedented number of veterans to attend colleges, universities, and an array of ‘postsecondary’ institutions” (Thelin et al., 2017). Additionally, “the rising birth-rate and increased immigration into selected states, along with a deliberate extension of college admissions” added to the boom in enrollment seen nationwide (Thelin et al., 2017). Many men from MSNC were killed in action and did not return at all.

**Post-War rushing period and the growth of the fraternity at MSNC.** In 1946, fraternities began their post-War rushing period. Once again, a large section in the school paper was dedicated to fraternal activities on campus. It made sense that fraternities were able to recruit men and increase membership numbers—enrollment reports showed that more men than women were attending MSNC by 1948 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). In 1948, of 2,422 total students enrolled, 1,377 were men (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). This higher proportion of male students to female students continued until 1953; subsequently, the number of male and female student remained almost even until the mid-1970s (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). Fraternities seeking men who in the War had shared a common experience, common values, a mission, and standards for membership were able to recruit veterans in large numbers.
Unlike during the First World War, sororities also struggled to form at MSNC during this time. During WWII, many sorority women were involved with war efforts at home. This was the time when service and philanthropic efforts became a focal point for sororities (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). Other women on campus may have also been engaged in these types of activities or may have been working jobs left vacant by men. Women simply did not have the time to focus on social organizations. National sororities most likely felt the impact of WWII and were less likely to expand to campuses nationwide during this time. The National Panhellenic Conference detailed this period in their written history of the Conference:

The Conference curtailed unnecessary travel during World War II – as did its member groups – and created a Committee on War and College Women to advance the Allied effort on the home front. It sent representatives to meetings held by the U.S. War Department and passed a resolution encouraging female college graduates to consider joining the armed forces. (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.)

In contrast to earlier pre-War years, only seven sororities operated at MSNC—146 women were listed in rosters in the 1946 *Aurora*. Further, only five fraternities operated—131 men were listed in rosters (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1946). Of those 131 men, 37 were pledges, meaning they were new members (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1946). These were low numbers for both chapters and for the total membership of the Greek-letter community at MSNC. For example, in 1929, there had been 331 sorority women out of 2,069 total enrolled students (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). The women who remained at MSNC during the War could afford to do so, but no new chapters formed during this time.
In December of 1945, a newsletter written by a Zeta Chi Sigma fraternity alumni member described the way things had changed at MSNC:

At good old Ypsi things are getting back to normal too. The enrollment is picking up rapidly and men—yes, real honest-to-goodness men are coming back to the campus. Last year there were only between 30 and 40 of them but this fall we have about 175. Between 60 and 70 of these are former service men. The second semester promises an even larger number. (Riddering, 1945)

WWII affected local chapters at MSNC as well. Local and national members of Pi Kappa Sigma sorority became involved WWII efforts:

Pi Kaps like their sorority sisters entered every field of action. Waves, Wacs, Spars, and Marines appeared. Girls and women sold and bought war bonds, studied and taught first aid, served as air-raid wardens and air-plane spotters, rationed food, gave blood, worked in factories and provided willingly multiple other services demanded by War. (Seaton, 1949, pp. 375-376)

MSNC was situated close to the Willow Run bomber plant and other facilities that had been constructed by Henry Ford. The entire local economy was affected and required both men and women to take on new responsibilities.

After men returned from WWII, and the G.I. Bill began to bring new men to campus, Phi Delta Pi regained some members. Although Black men and women had been on campus since the late 1930s and early 1940s, there were still no non-White members in either Pi Kappa Sigma or Phi Delta Pi when the first two historically Black sororities were established on campus in 1949 (Eastern Michigan University, 1950, p. 131). In the 1950 Aurora, only 32 Black women appeared in the yearbook, and 19 of those women were members of either
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. or Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (Eastern Michigan University, 1950, pp. 42-100). Only 27 Black men appeared in Aurora that same year, but none of these men was affiliated with fraternities on campus because none of the fraternities accepted Black students (Eastern Michigan University, 1950, pp. 126-127).

As more Black students arrived on campus, along with other student groups after WWII, smaller local and national chapters struggled and ultimately joined larger well-established national chapters. This process occurred because of actions by larger NPC-affiliated groups on a national level. These larger national headquarters came with much stricter membership requirements, were affiliated with national umbrella organizations, and made membership more exclusive in a way that affected students at MSNC in Greek-letter organizations for many years. The membership requirements influenced chapters at campuses nationwide, regardless of the types of students attending the institutions. Membership requirements for high GPAs, the ability to pay local and national dues, and the ability to give time and energy to the organization were implemented across the country for each national organization.

**Impact of the G.I. Bill.** In the years following the Second World War, members of fraternities and sororities saw a dramatic expansion in membership on campus, concurrent with increased enrollment at the College. In 1944, enrollment had dropped to 675 students; however, in 1945, enrollment had climbed back to 1,061 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). In 1946, enrollment increased to 2,232 students, and in 1947, enrollment increased to 2,466 students (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). Enrollment continued on an upward trend through the next three decades. Only 10 years after the conclusion of WWII, total enrollment was at 3,397 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). During this time, the men’s
undergraduate enrollment was higher than women’s undergraduate enrollment every year from 1948 through 1958, with the exception of 1951, 1953, and 1954 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002).

With new and returning students contributing to increased enrollment, the stage was set for new organizations to form at MSNC. Beginning in 1948, five new national men’s organizations formed, and one local organization established, with nearly two forming each year through 1952. National organizations operated chapters on more than one campus and maintained a national headquarters. The local chapter that formed only existed at MSNC. This local chapter was able to form because it catered to a type of student not sought after by the national organizations that formed during that time. Existing records were not clear about which student group was recruited by this new local chapter; however, it is likely chapter members had found a particular group with whom they shared interests and values. Because many fraternities recruited veterans, the new local organization may have focused on men who did not serve, or it may have recruited student athletes or some other group.

The changing student body at MSNC. In 1949, MSNC hosted its first historically Black fraternal organization when Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. established a chapter on campus (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1949). This chapter was a single-letter chapter, Xi, one of the first to form nationwide (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1949). That same year, a second historically Black sorority joined MSNC when Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. came to campus. In addition, two National Pan-Hellenic Council sororities that are still present at EMU today formed in the same calendar year (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1949). After WWII, more men returned to campus through the G.I. Bill; further, different types of students enrolled in higher education. Additionally, as the public
school system continued to grow, and Black Americans moved north, demand for Black school teachers increased. This demand brought Black female students to MSNC to study to be teachers.

Although two Black sororities were present on campus, little mention of these two sororities appeared in *The Normal News* articles from 1949 through 1952. Only College Panhellenic Council (CPC) sororities and IFC fraternities were mentioned, and most of those articles involved intramural sports competitions between the fraternities. The White students who published the campus news were not interested in covering the activities of Black student organizations. According to entries in *Aurora* from this period, it is clear that the men and women in leadership positions for *The Normal News* were White. These organizations formed because Black members would not have been welcome in White fraternities and sororities on campus. Although they were technically fraternities and sororities with national affiliations, their peers apparently did not judge Black organizations worthy of news coverage or inclusion in campus activities.

A new type of men’s organization formed on campus when the first historically Black fraternity began in the form of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. in 1952. Unsurprisingly, the two historically Black sororities formed before the first historically Black fraternity—there was a demand for Black female teachers as the Detroit public school system expanded. Black men and women were not members of any of the traditionally White sororities and fraternities during these years. Photos from *Aurora* yearbooks during this period showed separate White and Black fraternities and sororities—clearly, segregation remained between races in the Greek-letter community during these years.
That same year, articles about Greek-letter life were featured to introduce freshmen to the idea of joining, but only CPC and IFC organizations were featured, and none of the historically Black organizations was mentioned. The implication of this was that the historically White fraternities and sororities were featured in order to appeal to White students; in contrast, the Black fraternities and sororities operated outside of the focus of featured student life. This also highlighted what the campus media and news reporters valued at the time. Social Greek-letter life at MSNC was not open to all.

The 1950s were another time of growth for the fraternal system at MSNC. Fraternities and sororities nationwide experienced little expansion during WWII. After WWII, however, the G.I. Bill helped send many returning veterans to college across the nation. Many local fraternities at colleges across the nation had lost members when students were called to serve. Leaders at national fraternities saw this as an opportunity to absorb local chapters in order to expand after WWII at universities across the nation, which resulted in more national control over policies and membership standards. This expansion had a dramatic influence on governance of these organizations on both a local and national level. This expansion affected MSNC fraternities, as exemplified by Phi Delta Pi, a local chapter founded as the first social fraternity at MSNC. Phi Delta Pi members petitioned a national chapter, Tau Kappa Epsilon, to absorb them (Eastern Michigan University, 1954). Tau Kappa Epsilon replaced Phi Delta Pi at MSNC entirely. Figure 22 shows a description of the national organization of Tau Kappa Epsilon as it had absorbed Phi Delta Pi, a local chapter that had been at EMU since 1892.

As other national fraternities came to campus or replaced local organizations, the types of students joining these organizations changed. The remaining local fraternities
continued to recruit a more traditional MSNC student. These students still closely reflected
students from local areas, coming from families with more modest incomes. These traditional
students were less likely to attend a more established, prestigious institution. For example,
Arm of Honor, a local fraternity formed in 1895 as only the second fraternity on campus,
continued to celebrate loyalty to the school and all it had offered their organization over time.

The original constitution states . . . that there should be a closer and more intimate
acquaintance among the royal good fellows and that the “Hammerhead” society was
created . . . to promote good fellowship and foster a spirit of life-long fellowship
among its members. Its members believe above all else in the comradeship, the
betterment of our college, and the promotion of those high ideals given to us through
the years. (Eastern Michigan University, 1949, p. 178)

The fraternity founders were really focused on the social aspect of being with their peers,
while preserving and maintaining the academic nature of the societies too.
Thus, members of local organizations such as Arm of Honor focused on traditional values and ideals as new national organizations formed for a different type of man. These organizations sought a particular type of man, one that would elevate their social status on campus. They wanted men of a “higher caliber,” not the men the local chapters targeted.
National organizations also appealed to men who had a family history with certain fraternities. Having a grandfather, father, uncle, or brother who had joined a national chapter somewhere else was a desirable legacy. Nepotism certainly came into play with these national organizations. Local chapter members would have focused on first-generation students and students who lacked this type of prestige or status.

**Meeting local students’ needs.** Two other historically Black fraternities formed during this time. When students found themselves unwelcome in the fraternal organizations already open on campus, they formed new Greek-letter organizations to qualify as “Greek.” This formation process showed the pattern of fraternities and sororities developing during this period to serve minority groups on campus. Again, each of these new organizations qualified as a social Greek-letter organization; however, members of these new fraternities had very clear divisions in membership from chapter to chapter. Each fraternity took on a particular personality. This was evident when I looked at *Aurora* yearbooks from this decade. Each fraternity and sorority reflected a certain way of dressing and shared inside jokes in the organization descriptions. Chapter members often resembled each other.

**National influence.** Just as local sorority members had learned, national organizations provided resources, structure, standards, and guidance not given to local organizations. Without such resources, local organizations found it harder to recruit and compete. Students did not perceive local chapters as having the same level of success as the national organizations. However, members of local organization may have felt pressure to conform to the national norms for recruitment guidelines, including rules about what members might look or act like. These isomorphic pressures may have led to fewer local

**New national groups formed to serve specific types of students.** Some organizations formed to include men who were likely not welcome in other fraternities on campus. These national organizations recruited only from certain religious groups, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds. During this time at MSNC, Delta Sigma Phi formed, a fraternity originally founded to include students who had been rejected from other fraternities because they did not identify as either Christian or Jewish. In 1957, Alpha Epsilon Pi, an international fraternity focused on providing positive college experiences for Jewish men, formed at MSNC, indicating the different types of students who were now attending MSNC. Alpha Epsilon Pi was the first chapter of its kind at MSNC. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., a third historically Black fraternity, also formed during this period of growth (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1957).

Sororities also experienced growth during this period, although the formation of men’s organizations certainly dominated the Greek-letter community. New varieties of organizations formed for White students, affiliated with organizations that celebrated or recognized specific religions. Meanwhile, Black students were not welcome to join fraternities on campus that had been White throughout MSNC history, and instead, had to open their own chapters. Even considering the diversity of the types of fraternities and sororities opened at MSNC, members of each individual organization were exclusive to members of all other organizations. White men and women joined White fraternities and sororities. Jewish students joined Jewish fraternities and sororities. Black students joined historically Black Greek-letter organizations. Each group did not welcome members from
other groups. Thus, any student at MSNC could be Greek, but he or she could not be a member of just any Greek-letter organization.

**Rapid growth was followed by stagnation.** Although fraternities grew significantly throughout the 1950s at MSNC, that trend did not continue into the 1960s. In 1954, 1955, and 1956, *The Normal News* featured articles highlighting the increase in enrollment. In 1955, one issue showed a headline on the front page titled “Enrollment Increases 20 Percent” (Eastern Michigan University, 1955). This enrollment increase came at the same time that MSNC changed its name to Eastern Michigan College, after the State Legislature granted the name change to accommodate the expanded education functions of the four colleges (Eastern Michigan University, 1955). During this time, the number of men was often slightly higher than the number of women enrolled. In fact, in 1952, 1955, 1957, and 1958, more men than women were enrolled (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). On July 1, 1956, MSNC became Eastern Michigan College.

**Changes on campus and the impact on membership.** Besides the name change, many other changes occurred on campus in 1956. *The Normal News* became *The Eastern Echo*, dropping the word *Normal*, just as the college had (Eastern Michigan University, 1956). Many fraternal organizations that failed during the 1960s may have been trying to build on the growth seen at the institution in the late 1950s, but they could not maintain chapters for long. The Greek-letter community had grown too large, too fast, for the type of students MSNC served at the time. For a short time, new types of students proliferated on campus. New chapters formed during that time to accommodate new types of students. After that initial group graduated, however, not enough students remained to sustain the new chapters.
Enrollment for undergraduate students at MSNC in 1955 was 3,053 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). Rosters showed 267 men in 10 fraternity chapters (Eastern Michigan University, 1955, pp. 111-120). In 1965, undergraduate enrollment had risen to 7,960 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). Rosters showed 295 fraternity men in 12 chapters (Eastern Michigan University, 1965, pp. 173-183). During the 1960s, the two fraternities for Jewish men emerged on campus (Sigma Pi and Alpha Epsilon Pi); in addition, the membership numbers in the historically Black fraternities had grown. However, by 1975, with EMU enrollment at 14,048 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002), rosters showed only 176 men in nine active fraternities on campus (Eastern Michigan University, 1975, pp. 36-67).

In addition, suddenly more men attended than ever before. In 1965, there were 3,991 men. That number climbed to 8,257 men in 1970 and then fell back to 6,876 men in 1975 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). After the initial boom in fraternity membership, some students remained interested in joining fraternities and sororities, but students had many other ways to get involved. Further, during the 1960s and 1970s, fraternities and sororities were viewed as “the Establishment.”. It was no longer “cool” to be in a conservative organization. This period occurred during and just after the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War. Certainly, some students on campus were still interested in joining, but being viewed negatively likely hurt recruitment efforts and membership numbers.

**New types of students presented a challenge to exclusionary groups.** Additionally, new types of students faced new challenges as fraternal organizations sought to recruit them. Some of these students may not have had time or money to join Greek-letter organizations. Many of these nontraditional students likely held jobs, had families, and did not place their
social circle as a top priority. Some were first generation and enrolled at EMU with no prior knowledge of fraternity or sorority life. As enrollment began to level off, not enough students were interested in joining fraternities or sororities to maintain the large number of chapters now on campus. Chapters that formed with national headquarters affiliation would have been expected to continue to increase membership.

At first, members of some fraternities were able to garner interest from a specific type of men for their chapter. However, based on the number of chapters that struggled to remain open, these groups either could not find enough of the type of men they were willing to accept, or they were too exclusive and could not maintain membership without taking different types of members. After EMC became Eastern Michigan University in 1959, only four fraternities formed in the following decade, none of which remains active at EMU today. The other fraternities that formed in the 1960s no longer exist on campus either.

**War and “the Establishment.”** The Vietnam War years brought stagnancy to fraternity expansion across the nation, much like what occurred during WWII. However, enrollment statistics were not necessarily a contributing factor at Eastern Michigan University, whose enrollment continued to grow during the Vietnam years (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). Students could avoid the draft during the Vietnam War if they could show they were enrolled and making satisfactory progress in a field of study. Even for students who remained on campus, the campus climate centered on student war protests. Many student groups organized antiwar protests. One of those groups was the EMU Student Mobilization Committee (SMC), which planned activities in concert with national protests (Eastern Michigan University, 1970). Students and staff put together “Mother Courage and her Children: A Multimedia Anti-War Explosion” performance at Quirk in April 1969
(Eastern Michigan University, 1970). Student demonstrators stopped Marine and Navy recruiters who recruited on campus during this period (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1970). In short, students engaged in social protests grappled with issues larger than just fraternity and sorority life.

Fraternal organization leaders faced questions about purpose and relevancy at a national level, which may have affected recruitment on campuses as well as relationships between campus administrators and fraternity and sorority executives. In addition, students could choose among many other student organizations available on campus that offered ways to be involved. These other student organizations would have been much less selective than national fraternities and sororities on campus. In addition, they may have been more attractive to students who did not find Greek-letter life an attractive option or who were not welcome in Greek-letter organizations.

Other students negatively viewed Greek-letter life as “the Establishment.” Leaders of many organizations originally formed to serve specific groups of men or women may have quickly realized they would run out of students to recruit if they were not willing to be flexible on membership requirements. Inflexibility meant they would not be able to remain open. The days of fraternities and sororities offering unique social experiences had passed. With an antiestablishment mentality emerging on campuses across the nation during the Vietnam War, students were less interested in subscribing to social norms that had been perpetuated on campus through organizations like fraternities and sororities. New norms and values were developing. Without peers, faculty, staff, and administrators giving legitimacy to fraternal organizations by recognizing them as prestigious, Greek-letter organizations lost
some of their luster, causing students to perceive them as unnecessary social transactions designed simply to gain prestige.

“**It’s not cool to be Greek.**” Protests occurred nationwide during these years, and many protests targeted fraternities and sororities, which many viewed as elitist and conservative. During the 1960s, three sororities attempted to expand to EMU; none remains today. These sororities included a Jewish sorority, Alpha Epsilon Phi, as well as Alpha Omicron Pi and Zeta Tau Alpha, all of which were national sororities. From 1959 to 1969, enrollment at EMU had climbed from 4,769 to 18,809 students; however, only a handful of Greek-letter organizations had opened, and few were able to maintain chapters past this decade (Eastern Michigan University, 2002).

Just because more students attended EMU did not mean more students would join the existing Greek-letter organizations on campus. The new type of student at EMU may not have been interested in joining mostly White, conservative Greek-letter organizations. The simple fact was that the student body was no longer a homogeneous group of White students searching for social prestige and literary discussions. Students were coming from all over the country, with different racial, religious, and political affiliations, and many had experienced life during the Vietnam War. Students’ experiences prior to coming to EMU had evolved. Thus, enrollment at fraternities and sororities decreased because of their exclusive nature. Fraternities and sororities members needed to figure out how to recruit and who to recruit to maintain prestige without being elitist and exclusive.

**Civil rights movement.** Many articles appeared in *The Eastern Echo* in 1962. The authors questioned whether fraternal organizations at EMU discriminated against Black students (Eastern Michigan University, 1962). In 1963 and 1964, a series of articles appeared
in *The Eastern Echo* criticizing fraternity life at EMU overall, calling it “elite and exclusive.” The writer of one article described the perks of fraternity membership: “A fellow misses much, if not practically all activity, such as dances, parties, intramurals, if he does not belong to one of the too-many fraternities” (Connolly, 1964). He explained how a fraternity member might have a very different experience, compared to the experience of an unaffiliated student. “In a fraternity one gets a one-sided, prejudiced, highly slanted view of campus” (Connolly, 1964). Connolly concluded, “Fraternities not only permit, but promote as well, the feeling of private enterprise on this campus.”

Discussions of race relations on campus and within the community appeared throughout *The Eastern Echo*. Student council members on campus blamed the housing staff for being discriminatory; a shortage of housing on campus was reported as well. At that time, it was still more socially acceptable for women to live on campus and for men to live off campus. This could be one reason the fraternity growth in the 1960s did not last into the 1970s. Further, some IFC-affiliated fraternities announced plans to host “slave” events for fundraising. In fact, the yearbook entry for Phi Sigma Epsilon in 1965 was “Phi Sigma Epsilon Sponsors Its Annual Slave Sale” (Eastern Michigan University, 1965). These events featured students bidding on fraternity men to be their “slave” for a defined time. The fact that the school newspaper published these ads in a campus newspaper that also served Black students clearly shows that discrimination was an acceptable practice on campus. Clearly, White editors and reporters at the newspaper controlled the paper’s content. Through the late 1960s, many articles in *The Eastern Echo* focused on Vietnam and civil rights protests. Violent protests occurred on campus after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed. In 1967
and 1968, sororities and fraternities were called out in the paper for discriminatory practices a number of times.

Based on photographs of members from this period, as well as on some of the messaging in the EMU newspaper, I found two distinct groups on campus: Black fraternities and sororities and White fraternities and sororities. Considering national organizations’ membership policies were exclusive in nature, I can assume these members were privileged White men and women who likely identified as Christians. In the 1975 *Aurora*, for example, nine fraternities were pictured. Only two fraternities included Black members, both founded for Black members (Eastern Michigan University, 1975). Over 50 pages of the 1975 yearbook were dedicated to Greek-letter life, representing a small portion of the student body. In fact, in 1975, rosters showed only 176 fraternity men, out of 14,048 students on campus (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1975). Fraternity men made up only 1.2% of the student population in 1975, in contrast to the 3% they represented in 1965 (Eastern Michigan University, 1965, pp. 173-183).

On campus, protests and unrest about race relations and civil rights happened regularly. Meanwhile, the Greek-letter system at EMU continued to operate and reflect systemic discriminatory practices by keeping distinct racial divisions in membership. This discriminatory behavior was not only observed in the Greek-letter system at EMU. Mitchell Chang conducted a study of over 300,000 students from 365 four-year colleges across the country and suggested historically, “White students find shelter in these organizations during times of racial tension or use these clubs to perpetuate racial intolerance” (as cited in Chen, 2009, p. 83). *The Eastern Echo* editors published articles during this time using the word *ghetto* to describe a local elementary school. In 1969 and 1970, almost no coverage appeared
on Greek-letter organizations in *Eastern Echo* articles other than one opinion article whose author questioned the relevance of fraternal organizations on campus.

**Black Greek-letter organizations at EMU during the civil rights movement.**

Although the NPHC fraternities on campus affiliated with the IFC, and the NPHC sororities affiliated with the CPC, the affiliations did not signify unification of the Greek-letter organizations. In fact, this period was tumultuous for all Black students. During the 1960, 1961, and 1962 school years at EMU, all-White homecoming courts were featured in *The Eastern Echo*, along with all-White candidates for the Men’s Union, except for one Black candidate for president (Eastern Michigan University, 1960, 1961, 1962). In addition, even though a Black woman served as president of the College Panhellenic Council in 1958, her presidency could not be attributed to inclusion—the leadership of the Council at the time worked on a rotation of chapters present in the Council (Eastern Michigan University, 1958).

In 1963 and 1964, a series of “letters to the editor” appeared in *The Eastern Echo* criticizing fraternity life at EMU. However, one particular writer responded by targeting Black fraternities on campus, calling them “exclusive.” “At a time when national Greek organizations are attempting to tear down racial barriers, black students are forming their own segregated societies—requirement for membership . . . black skin” (Eastern Michigan University, 1962). It would have been a stretch to assume that national Greek-letter organizations were trying to tear down racial barriers. Many national organizations still had governing documents allowing no Black students into their organizations. Even at organizations with no stated racist membership policies, action was still being taken against chapters whose members were trying to be inclusive.
Student voices. A chapter of Zeta Tau Alpha sorority, an NPC-affiliated sorority at Albion College, was put on probation by its national office for “pledging irregularities” when members attempted to offer membership to a Black woman (Wainright, 1967). Wainright explained, “Many of the sororities here at Eastern will someday have to decide between social growth or intellectual stagnation.” Wainright noted that the women at EMU “can take a lesson from these girls.” Wainright was indicating that some of the women at EMU would need to make choices, like the women at Albion, and think about how they were selecting women to fit a particular mold, versus selecting women to further the goals of their sorority. “The chapter pledged a girl they felt had the qualifications to further the goals of their sorority. They did not see her as a boulder in the stream of tradition but as a light to progress and human understanding” (Wainright, 1967).

In another letter to the editor, a Black student at EMU wrote, “Let us examine history. History shows that when blacks stopped trying to integrate, but separate, whites decided to let us into their institutions.” The writer was indicating that exclusion was acceptable when initiated by Whites, for Whites, but that as soon as Black students attempted to organize, this action was seen as exclusionary as well. “They wanted to keep an eye and hand in what we were doing: separation meant exclusion for whites” (Eastern Michigan University, 1962). The writer stated, “A man is born free. So now you say we’re free to integrate, he should also be free to separate such as in the case of the black pep club, Black Student Association, Chicano Student Association, black fraternities, and sororities.” The writer even compared the situation to that of the Ku Klux Klan (Eastern Michigan University, 1962). Reviewing EMU Aurora yearbooks from 1962 showed that membership in White fraternities and sororities was still exclusively White, and Black fraternities and sororities were separate.
Despite the fact that they were members of the same umbrella groups for Greeks on campus, Black and White students and Black and White Greeks continued to be at odds with each another, even though many similarities existed between their organizations and societies.

**Social issues encouraged organization of like-minded men and women.** Another fraternity for Black men formed at EMU in 1965, but this chapter never affiliated with the NPHC nationally (Eastern Michigan University, 1965). This chapter, Phi Eta Psi Fraternity, Inc., was founded nationally in Flint, Michigan, in 1965 (Eastern Michigan University, 1965). The Delta chapter formed at EMU during this time. Minutes from a meeting of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. chapter indicated the desire to work with Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. to discuss “Negro Greek Civil Rights” (Eastern Michigan University, 1965). Members formed a committee of four men from their chapter to begin this process (Eastern Michigan University, 1965). The impetus for this meeting stemmed from the racial tensions on campus and the desire to want the Black Greek-letter organizations to self-govern away from the two councils on campus that were nearly all White at the time. In 1968, racial tension was the subject of almost every cover of *The Eastern Echo*. In March 1968, a headline appeared in *The Eastern Echo*, criticizing a newsletter called “Black Perspective.” The White writer explained, “The newsletter was published ‘because official University publications cannot cater to the special needs of Black students.’” The writer questioned the purpose of the publication, asking, “So then, should everyone have his own newsletter, or should each cultural unit publish? Isn’t that a kind of racism? Isn’t that a kind of prejudice?” (Eastern Michigan University, 1968). There were white students on campus that were aware of the racial tensions, but could not understand the experience of their Black peers.
**National protests significantly affected campus happenings.** In April 1968, following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., classes on campus were cancelled (Eastern Michigan University, 1968). An April 9, 1968, *Eastern Echo* headline was “Days of Tribute . . . And Violent Disturbances.” Another headline for the same issue was “EMU Peaceful Tribute Becomes Violent on Campus.” Tensions remained in the Greek-letter community as well. One article in *The Eastern Echo* covered an intramural basketball game that turned violent:

> When Kappa Alpha Psi, a Black fraternity, and the sigma Tau Gamma’s, a white fraternity, got together to play a basketball game last Thursday, no one anticipated in would end in a fist fight, resulting in the cancellation of the finals of intramural basketball this year. (Eastern Michigan University, Clipping, 1968)

The game included multiple interruptions to address violence on the court. Over 100 fans stormed the floor. Eventually, the assistant to the dean of students attended a basketball game to meet with the students. When asked if there were any racial overtones to the fight, the assistant to the dean of students replied, “No, it was just a basketball game. The playing got rough and it was a hotly contested game between two fraternities nothing more” (Eastern Michigan University, Clipping). The dean of students did not want to acknowledge publicly the deep racial divide between Black and White Greek-letter organizations on campus; thus, he simply dismissed it as a competitive event. After the game, the brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi felt differently. At their next chapter meeting, they decided to raise a protest over the events at the basketball game. “Bro. Rudolf Hendrix moved that if we lose the basketball protest, we will withdraw from league. Motion carried” (Eastern Michigan University, p. 103).
Notwithstanding how the brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi may have interpreted the event, Black students on campus demonstrated often. In February 1969, they presented the administration with a document called “Black Student Demands.” They asked for more resources for minority students and increased enrollment of Black citizens who lived locally. A major protest took place on February 20, 1969, when protestors attempted to occupy Pierce Hall (Eastern Michigan University, 1969). Police and security were present at the demonstration (Eastern Michigan University, 1969).

**Growth of Black Greek-letter organizations (BGLOs) following the civil rights movement.** After the 1960s, no significant growth occurred for historically White fraternal organizations; however, there was immediate growth at EMU of National Pan-Hellenic Council fraternities and sororities. Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. opened chapters at EMU in 1970, 1972, and 1973, respectively (Eastern Michigan University, *Aurora*, 1970, 1972, and 1973). These chapters were part of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) and were historically Black organizations. Because IFC and CPC organizations did not offer membership to Black students, Black students seeking to join fraternities or sororities had to affiliate with an NPHC group. Thus, the exclusive nature of the IFC and CPC helped grow membership numbers of NPHC groups.

**Black Greek-letter organizations at EMU continued to grow at EMU.** Although EMU may have hosted NPHC organizations on campus earlier than did some other institutions, its Greek-letter system consisted of predominantly White and predominantly Black organizations. EMU organized a “Race Symposium” in the late 1960s. A writer for *The Eastern Echo* explained the symposium: “Specifically the problems of racism and ‘Black
America’ will be explored to generate an understanding of both the problems and the possible solutions or actions which are being proposed by the various segments of our society” (Eastern Michigan University, 1968). Following the civil rights movement, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., another NPHC-affiliated sorority, formed at EMU in 1970. Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. arrived in 1972 and 1973, respectively (Eastern Michigan University, Aurora, 1972-1973). At this point, eight of the nine national NPHC-affiliated organizations existed at EMU. However, no governing council emerged for NPHC organizations outside of CPC and IFC for over a decade.

The 1980s brought more conversation about racial tensions on campus, and some concerned Greek-letter organizations. In 1985, a reporter for The Eastern Echo described a meeting taken with the goal of uniting the Greek-letter organizations. “Omega Psi Phi President Chris Houston said he was disappointed that more white fraternities and sororities did not come to the antiapartheid awareness week events that his fraternity supported” (Eastern Michigan University, 1985). The rest of the meeting seemed to focus on issues involving communication, membership involvement, and alcohol (Eastern Michigan University, 1985). Only a year later, Black Greek-letter leaders asked for a seat on the student senate. The PRESS club, a humanitarian interest group on campus, asked for a seat for Black Greeks on the student senate by 1986, as well as the creation of a Dean of minority affairs (Eastern Michigan University, 1986).

**Early formation of the Black Greek Council.** That same year, Black Greek leaders formed the Black Greek Council, the first governing body on campus for black Greek-letter organizations. In 1990, an author for The Eastern Echo described the reasons for the formation of the Black Greek Council: “Fraternities and sororities have long been a part of
campus tradition nationwide. However, many minorities feel left out because of diverse
cultural and historical differences existing in the membership of the typical Greek system”
(Eastern Michigan University, 1990).

Many students in the traditionally White Greek Council at EMU argued this was the
wrong move for the Black Greeks on campus, even though Greek Council members had not
allowed Black students to join traditionally White organizations. In fact, Greek Council
members were quick to voice their frustration with Black fraternities and sororities while
trying to force the Black Greek organizations to join a council that was never meant to serve
them. “The top agenda this year is to bring the black Greeks back into the traditional Greek
council” (Eastern Michigan University, 1985). By including Black Greek students in the
Council, the IFC and CPC fraternities and sororities could say publicly they were being
inclusive. However, simply allowing Black Greek organizations to affiliate with a council
Black students had not established was still an act of exclusion.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) developed the concept of cultural reproduction to
illuminate such situations. Their work focused on social class and education class, examining
the power held by the dominant class. The tension between the White fraternities and
sororities and the Black fraternities and sororities continued to exist into the 1990s because of
cultural reproduction. The members of the White organizations on campus held the power.
They had existing governing councils, as well as privilege. The Whites controlled the
narrative in the newspaper and the policies for Greeks on campuses. In addition, they largely
controlled the decision about whether to give formal recognition to the Black Greek Council.

When the Black Greek Council formed in 1990, the University did not officially
recognize it. The Board of Regents had to approve a council for it to gain official recognition,
which allowed it to self-govern. The Board of Regents had not granted official recognition to the Black Greek Council. The lack of recognition can be attributed to the failure of the Board to acknowledge the underlying problems existing on campus. The lack of recognition for the Black Greek Council forced them to choose between affiliating with an all-White council or moving forward without official recognition. Thus, the Black Greek Council was set up to fail by its peers and by the administration. At the time, the Board of Regents recognized the IFC and CPC (both part of the larger Greek Council), allowing them to be recognized officially as student organizations on campus. Although students in the Black Greek Council realized recognition was important, they formed the Council when they felt that members of the larger Greek Council simply would not meet the needs of Black Greeks on campus.

**Different organizational purposes shaped tensions between EMU Greeks.**

Traditional Black Greek-letter organizations formed around purposes different from the purposes that prompted many traditionally White social fraternities and sororities to form. For example, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. was founded at Cornell University and “initially served as a study and support group for minority students who faced racial prejudice, both educationally and socially, at Cornell” (Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., 2016). Additionally, throughout history, Alpha Phi Alpha “also recognized the need to help correct the educational, economic, political, and social injustices faced by African Americans” (Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., 2016). The first traditional Black Greek-letter sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., was founded because one of the founders, Ethel Hedgeman, “worked to honor what she called ‘an everlasting debt to raise them (Negroes) up and to make them better’” (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., 2016). Establishing organizations to help lift up a minority group and address issues of racial injustice was a
different founding purpose than the purpose motivating the founders of early White fraternities and sororities, which formed because students felt they needed social connections and access to material the institution did not provide.

James Brown, a student at EMU and President of the Black Greek Council in 1990, described the difference between predominantly White Greek-letter organizations and historically Black Greek-letter organizations. “Black greeks perform specific national programs targeted for the black community.” Brown further explained this was in contrast to “white organizations who function basically as social organizations” (Eastern Michigan University, 1990). However, it is important to note that by the 1990s, the many types of organizations at EMU actually had quite a bit in common. They were organized in similar ways, served their communities through philanthropy and service, and included only students who maintained a minimum GPA. White and Black students both received social experiences through membership in Greek-letter organization; however, White fraternities and sororities were still viewed and treated as if they mattered more.

White students who were already in the privileged position of being able to attend higher education institutions formed White fraternities and sororities. These students reproduced the cultural norms of other White Greek organizations on campus. Black students could not even enroll at higher education institutions when White fraternities and sororities were forming. Members of White fraternities and sororities were not working to give higher education access to students who did not have that privilege; rather, they were seeking a place to connect outside of the classroom. In contrast, students who formed organizations such as Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. recognized
their position of privilege and founded their groups to help other disenfranchised populations gain the rights and access they had received.

The IFC and CPC councils did not offer the same experience or act toward the same purpose offered by many of the Black Greek-letter organizations. By the late 1990s, an official governing council for the NPHC-affiliated organizations was formed by students, approved by the Board of Regents, and recognized by the University. Today, the National Pan-Hellenic Council on campus is the governing body for nationally NPHC-affiliated organizations that have chapters at EMU. In 1998, the ninth and final NPHC-affiliated chapter, Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., arrived.

**The 1970s and 1980s brought nontraditional fraternities and sororities.** Some students sought social affiliation with other students like them, and they were not attracted to many of the traditional Greek-letter organizations. They found these organizations unattractive because they were exclusive, and in many cases, these students could not join. These students would not have been welcome in the existing Greek-letter organizations, and the Greek-letter members would not have found these nontraditional students worthwhile in terms of contributing social prestige. Nontraditional students decided to create their own organizations that would be the converse of the traditional fraternity and sorority chapters on campus.

**Anti-Greeks.** One chapter, called Kappa Beaver Sigma, formed in 1970 as the antisorority (Eastern Michigan University, 1970). Kappa Beaver Sigma had no membership requirements, dues, or responsibilities (Eastern Michigan University, 1970), in stark contrast to traditional Greek organizations with expensive dues, a strict social calendar, and exclusive membership policies. A similar type of fraternity, Phi Gamma Worm, formed in 1976 with
similar lack of requirements (Eastern Michigan University, 1975). “Since our theme is ‘Don’t get too organized,’ people are not afraid to join us. They’re not worried about responsibility to our organization” (Eastern Michigan University, 1975). These anti-Greek groups formed, but so did other groups of students who could not access the Greek-letter system in traditional ways.

**Alternative route to becoming Greek.** Another local sorority chapter, the Order of Diana, formed in 1970. These women found an alternative route into the traditional Greek-letter system. This chapter comprised women who called themselves supporters of one of the fraternities on campus, Tau Kappa Epsilon (Eastern Michigan University, 1987). I believe these women wanted to create an organization that would allow them to spend more time with these specific fraternity men. Many of them seemed to be girlfriends of the Tau Kappa Epsilon men; they had formed their own bonds and friendships. They may have also been either uninterested or unwelcome in many of the already existing sororities on campus. While fraternities struggled to rush new members, these groups of women formed to support the efforts of the fraternity and ended up eventually taking on Greek-letters themselves in 1988, renaming their organization Zeta Tau Omega. They had found an alternative route into joining a social Greek-letter organization on campus.

**Enrollment trends affected Greek community size.** Fraternal membership numbers were slow to recover after the Vietnam War; however, national organizations began to grow again when two national sororities and three national fraternities formed in the 1980s. This growth coincided with another period of rising enrollment. From 1979 to 1989, enrollment grew by over 4,000 undergraduates (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). Leaders at these two national sororities may have seen an opportunity at EMU and petitioned to come to
campus to capitalize on that growth. However, only two of the chapters that formed through the 1970s and 1980s could maintain chapters past 2000.

In terms of fraternity and sorority life, the 1980s brought changes in the purposes of these organizations. The late 1970s and early 1980s Aurora entries showed fraternity and sorority members drinking, partying, and socializing. The focus seemed to be on drinking and hosting off-campus parties. The students coming to EMU during this time may not have been particularly interested in the traditional, national style Greek-letter experience that these chapters offered, but they did not have many options when it came to joining local organizations. In 1982, Sigma Nu Phi sorority celebrated its 85th anniversary as a local organization at EMU (Eastern Michigan University, 1982). Sigma Nu Phi was still able to compete against the national chapters forming, but its members definitely felt the competition. “Sigma Nu Phi’s peak period was during the 1960s. We had 60 members and pledge classes of 20. Now, we’re in a lower period” (Scharich, 1982).

Students coming to EMU were not like the students attending nearby University of Michigan. While University of Michigan attracted students from all over the country with more money and Greek-letter affiliations through long lines of family history, students from EMU came from local communities and lower socioeconomic areas. They likely were not aware of Greek-letter life existing at EMU until arriving on campus. If they did find Greek-letter life at EMU, they would have found it exclusive and thus may not have felt welcome in these organizations. EMU students were likely to work part-time and full-time jobs and have many other commitments outside of going to class and pursuing a social circle.

National trends affected the EMU Greek-letter community. Aside from reporting statistics about fraternal life on campus during the 1970s, campus reporters wrote about many
other things that may have influenced the Greek-letter system and its ability to recruit new members or maintain new chapters.

Until the mid-1960s, fraternities and sororities were as much a part of any campus’ life as were textbooks, professors, and beer. Frat houses filled and groups could be selective about pledges, as many students tried to gain frat membership. However, with the advent of the Vietnam War, campus militancy and students’ rights movements, fraternities and sororities went the way of raccoon coats and school-color beanies. (Morrison, n.d.)

Enrollment was 19,965 in 1970 but actually dropped throughout the decade to only 18,883 by 1979 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). With EMU being so near in proximity to Detroit, the decline in enrollment reflected the struggle of the auto industry during this time. The country’s automobile industry began to compete with foreign automotive makers and increasing oil prices. The economy was struggling nationwide, but the auto industry took a major hit, especially in Michigan.

**Legislation affected EMU.** With most of EMU’s students coming from southeastern Michigan, many families struggled to send their children to college. Additionally, with so many Black teachers losing their jobs during desegregation, fewer Black students attended EMU to become teachers. In 1954, when the Supreme Court presented *Brown v. Board of Education*, approximately 82,000 Black teachers taught in segregated public school across the country. Only 10 years later, over 38,000 Black teachers had lost their jobs. Finally, between 1975 and 1989, another 21,515 Black teachers lost their jobs (Hudson & Holmes, 1994). The loss of employment for Black American educators may have been an unintended
consequence of desegregation after the *Brown v. Board* decision, but the consequence affected Black teachers across the country.

MSNC was founded with the intention of educating educators. The number of Black students majoring in teacher education decreased 66% (Hudson & Holmes, 1994). As EMU enrollment declined, so did participation in the Greek-letter community. In a lagging economy, students may have been less willing to spend money on membership dues and other costs. Many students were sons and daughters of working-class parents, who had instilled different values regarding how to spend money.

The 1960’s were years of protest and reform. Young Americans demonstrated against the Vietnam War. African Americans demonstrated for equal rights. Women demonstrated for equal treatment. For many, society’s hero was the person who helped others. For many in the 1980’s, society’s hero was the person who helped himself. Success seemed to be measured only by how much money a person could make. (Kleinfeldt & Freeman, 2007)

The priority was more likely on getting an education to make money versus participating in a social organization that might bring some social status to an individual or family.

**Greek-letter life was not a focus on campus.** The only coverage Greek-letter organizations received in *The Eastern Echo* reflected what members were submitting to the paper. Most of these announcements involved parties with free beer for attendees. There was even a section of *The Eastern Echo* called “What’s Happening,” featuring fraternity parties with “suds and ladies” (Eastern Michigan University, 1975). These features about Greek-letter life appeared in stark contrast to the tea parties and literary debates featured during the early years of these organizations. No longer were organizations looking for the academic
elite. Previously, organizations had sought individuals who would bring social prestige to the organization. Individuals who were looking for the same thing from an organization sought a matching group of men or women. This type of transaction was mutually beneficial to the organization and the individual.

When students could have alcohol in dorms, fraternities offered free beer to bring people to their events. With enrollment dropping, fraternities may have struggled to fill housing requirements and to attract men who could now live in coeducational housing on campus. In newspaper ads throughout the late 1970s, fraternities announced many “all-campus parties.” This trend continued into the 1980s, a seemingly normal occurrence on campus. Students visited fraternity houses to drink and have a good time off campus. Although advertised as parties for all students on campus, these parties were really intended to attract students to the fraternity and sorority houses, especially those who may not have otherwise been interested in Greek-letter life or even known that it existed on campus before enrolling. The fraternities members sought students who wanted to party, who had social status already, and who could afford the extra money for dues, rent, and alcohol. Figure 23 shows a yearbook photo introducing the Greek Life section of the yearbook in 1975.
Figure 23. Yearbook photo from 1975 Aurora introducing Greek Life section of yearbook. Source: “Greek Rush Week: Cans, kegs, and kidnaps” [Photograph], 1975, Aurora, EMU Archives, Ypsilanti, MI.

Students were not coming to EMU to be Greek. Once they arrived, Greek-letter life members might be able to convince them joining would set them apart from other students at EMU, but convincing students required effort. When Greek-letter organizations struggled for membership, members had to get creative. The purposes of the Greek-letter organizations on campus had shifted dramatically over time.

The fraternity system at Eastern Michigan is out of date. It is moving cross-purposes to those of the University if represents. While Eastern has moved from a normal school involved solely in teacher education to one of the state’s Universities offering
a broad-ranging curriculum to a diverse student body, the fraternity purposes remain narrowly social or completely unknown. (DeLoach, 1983)

Chapter leaders still offered something students could not find in a classroom, but now the experience focused on access to alcohol and the best parties, in addition to elevated social status. Chapter members did not offer literary debates or access to readings and political debates that students could not find elsewhere. Now, they offered admittance to alcohol-fueled parties with a select group of men and women, the brand-name recognition of national Greek-letter organizations, access to intramural sports leagues just for Greeks, and the ability to adopt the standards that Greek organizations claimed regarding GPA, community service work, and philanthropy. New purposes meant new recruitment tactics to recruit students who would be attracted to the EMU Greek-letter organizations.

**Slow organizational growth reflected national liability concerns.** In comparison to many decades of growth of the fraternal system at EMU, growth slowed considerably in the 1980s and 1990s. Of the groups that formed during that 20-year window, only four remain today. Omega Mu Epsilon, a local coed Greek-letter society, formed in 1981 but did not last through the decade. Three national fraternities formed throughout the 1980s as well. Articles appear in *The Eastern Echo* from 1981 to 1985 challenging the national fraternity and sorority system. Many students, faculty, and staff recognized a nationwide problem with fraternities and sororities, particularly in the areas of alcohol abuse and hazing (Eastern Michigan University, 1981, 1983, 1985). “Some incidents of hazing have been reported to the Dean of Students Bette White. No disciplinary action has been taken because ‘It’s very difficult to do anything about it because they (hazing incidents) aren’t reported in an official way,’ she said” (Eastern Michigan University, 1981). When EMU students, faculty, and staff
saw some of those issues occurring on campus, they realized the same problems were occurring nationally. Popular movies and television programs showed similar events. One article featured the EMU Student Senate requesting more support from the University for the EMU Greek-letter system. “A healthy Greek system has been proved to be a key factor in retention as well as alumni support for a University” (Eastern Michigan University, 1985).

**New diversity in the student body did not mean diversity in the Greek-letter community.** EMU was changing during this time as well. Although students still enrolled at EMU to study teaching, it had been decades since EMC became EMU. That name change meant something. EMU added new departments and programs of study, bringing larger numbers of students to EMU to study new majors. For example, the College of Business at EMU was established in 1964, followed by the College of Health and Human Services in 1975. The College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Education both continued to add new areas of study as well. These additions meant new types of students would continue to come to EMU to pursue these programs of study.

During this time of growth and change for EMU, fraternities and sororities struggled to find ways to recruit new students and keep up with the growth of EMU. IFC-affiliated fraternities continued to compete with each other by putting ads in the paper inviting people to off-campus parties, even offering free beer for “pre-finals” and “post-finals” parties. The purposes of these fraternities had changed. Instead of searching for students who were academically elite or well-known athletes or who simply had more money, fraternities had to recruit the socially elite, regardless of what else might come along with that. In addition, fraternity members needed to search for men who were interested in and had time to commit to an organization that would only provide them with social opportunities and access to
parties. Although this new type of fraternity man might help elevate the social status of the organization, they still resembled early members of fraternal organizations. Composite photos in *Aurora* yearbooks from this decade showed that members of IFC fraternities still comprised White men searching for men just like themselves. In contrast, NPHC organizations were rarely mentioned in campus news, but when they were, the articles focused on week-long events or service projects. However, few Black students contributed to *The Eastern Echo* and other campus news sources. This was confirmed when I viewed *Aurora* photos from campus organizations operating in the 1980s. *The Eastern Echo* staff members were all White, and often, all male (Eastern Michigan University, 1980, pp. 48-49). Figure 24 shows an article from *The Eastern Echo* detailing one example of how CPC and IFC often worked together, but there is no mention of the NPHC in any part of the article. Figure 25 shows a page from the Aurora with only white members being featured in the Greek Life section of the yearbook.
Figure 24. News clipping showing the campus newspaper only featuring news about the CPC and IFC.

Source: “Greek groups unite in two councils” [Clipping], 1983, The Eastern Echo, 82(82).
Figure 25. *Aurora* yearbook pictures from 1975.

*Source: Aurora* [Photographs]. *Aurora*, 1975, EMU Archives, Ypsilanti, MI.
On a campus that was becoming more diverse each year, the makeup of the Greek-letter community’s membership had not changed much in its 100 years of existence. I confirmed this assertion by viewing Aurora photos from the 1970s and 1980s, as well as photos in The Normal News and The Eastern Echo. IFC- and CPC-affiliated organizations remained White. NPHC organizations remained Black. When the newspaper or Aurora featured stories about the Greek-letter community, the stories were about the IFC and CPC doing things together and did not involve the NPHC.

**Two separate communities.** It was almost as if two entirely separate Greek-letter communities have existed at EMU throughout history. Additionally, as I considered the types of organizations that have stayed open or have closed over the years, it seemed obvious that the lack of diversity in Greek-letter organizations at EMU had not changed much over time. When a local fraternity for Black men attempted to open, it closed shortly afterward. When a coed fraternity opened, it also closed shortly thereafter. When independent anti-fraternity and antisorority groups opened, they closed almost immediately. When new local groups formed in the second half of the century, they also could not sustain themselves. Thus, the Greek-letter community at EMU has remained largely insulated from the growing diversity of the student body.

**Housing issues created unique membership opportunities for Greeks.** From 1986 to 1988, overcrowding of dormitories on campus was a major issue featured in nearly every Eastern Echo issue (Eastern Michigan University, 1986, 1987, 1988). A committee from outside of EMU was formed to investigate off-campus housing needs. Overcrowding benefited fraternities and sororities. Members of White Greek-letter organizations had access to regular off-campus housing. The administration could not have closed many Greek-letter
organizations while simultaneously dealing with a campus housing shortage. This shortage helped Greek-letter organizations maintain membership numbers following a period when they had been struggling to recruit members. The housing shortage also meant that members of Greek-letter organizations needed to be willing to offer membership to students they may not have otherwise considered. If students needed places to live, and Greek-letter organizations needed more members to pay the bills and keep the organizations open, members were more likely to compromise on membership requirements. In addition, many fraternities and sororities had liability concerns regarding alcohol, large off-campus parties, and hazing that seemed to be largely ignored.

**New types of fraternal orders.** Across the country, expansion had not been successful for national organizations for most of the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s, new Greek-letter organizations formed at EMU but some were not able to survive past the decade in which they formed. For example, in 1990, Chi Phi Kappa, a local sorority, formed and closed shortly afterward (Eastern Michigan University, 1990). In contrast, Sigma Delta Tau sorority formed in 1992 and remains open today (Eastern Michigan University, 1992). In 1993, Alpha Chi Rho fraternity opened a colony but closed shortly afterward (Eastern Michigan University, 1993). EMU was no longer a place where local Greek-letter organizations could thrive. So many new types of students with so many interests had enrolled, and they had plenty of other options for social engagement on campus.

In addition, local organizations did not have the prestige in the community and on campus that they once had. In fact, local fraternities and sororities were unknown beyond the borders of EMU’s campus. These local organizations had prided themselves on their institutional loyalty; however, they were loyal to an institution that no longer existed in its
original form. They were relics of the past, left over from MSNC. Local organizations did not attract students the way a recognizable Greek-letter organization name might. Further, local organizations did not have the same resources or accountability measures that a national organization had. Instead, local members kept the same behaviors they had always had—recruiting students not welcomed or attracted to the traditional, national fraternity or sorority.

Meanwhile, national organizations coming to EMU continued their practices and traditions, and some of them suffered for it. Even if local membership standards and policies had changed to be inclusive, many national organizations were not quick to educate their members on inclusivity, and in many cases, discouraged it, presenting an interesting conflict. Students did not view local Greek-letter organizations as legitimate or socially prestigious. National Greek-letter organizations refused to be flexible on membership standards and often struggled to find their niche at EMU. As a result, members of chapters that were national or local in nature found it difficult to keep Greek-letter organizations open at EMU. The Greek-letter community at EMU lacked a clear identity.

In 1994, three new types of organizations emerged on campus. Iota Beta Psi Sorority Inc. opened locally as a Latina sorority, affiliated with a national group (Eastern Michigan University, 1994). Although it stayed open only two years, Iota Beta Psi Sorority Inc., along with the national group, Sigma Lambda Gamma Multicultural Sorority, were the first two multicultural organizations to open chapters at EMU. Sigma Lambda Gamma struggled to stay open past the 1990s as well. The attempt to form these two organizations at this time was consistent with national trends for Latino students in U.S. higher education. Latino student enrollment had increased steadily since the mid-1980s. In addition, the formation of these two organizations indicated an unfulfilled need or a desire. Latino students at EMU did
not experience a welcoming environment in the historically White fraternities and sororities on campus. Similarly, Latinos would not have necessarily been welcome to join an NPHC group either.

LGBT Greeks organized at EMU. In 1994, Delta Lambda Phi established a chapter at EMU (Eastern Michigan University, 1994). This fraternity’s national organization was formed as a progressive fraternity for gay men (Delta Lambda Phi, n.d.). They had a house on campus in the 1990s and partnered with University of Michigan to maintain membership (Eastern Michigan University, 1994). The EMU chapter was able to form because the chapter at University of Michigan already existed. Students at EMU who identified as gay were not likely welcome to be openly gay in existing organizations on campus. EMU students saw that the chapter at University of Michigan had formed and wanted to offer the same experience for gay men at EMU (Eastern Michigan University, 1994). It was unclear if the group petitioned the IFC for official recognition; the group closed before 2000.

Collaborating with the University of Michigan chapter created a unique challenge for the Delta Lambda Phi men at EMU. The only thing members of Delta Lambda Phi at EMU and University of Michigan shared was their sexual identity. The men at these respective institutions had access to vastly different resources and experiences. The Greek-letter communities at EMU and at University of Michigan shared few commonalities. The fact that the members of Delta Lambda Phi identified as gay did not necessarily mean they shared the same struggles and experiences. Being a member also meant that students were publicly recognizable as gay men, which made recruiting an even greater challenge for Delta Lambda Phi.
In 1996, Delta Tau Delta fraternity formed, and Kappa Sigma fraternity established a colony, which never gained full membership as a fraternity (Eastern Michigan University, 1996). Only Delta Tau Delta and Sigma Delta Tau have fully established chapters at EMU today (Eastern Michigan University, 2017). These two organizations have operated since their establishment in the 1990s. In 1998, Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. formed the final NPHC group at EMU (Eastern Michigan University, 1998); the chapter also remains open today.

**Changing student body and the impact on the EMU Greek-letter community.**

Correspondence between EMU administrators and leaders at national fraternity and sorority headquarters showed that EMU administrators were open to the formation of new Greek-letter chapters. As described, many chapters were able to form through the 1990s but struggled to remain open. Concerns about liability issues, new national policies about alcohol and hazing, and little flexibility in membership standards led to many Greek-letter chapters struggling to remain relevant at EMU. Historically White fraternities and sororities could no longer count on being able to draw from a student body that looked mostly like them. The student body had become more diverse, and not all White students were interested in Greek-letter life. Likewise, not all Greek-letter organizations were interested in all of the students who were White. Further, with new policies mandated from both campus and national headquarters, chapters were being disciplined and closed when violations occurred.

Across the nation, racial discrimination in fraternities and sororities was still prevalent, capturing headlines. Not until 1991 did the University of Alabama hold its first integrated Greek-letter rush week (Rosenberg, 2015). Organizations that had attempted to integrate their membership in past years had even faced violence. “Michael Schwerner, who,
along with his Congress of Racial Equality colleagues Andre Goodman and James Chaney, was murdered by members of the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi in 1964, was in Alpha Epsilon Pi, a fraternity rooted in Jewish principles, at Cornell” (Rosenberg, 2015). EMU administrators may have been open to new organizations forming, in hopes that it might improve or change the current Greek-letter system at EMU by adding diversity, new standards for behavior, or including groups not currently involved in Greek-letter life. However, students may have been worried about the perceptions of others.

**Liability concerns closed chapter.** Often, when new chapters formed, established chapters had to compete for the same students. This process sometimes caused organizations with liability issues or dwindling membership numbers to close. The EMU administrators would not have been able to close chapters in the Greek-letter community, but they did interact with and communicate with national headquarters representatives to bring new chapters to campus.

This willingness to engage can be attributed to a particular administrator who was Greek-affiliated and felt that Greek-letter chapters could be a positive presence on campus. Greg Peoples, the Dean of Students in the 1990s at EMU contacted a variety of organizations and supported their expansion efforts on campus.

The 1990s at EMU in the Greek-letter system were unstable, according to reporters for *The Eastern Echo*. In 1991, articles often appeared about Theta Chi fraternity and Arm of Honor throwing parties that got out of control (Eastern Michigan University, 1991). On one particular evening, officers from the EMU Department of Public Safety were called to the Theta Chi house and were later accused of using excessive force to break up the party (Eastern Michigan University, 1991). The University Judicial Board cited Theta Chi for
shouting racial slurs at passersby (Eastern Michigan University, 1991). When the chapter was merely suspended, many Black students marched to the Theta Chi fraternity house to protest (Eastern Michigan University, 1991). Black students believed this fraternity consisted of privileged White men who were not being held accountable for their racist behavior.

In 1992, hazing investigations were conducted to investigate Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and Phi Eta Psi Fraternity, Inc. (Eastern Michigan University, 1992). In 1993, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. was suspended and charged with hazing. Other fraternities were investigated for alcohol violations. Kappa Phi Alpha was suspended for 3 years beginning in 1993 for violating the university alcohol policy (Eastern Michigan University, 1993). Sigma Kappa sorority members were accused of being racist and using a racial slur with a potential new member (Eastern Michigan University, 1993). These events characterized a time of drinking and hazing for Greek-letter organizations across the nation. Some groups tried to follow new national and campus risk-management policies while simultaneously trying to project an “Animal House” image to prospective members. Many groups were suspended at EMU.

Liability concerns can be linked directly to the types of students who were included or excluded from the Greek-letter community. When new policies were implemented and violations of those policies occurred, organization leaders battled with EMU administrators, each testing how far they could push the other. Organizations with national headquarter affiliations often experienced disciplinary action from their national offices if a violation occurred. If these violations became a pattern or were mentioned in campus news publications, other students could discover what types of organizations were in the Greek-letter community. For instance, if a chapter gained a certain reputation, it could attract
students who wanted to be a part of an organization that behaved that way. Closing a chapter for liability concerns could become difficult for administrators.

**Closing chapters came with risk.** A chapter with a national affiliation was easier to close because the national office assisted EMU in shutting down the chapter, especially if the headquarters or housing corporation owned the house. If a chapter was local, it was much more difficult for the university to cease operations of that chapter. Without national support or brand reputation, administrators could do little to stop a group of men or women from continuing to operate with no change. However, a local group was harder to support when open, and could often provide challenges for the institution because they did not have the same resources, support, or accountability systems as nationally affiliated chapters. Nationwide, this situation led to many local chapters disappearing from college campuses. This has directly affected who can become a member of a Greek-letter organization at EMU. With the last remaining local fraternities closing in 2009 and 2012, there are no longer any local fraternities at EMU for men to join. One local sorority remains open at EMU. A local organization has the ability to recruit students who more closely reflect the demographics of the student body at EMU; in contrast, chapters of national organizations may follow a more prescriptive recruiting process and experience pressure from their national organizations about who and how to recruit.

**Disciplinary actions affected Greek-letter organizations differently.** Additionally, liability concerns could lead to group suspensions for a semester or sometimes for multiple years. When a chapter was suspended, members could not participate in recruitment or social activities within the Greek-letter community. This penalty has directly affected membership at EMU. For example, when administrators investigated Black Greek-letter organizations
(NPHC-affiliated) for hazing and suspended them for longer than a semester, the groups often dissolved. NPHC groups were usually only five to 10 members in size. When a small group faced disciplinary action, it could mean the end of the chapter. NPHC groups were most often investigated for hazing, a violation EMU administrators have often punished by handing down long-term suspensions.

On the other hand, when IFC chapters were investigated for alcohol violations, an internal judicial board made up of peer student members of the IFC often handled the matter. Usually, if a suspension was issued at all, it was only a semester long and only affected social activities. This meant that IFC fraternities, which were on average already much larger in membership than NPHC chapters, were able to continue recruiting to stay open. Over time, a pattern emerged of White fraternities and sororities facing less harmful sanctions for violations of policies than those imposed on their NPHC-affiliated peers. If an NPHC chapter was not currently open at EMU, or if multiple chapters in the NPHC were not open, students interested in pursuing membership were not able to join. Those students were not widely represented in the largely White male fraternities that made up the IFC.

The National Pan-Hellenic Council, the council that has supervised nine historically Black Greek-letter organizations, issued a joint statement against hazing in 1990:

In 1990, the member organizations of the NPHC jointly agreed to disband pledging as a form of admission. At the dawn of a new millennium, we, the members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council do hereby reaffirm our unequivocal opposition to hazing and those who seek to perpetuate it.
Although this statement was made in the early 1990s, hazing investigations have plagued NPHC organizations at EMU into the new millennium. Hazing in NPHC organizations has often been more physical and noticeable, but hazing in CPC and IFC can be kept secret.

**Liability concerns have called the future of Greek-letter life at EMU into question.** In 1999, articles began to appear in *The Eastern Echo* about universities eliminating fraternities at campuses around the nation (Eastern Michigan University, 1999). Campus administrators nationwide evaluated the liability of having Greek organizations on campus. They had to decide between closing groups, which could lead to the formation of underground fraternities and sororities, or keeping them open and trying to manage them. In terms of fraternities and sororities at EMU, the 1990s were filled with drama, with many chapters opening and closing, new types of chapters opening to serve different populations of students, and scrutinizing of the Greek-letter community. The drama prompted increased self-governance and the development of new risk-management policies.

The year 2000 brought the first EMU full-time staff member for Greek-letter organizations. Leading up to 2000, graduate assistants from EMU and other nearby institutions had been serving in an advisory capacity, but these people departed when they completed their programs. Students, staff, faculty, and administrators had been requesting a full-time staff member for years, beginning in the 1980s. Other institutions nationwide had hired full-time staff members dedicated to advising their Greek-letter communities, especially institutions that had hosted Greek-letter chapters on campus for 100 years or more. EMU students, staff, and administrators wanted a staff member who could dedicate time to educational programming, leadership development, and judicial government. They faced
isomorphic pressure to do something other institutions across the nation had been doing for some time—hire a full-time staff member dedicated to advising and controlling the Greeks.

University administrators have attempted to distance themselves from Greek-letter organizations, and from student organizations in general, by hiring staff to manage them. EMU students wanted a full-time staff member and resources to serve as a buffer between administrators and the Greek-letter organizations. Administrators felt a dedicated staff member could help manage liability concerns. Other Greek-letter communities across the nation had hired full-time staff members, and those communities continued to persist. The EMU Greek-letter community members needed one as well.

The health of fraternities and sororities at EMU was not a priority for its students, staff, or administrators. The student body had grown steadily since the inception of the institution, but the Greek-letter community had failed to keep up in terms of growth. With consistently fewer than 1,000 members total in the EMU Greek-letter community, Greek-letter life affected only a small percentage of students. Greek-letter life was not the reason students enrolled at EMU. Previously, the institution had been able to save money by using graduate students as advisors to the Greek-letter chapters. The graduate students could fulfill a requirement for graduation, get some professional experience, and then move on. However, graduate students leaving every two years resulted in a lack of consistent leadership.

Thus, a full-time staff member was hired, mainly because university leaders wanted to control and limit liability without having to close or eliminate Greek-letter chapters. Administrators still wanted to claim the institution hosted Greek-letter organizations and provided the type of campus community so many other prestigious and well-known institutions provided. They just did not want to deal with the liability that came along with
having a Greek-letter community. The compromise was hiring someone to manage the Greek-letter chapters. EMU was the last community in the Mid-American Conference to hire someone full-time to assist the Greek-letter community and, as of this writing, has had one for fewer than 20 years.

**Multicultural Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University.** The history of multicultural organizations in the Greek-letter community did not start until quite recently relative to the existence of the institution. Multicultural Greek-letter organizations emerged on college campuses throughout the United States during the 1980s and 1990s. Growth for these organizations occurred partly because of the success of the civil rights movement. At the same time, a new wave of immigration had occurred from the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (National Multicultural Greek Council, n.d.). This led to many changes at higher education institutions. Organizations formed to support Latino students as they entered colleges and universities. Multicultural Greek-letter organizations had beginnings similar to other Greek-letter organizations, except that members came from multicultural and multiethnic backgrounds. These students wanted to belong to organizations that not only embraced their own cultures but also valued the richness of other cultures and backgrounds.

The first multicultural organization at EMU was Sigma Lambda Beta Fraternity, Inc. This fraternity originated at the University of Iowa as a Latino fraternity in 1986 (Sigma Lambda Beta, n.d.). The organization affiliated with the NIC and quickly expanded nationwide. Although the chapter was Latino-based, members were simply required to be enrolled full-time, male, and undergraduates at an institution that hosted a chapter of Sigma Lambda Beta. A potential member also had to carry a minimum 3.0 GPA if it was their first
semester in college (Sigma Lambda Beta Fraternity, 2016). The organization started a chapter at EMU in 1994. The fraternity is no longer open; however, some EMU men have recently expressed interest in recolonizing.

Following the founding of Sigma Lambda Beta Fraternity, Inc. at the University of Iowa in 1986, a group of women decided to found a sorority for academic and social support for Latina women. Few Latina women attend EMU, and these women were likely not welcomed into any of the existing sororities on campus at the time, whether the sororities were predominantly White or Black. The Latina group became an official chapter at the University of Iowa in 1990, but did not affiliate with a national conference or council. Sigma Lambda Gamma opened a single-letter chapter at EMU in the mid-1990s, although the exact date was unavailable in historical documents. Currently, the chapter is inactive, but in May 2016, 20 women at EMU were granted colonization status to attempt to reopen the chapter.

Two other multicultural chapters formed in the 1990s at EMU, both sororities. The first was Iota Beta Psi Sorority, Inc. Little information was available about this chapter. The chapter was the organization’s Alpha chapter and had a national presence at some point but has since dissolved. In 1999, a second multicultural sorority opened a chapter at EMU. Zeta Sigma Chi Multicultural Sorority, Inc. first opened in 1991 at Northern Illinois University in 1991 (Zeta Sigma Chi, n.d.). Only 7 years later, the organization opened its Omicron chapter at EMU (Zeta Sigma Chi, n.d.). The organization has only 20 chapters nationwide; however, the chapter at EMU remains open to present day. In fact, Zeta Sigma Chi Multicultural Sorority, Inc. is the only multicultural Greek-letter organization still open at EMU. Thus, only one other multicultural sorority has opened at EMU since Zeta Sigma Chi, and no other fraternities have opened since Sigma Lambda Gamma. In 1998, Sigma Alpha Epsilon Pi
opened its first chapter at the University of California Davis when students perceived a need on campus for a Jewish sorority (Sigma Alpha Epsilon Pi, n.d.). National growth started for the organization in 2002, and it has since opened 16 chapters. Nine of those chapters remain open today. The organization opened its ninth chapter at EMU in 2008, and it became inactive in 2011 (Eastern Michigan University, 2008).

At the time of this study, the only multicultural chapter at EMU, Zeta Sigma Chi Multicultural Sorority, Inc., was not affiliated with any of the three governing councils at EMU. Although the Student Code of Conduct stated that all Greek-letter organizations must affiliate with a governing council, the chapter did not currently affiliate with one and operated independently. However, no council existed with which Zeta Sigma Chi could affiliate. The purposes of the organizations affiliated with CPC, IFC, and NPHC were not aligned with Zeta Sigma Chi, Inc.’s purposes.

After the addition of the colony of Sigma Lambda Gamma Sorority, Inc. in May 2016, chapter members began work on the formation of a new council at EMU, called the Multicultural Greek Council. The demand for this new council reflected the same reasons many NPHC groups wanted to form the Black Greek Council in the late 1980s. Although the CPC and IFC would allow these groups to affiliate, they would then be required to follow the policies of the council with which they have affiliated. This included following all national policies. Instead, new multicultural Greek-letter organizations have sought to start their own governing councils that would better serve their needs and more closely reflect the vision of its member organizations. How this council will operate compared to its peer councils is currently unknown. Without a national umbrella group, this council would consist only of
chapters at EMU whose members have decided not to affiliate with the IFC, NPC, or NPHC councils.

**Liability Issues at EMU**

Institutional leaders across the country have been dealing with liability issues since the earliest years of higher education. The advent of Greek-letter organizations prompted new concerns about liability and risk management. MSNC students who formed the first student organizations encountered policies related to self-governance. Some Greek-letter organizations, both locally and nationally, have been able to use self-governance to deal with internal issues. Even so, much governance and decision making occurs at the institutional or national organization level.

**Liability concerns, membership policies, and trends at EMU.** Since the inception of their organizations, students at Michigan State Normal College who formed early societies received policies dictated by the institution. For some of these societies, following their own policies, as well as university guidelines, was all that was required. However, for many Greek-letter organizations that became nationally affiliated, policies and guidelines developed over time provided additional structure, first at a national organizational level, and then eventually from other national governing councils and conferences. Institutional leaders also developed more policies, which have affected these organizations over time.

When the Lyceum first formed in 1853, its members developed a document called “Name and Object,” which resembled a constitution and bylaws for the group (Eastern Michigan University, 1853). It outlined job duties for the group’s president, vice presidents, secretary, and treasurer (Eastern Michigan University, 1853). There was also an outline for the use of committees and the initial roster of student members (Eastern Michigan University,
1853). These early governing documents were hand-written, dictating how often the members would meet and the purpose of the meetings (Eastern Michigan University, 1853). Guest lecturers from EMU attended meetings. For example, Professor Putnam gave a lecture on elocutions on December 14, 1855 (Eastern Michigan University, 1855). The society was open to any student who wanted to participate, and its purpose was to provide relief from the college curriculum through a literary and social experience (Eastern Michigan University, 1855). Societies at MSNC had become an essential part of many students lives. “Thus today, they stand as a social and literary factor in the life of the student, who relieves his weary brain from the toils of the week in Friday evening’s enjoyment” (Eastern Michigan University, 1898).

Similarly, members of other fraternal societies formed in the late 1890s developed governing documents, membership selection standards, and policies for how members should conduct themselves. Membership selection standards often included paying dues, going through an initiation period, and maintaining a minimum GPA. Some of these early organizations listed membership standards in each Aurora description. These membership requirements excluded students who could not afford the time or money to join. Additionally, students who did not have social status they could bring to the organization may have been excluded. In order to become a member, students had to share the same values and be willing to meet sets of standards. According to a 1901 Aurora entry for Tau Kappa Theta fraternity, its members are “weighed and not found wanting” before they aspire to don the orange and white [emphasis original]. Then, too, the mysterious road leading into the fraternal gate is found to be long and wearisome—beset on every hand with the
unknown as well as the unexpected. Fortunate, indeed, is he who endures until he finds himself safe within her portals. (Eastern Michigan University, 1901)

The 1898 *Aurora* included descriptions of the fraternities and sororities present at MSNC at the time. Many of them expected loyalty to the College, an emphasis on academics, and fellowship. This college experience was the first for many of these students. They saw MSNC as their home and the members of these early organizations like family. These standards defined membership in the early fraternal societies at MSNC. Members also paid dues, which may have influenced which students were able to join.

It is unclear what early self-governance looked like for these organizations—early members left no meeting minutes or notations of judicial structures. The first evidence of accountability among fraternal organizations outside of their internal policies came in the form of meetings minutes from the Panhellenic Association of Sororities, beginning in 1919 and from the meetings of the Interfraternity Council (IFC) in 1910.

The purpose of the IFC was to unite and organize fraternities on campus. Two delegates from each chapter attended each meeting to make decisions that affected the fraternity community. No early meeting minutes of this group have remained, but many newspaper clippings and other items showed the group’s early existence at MSNC. The national governing body for the IFC was the National Interfraternity Conference (NIC), which was established in 1909, only one year before the IFC was established at MSNC. Photographs in the school yearbook showed the membership comprised White men, many of whom were also athletes and leaders of other clubs. Most fraternities also listed an honorary member or advisor, usually a prominent faculty member or administrator on campus.
Increased influence of national guidelines and governance. After the Association of Education Sororities (AES) had been developed, the meetings included more detail of governance outside of the MSNC campus. For example, meeting minutes from a meeting in 1929 included the following report: “Announcement made that the rule which states a girl must be initiated six months after pledging has been changed by the A.E.S to one year” (Eastern Michigan University, 1929). This policy was developed to allow individual chapters more time to learn about the women they had recruited, ensuring that new members were more likely to stay and contribute financially, academically, and socially. This policy also gave the organizations the option of not including someone if they learned more about that individual and did not want to initiate her. If after six months, the member had not proven her worth, the organization could choose not to initiate. This practice represented an example of employing a buffering tactic to code and sort certain women out of sorority membership at MSNC. Additionally, to protect the organization and its desire for a specific type of member, the longer initiation period gave the organization the ability to exclude a member for any reason, putting the responsibility for not being initiated back on the member for not “proving herself worthy.”

The students set and maintained standards through discussions and by comparing their organizations to other organizations (Eastern Michigan University, 1929). A meeting in the spring term of 1929 included a request that each sorority provide a report of how they imposed penalties on members who did not meet certain academic standards so the council could decide on one method as a group (Eastern Michigan University, 1929). The groups compared themselves to one another to compete to be the best women and get the best women. Deans of women continued to be present at meetings to discuss topics such as
parliamentary procedure, social etiquette, and university policies on dances and parties (Eastern Michigan University, 1929).

As the Panhellenic Association at MSNC continued to organize and grow in size, more influence came from the AES. In fact, “Miss Walton, national President of Sigma Sigma Sigma, and president of the A.E.S. visited MSNC and led a discussion on the A.E.S constitution” (Eastern Michigan University, 1930). Chapters compiled official grade reports and reported them to the AES council; the council ranked chapters by GPA. This ranking system was the first of many devices used to create a sense of competition for new members. A new member could now see proof of which sororities were “the best” in any given category. In late 1930, college administrators made formal plans to implement grade standards for women interested in joining sororities at MSNC (Eastern Michigan University, 1930). Into the late 1930s, the AES sent a handbook on social precedents to all member groups around the country (McPherson, Sharp, & Gose, 1935). These guidelines outline suggested social practices for the “ideal” college woman, focusing on social etiquette, how to be a lady, how to keep a man happy, how to be polite, and so forth (Eastern Michigan University, 1935). Little guidance appears regarding academic skills or to anything else linked to the intellectual context of an institution of higher education (Eastern Michigan University, 11935). These women received instruction on how to be the socially elite, which was another way to differentiate themselves from their peers who were not affiliated with a sorority. In addition, the local delegates to the Panhellenic Association developed formal governing documents (Eastern Michigan University, 1935).

A council for all? Toward the late 1940s, two events occurred in the MSNC Panhellenic Association that affected policies. Two historically Black sororities—Alpha
Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.—affiliated with the Panhellenic Association (Eastern Michigan University, 1949). These two organizations did not have another choice at the time: Although they were included in the council and were able to vote on council matters, many of the meetings did not cover topics, issues, or concerns that served the interests of either sorority. Members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. were already a minority group at MSNC. They had to affiliate with the council, and thus, had to follow NPC national policies.

The women at the NPC who were creating these policies and guidelines were all White at the time, focused on serving the needs of NPC member groups across the country. Cultural reproduction was occurring, but the culture being reproduced was solely that of the White women in sororities. The NPC sororities discussed rush practices, dances, and socials. In contrast, the NPHC chapters and CPC chapters focused on different issues and challenges. White women were not discussing ways to help elevate Black women or people at MSNC. Additionally, White sororities had access to resources like campus housing; the historically Black organizations did not. A member of a Black fraternity at University of Michigan during the 1950s said, “It would have been difficult for us to own property in the 1950s because of limited resources and the general climate of housing discrimination” (Woods, 1992).

**Sudden shift in governance.** During the late 1950s, the AES and NPC merger occurred. All policies now came from the NPC as a national umbrella group for all national sororities established by the NPC or AES (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.). However, MSNC sororities still consisted of a handful of local organizations, and now two historically Black sororities. This meant there was some differentiation within the council regarding
policy enforcements and expectations. Now one national umbrella group was setting expectations and standards at a college that had until now allowed all local and nationally affiliated groups to participate in discussing and voting on sorority matters. Now one uniform set of guidelines, policies, and ideas were disseminated to the sorority women at MSNC. The variation in types of organizations changed quickly. More campus policies emerged, affecting sororities on a local level. Thus, even if the sorority community at EMU decided to be more inclusive, the national policies would likely prevent members from successfully practicing inclusion.

National headquarters for all of the national Greek-letter organizations at MSNC enforced their own national policies; in contrast, locals enforced their own local policies while also having to adhere to standards and policies set by the NPC regarding rushing and membership. These standards included meeting a GPA requirement, paying dues to NPC in addition to each respective national headquarters, and meeting requirements for service hours completed and philanthropy dollars collected. Other suggestions involved what a sorority woman should look and act like. In addition, students were required to follow specific institutional policies regarding student organizations. This becomes important over time—EMU has created policies that dictate the ways in which sororities and fraternities can be exclusive.

**Campus policies specific to Greeks were created.** Up until the 1990s, Greek-letter organizations at EMU had to follow the policies set forth for all student organizations. In 1991, however, the Board of Regents adopted the “Recognition/Conduct Policy for Greek Organizations” (Eastern Michigan University, 1991). Social Greek-letter organizations are currently protected under Title IX and thus can discriminate based on sex in order to remain
single-sex organizations (Eastern Michigan University, 1991). However, EMU developed guidelines for all other student organizations requiring they avoid discriminatory membership practices in any other way for enrolled EMU students (Eastern Michigan University, 1991). Greek-letter organizations were required to follow all of these policies, but were still able to discriminate based on sex. Because EMU’s Greek-letter organizations have never been autonomous actors and have always been a part of a larger social system and context, they must respond and adapt when policies are created by either national umbrella groups, national organizations, and even the campus.

**Off-campus housing created additional liability concerns.** Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, many new fraternities and sororities formed at EMU, but the membership within each chapter did not necessarily grow to large numbers. This coincided with EMU enrollment increasing from 5,105 in 1960 to 19,326 in 1980 (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). Over 20 new fraternal organizations developed at EMU during this 20-year period. When enrollment growth began, residence hall space was overabundant; however, into the late 1980s, housing became overcrowded. This issue dominated *The Eastern Echo* headlines in 1986–1987. Some of the headlines included:

- “EMU housing crunch spreads to off-campus living opportunities,”
- “REACT aids search for off-campus housing,”
- “Eastern closes new student enrollment first time in history,”
- “EMU housing prepares for ’86 challenge,” and
As EMU administrators struggled to keep up with housing demand, many students opted to live off campus. At the same time, the Greek-letter community at EMU started to pursue a housing plan for Greeks (Eastern Michigan University, 1986). This factor likely contributed to the number of Greek-letter organizations that developed and grew in size during this time. In addition, in 1972, the legal drinking age in Michigan was lowered to 18; later it was raised to 19, and then in 1978, to 21. These legal changes had a definite effect on rushing practices. Students had access to alcohol at a younger age. Many previously held concerns about under-age drinking and alcohol in the rush process were no longer a focus. Fraternities and sororities could offer alcohol to get potential members to attend rush parties and events. It became less important to go out and actively recruit members when they could simply advertise parties with free beer to get the attention of students who were not yet affiliated.

**Public relations for Greeks at EMU focused on alcohol and party culture.** The *Eastern Echo* featured Greek-letter organizations in the late 1970s and into the early 1980s. Greek-letter organizations mostly appeared in ads for parties at fraternity houses or at local establishments that offered “Greek Night” discounts. Fraternity after fraternity advertised parties with themes like “Welcome Back” and “Pre-Finals Bender.” Fraternities offered “free suds” or charged a few dollars to “come party with the best.” Many *Eastern Echo* issues featured advertisements for multiple fraternity parties on the same weekend. In the early 1980s, organizations advertised their parties at host establishments like “The Suds Factory” and “The Spaghetti Bender.” The organizations that advertised those parties were all IFC member groups. The fraternities at EMU had become the social scene for parties that provided alcohol. Only the fraternities could hold these parties—sorority women were
governed by national policies that prohibited them from registering events at their chapter houses where alcohol was present. This simply meant that the fraternity men hosted the parties, and the sorority women were their guests. The culture around hosting parties was not necessarily new to Greek-letter organizations, but partying had now become the central focus of the social activities in the Greek-letter community at EMU. Greek-letter life at EMU during this time served few of its original purposes outside of providing social outlets. Their traditional activities during this time included hosting and attending parties, competing in intramural sports, and participating in traditions like homecoming.

“Social” in nature. Fraternities had truly become social Greek-letter organizations. This affected fraternities’ membership practices by allowing members to be less selective. As long as they could find a man or a woman who was willing to socialize, attend parties, and meet the minimum eligibility for the national headquarters and campus guidelines, they had a potential new member. Members were less focused on finding students interested in planning and implementing service and philanthropy projects. Students did not have to be interested in oratory exercises or literary debates. They simply had to get along with the other members socially and elevate the social status of the organization. In essence, the Greek-letter community at EMU lacked substance during this time.

Not much evidence exists regarding how national policies affected organizations until a few particular liability issues start to appear nationally. One of these issues was alcohol use and abuse. Alcohol use and alcohol-related deaths have been an issue in fraternal organizations since their earliest years. However, in 1986, around the same time that parties dominated headlines in the campus newspaper, leaders from various national men’s fraternities began to meet and develop the Fraternal Insurance Purchasing Group (FIPG, n.d.).
This group developed risk policies for national fraternities related to alcohol, hazing, sexual assault, and firearms in an attempt to limit liability (FIPG, n.d.). These policies are now known as the Fraternal Information and Programming Group Risk Management Policies (FIPG, n.d.).

The push to develop these insurance policies came from increased reports of alcohol use and abuse within the fraternity and sorority community nationally. This began to affect membership in the sense that even if fraternities and sororities continued to party, they had to ensure their members were willing to follow policies while participating in these events. If policies were violated, and leaders at the campus or national organization found out, organizations could be disciplined, preventing them from recruiting new members, or closed entirely. Thus, chapter members had to become selective again and punish members who violated these policies and put the organization at risk.

Fraternity members from Michigan State Normal College were drinking alcohol long before these policies were developed. Members represented the social elite on campus; thus, many social gatherings included alcohol consumption for members of the organizations and their guests. In a 1948 letter from Ada W. Howard to James Brown, the Dean of Men of MSNC, Howard complained that some fraternity men rented her cottage and left it in disarray. She wrote, “I was told that the boys were so ‘drunk’ they could barely navigate and drive away in their cars under the influence of alcohol” (Eastern Michigan University, 1948). Locally, news about the Greek-letter community at EMU was often covered in the campus newspaper, The Eastern Echo. As policies developed at a local level, students and entire organizations not willing to follow campus and national risk-management policies could be
subject to judicial action by the University, and individual students could become ineligible to join a fraternity or sorority if they were in poor judicial standing.

**Questions of relevance nationwide.** During the same period in which Greek-letter parties were advertised, articles about the relevance of Greek-letter organizations monopolized *The Eastern Echo*. Writers questioned fraternity and sorority relevance nationwide. One author discussed a 1985 book by Robert Egan titled *From Here to Fraternity*. *The Eastern Echo* author discussed the book as a satirical take on Greek-letter life. Egan was quoted as saying that he doubted “his book will damage the responsible-yet-fun-loving reputation that Greeks want to present” (Eastern Michigan University, 1985). Another article, published in *The Eastern Echo* in 1986 highlighted institutions from across the nation that took action against their Greek-letter communities to address concerns about alcohol and hazing (Eastern Michigan University, 1986). Institutional leaders questioned the value of fraternities and sororities on campus. Greek-letter organizations may have been present on campuses for many years, but no longer provided the only social outlet for students.

**National headlines created tension on campus at EMU.** At the same time, many fraternities and sororities were making headlines nationwide for alcohol- and hazing-related deaths and injuries. Fraternities and sororities had become liabilities and not assets on many campuses. Administrators at EMU questioned the relevance, safety, purpose, and future of Greek-letter organizations at EMU. In the fall of 1986, administrators from across the EMU campus formed a committee to develop a plan to improve the Greek-letter community (Eastern Michigan University, 1986). The 10-Point Plan included:

1. **Staff Support** --- by August 4, 1986. Hire two (2) graduate assistants as Greek Development Specialists;
2. 10-Year Strategic Plan --- by June 17, 1987. Propose 10-year institution-wide program for Greek community growth and advancement;

3. Greek Conference --- by November 30, 1986. Design and execute comprehensive Campus Greek Conference;


5. Housing Financing --- by June 30, 1987. Stimulate no less than 50 percent of eligible Greek organizations to establish alumni housing organizations;

6. Housing Master Plan --- by January 16, 1987. Develop systematic Greek-site housing plan in cooperation with City officials;

7. Excellence Incentives --- by November 1986. Submit proposal for Greek community incentive program to reward academic and leadership excellence;

8. Greek Mentorship --- by December 12, 1986. Create and guide Greek mentor program;

9. Greek Council --- by October 31, 1987. Administratively establish and implement Greek Council; and

10. Project Aetna --- by October 3, 1986. Launch “Project Aetna” by appointing seven university staff to create and facilitate development in the following areas:


**Campus administration increased monitoring of Greek-letter life at EMU.**

Because of the 10-Point Plan, a Greek Council was created and proposed to Student Government and the Board of Regents. The purpose of the Greek Council was to move away
from the practice of having separate councils (CPC, IFC, and the Black Greek Council). A staff writer at *The Eastern Echo* interviewed the Dean of Students, Leslie Bates. Bates said, “It all started last fall when there was an open house party that got out of hand and the police were called. It created a negative image of the Greeks on campus” (Eastern Michigan University, 1986). In the same article, Bates said that funds would be available within a year to hire a full-time Greek advisor (Eastern Michigan University, 1986). The Council’s purpose included handling internal policy violations and further self-governance. The protocol at the time, written into the student code of conduct, required Greeks or Greek-letter organizations to appear before the dean of students in the event of an infraction (Eastern Michigan University, 1986). This decision affected membership practices, because all Greeks had to hold one another accountable for their behavior. Students who normally would have never worked together were forced to work together on decisions related to membership practices and judicial issues. In fact, the councils had been separate for years. A divide had always existed between the IFC and CPC councils on one hand, and the Black Greek Council on the other. The Black Greek Council members had fought to establish their own council so they would not have to join the IFC or CPC.

*All talk, no action.* It is unclear if the all-Greek Council ever actually emerged. EMU did not hire a full-time Greek-letter advisor for another 14 years. The conversations happening in the EMU task force indicated campus leaders at least had a desire to try to unite a divided Greek-letter community while avoiding further liability issues. Hiring a full-time staff member would have meant that community standards could be implemented, along with education about diversity, hazing prevention, sexual assault prevention, drug use, personal values, and leadership skills. With a full-time staff member, organizations that had been
liability concerns or had been performing poorly academically would likely have closed or been forced to improve. This would have affected the type of members joining the Greek-letter community at EMU. If performing poorly chapters were made to close, the types of behaviors they had been exhibiting would have become less acceptable to the rest of the community. Students who had been potential members of the community would have been made aware through The Eastern Echo that chapters were being closed. This would have made non-affiliated students aware of the types of students who were welcome to join a chapter at EMU. In short, hiring a professional dedicated full-time to the Greek-letter community could have had an enormous impact on the types of students joining these organizations at EMU. Such an advisor could have offered guidance to leaders in the Greek-letter community and made recommendations to administrators on best policies or practices. Administrators’ decision not to hire a Greek advisor at this time could have been a political play, or it could simply have meant that Greek-letter life at EMU was not a priority to anyone outside of the Greek-letter community itself.

The following year, in 1987, Dean of Students Bette C. White, released the “Greek Life Policy and Procedure Status Report.” This report outlined policies and direction of national organizations regarding open parties and alcohol. White summarized two national organizations policies related to alcohol use. Each of these examples highlighted the fact that national organizations policy statements directed students to follow their institutional policies related to alcohol. In a section titled “University’s Role Regarding Off Campus Behavior of Fraternities and Sororities,” White concluded,

The behavior of students at Eastern Michigan University is covered in the Student Conduct Code and Judicial Structure for Students and Student Organizations which
was approved by the Board of Regents in May of 1985. Specifically, off campus conduct is covered in Section B. which states:

Individual or group conduct described in the regulations in Part A which occurs off campus may also result in disciplinary action by the University when:

1. Such conduct has or tends to have a substantial adverse impact on the interest of the University or an individual within the University community, AND

2. There is a showing to that effect to the satisfaction of a University hearing board to which the case is referred.

White described the relationship between students in local chapters of national organizations: “Most Greek organizations, however, have the additional, although not contradictory, expectations of their National Offices.” White was referring to the various external forces that have affected EMU Greeks because of the bridging that had occurred over time (Eastern Michigan University, 1987). With this plan’s release, students, faculty, staff, parents, and community members likely gained awareness of the problem. The policy and 10-Point Plan both appeared in *The Eastern Echo*. Headlines from this time regarding Greek-letter life were mostly about liability issues and stricter policies. The purpose of Greek-letter life at EMU seemed unclear, although the ways in which the organizations interacted with the institution were being more clearly defined with each new committee and policy. If potential members of an organization read the news coverage, they would have understood that the days of unsupervised and unregistered parties were ending. Without a focus on partying or a strict focus on academia, service, or philanthropy, the purpose of the Greek-letter community at EMU was murky. At this point, Greek-letter organizations at EMU had to handle multiple
levels of policy, beginning internally with their own constitutions and bylaws, extending next to their respective councils and governing policies, then to the institutional level, their national chapter guidelines and policies, and then eventually to their national governing council or conferences.

**Chaos during policy implementation.** Even with institutional involvement and national headquarters creating policies around risk management and alcohol use, fraternities at EMU continued to appear in the headlines for violations of these policies. Only two years after the report from Dean White, Lambda Chi Alpha appeared before the dean of students and endured a national headquarter representative visit in response to an alcohol violation wherein two men pledging the organization were drinking in the basement during a dry rush activity happening upstairs in the fraternity house (Eastern Michigan University, 1989). Later that same semester, Theta Chi appeared before the University Judicial Board following a party at which Theta Chi members reportedly used racial slurs toward a group of Black men walking past their house during the party (Eastern Michigan University, 1989). Eventually, the University Judicial Board placed Theta Chi on interim suspension (Eastern Michigan University, 1989). Nearly 100 students marched to the Theta Chi house to protest the suspension, saying the fraternity was not being punished enough (Eastern Michigan University, 1989). That same fall semester, the IFC suspended Phi Sigma Phi for a party to which police had to be called, and Arm of Honor went before the University Judicial Board on charges of hazing and received a one-year suspension (Eastern Michigan University, 1989).

**Inconsistent purposes of Greek-letter organizations at EMU.** As chapters and their members adjusted to the many new policies from both campus and national
headquarters, a struggle likely ensued between chapter members who were attempting to enforce new policies and those who still believed the chapter should be able to host parties whenever and however they liked. Membership recruitment practices were affected. Depending on which member was handling recruiting, chapters could encounter students who interpreted the purpose of the organization quite differently compared to other students who might have discerned a different purpose.

Fraternities clearly struggled to follow new policies set forth by the administration during this time. As chapters were disciplined, they may have also lost the privilege to recruit new members. This loss could motivate them to do better or have the opposite effect. If some fraternity or sorority members were angry at new policies, they could choose to continue to behave without regard for consequences. That attitude would have been visible to potential members of the Greek-letter community at EMU.

The community had now divided in a different way, between organizations that agreed to follow these policies to reduce liability and those that refused. Likewise, this division affected which chapters students might choose, if they chose to affiliate at all. Many fraternal organizations continued to exist simply because Greek-letter life had been institutionalized at EMU over more than 100 years. Scott (1987) noted the term *institution* related “to those features of social life which outlast biological generations or survive drastic social changes that might have been expected to bring them to an end” (p. 499). For example, people may celebrate an occasion without knowing the origins of the celebration and without understanding its significance, even if some of the celebrants might not agree with the meaning of the celebration if they had known it (Scott, 1987). Thus, fraternities and sororities continued to exist at EMU despite the many challenges members faced. They may have
continued to perform the same rituals and traditions their founders performed, but with no real connection to those rituals or traditions. Instead, they faced the challenges of being students in a completely different time.

The next several years brought two additional fraternities to campus, Sigma Nu and Sigma Phi Epsilon, but those years also included several more hazing and alcohol investigations in IFC and NPHC chapters. The two EMU chapters provided perfect examples of two organizations whose members chose different paths. Sigma Phi Epsilon closed in less than a decade for violating policies connected to hazing, alcohol, and sexual assault. Sigma Nu is still open today, probably because members chose to follow policies received from both the national office and campus administrators.

Even a sorority encountered judicial sanctions when a member was reported to have made a racist comment to another woman while visiting Central Michigan University. This pattern of incidents involving racism in the IFC and CPC councils likely affected the types of members who were willing to join. The pattern also indicated whom these chapters would welcome. Clearly, racial discrimination existed in the IFC and CPC chapters on campus. Although Greeks occasionally appeared in the news for positive events such as philanthropic or service efforts, new chapters forming, or for academic accomplishments, incidents involving alcohol, racist comments, and hazing violations seem to have dominated this 10-year period.

**Increased institutional control at EMU.** In response to this tumultuous time for the Greek-letter community, in 1991, the EMU Board of Regents approved “Policy Governing the University Recognition and Conduct of Greek-letter Social Organizations” (Eastern Michigan University, 1991). This document outlined specific guidelines and requirements
that chapters had to meet to maintain recognition as a student organization on campus. In addition, the Board of Regents stated alcohol policies and sanctions that would be levied should an organization violate these policies. The aim of these policies was to bring more consistency to the way Greek-letter judicial matters were handled and to set standards and expectations for any new Greek-letter organizations wishing to form.

In 1995, the IFC and CPC councils adopted the FIPG risk-management policies. Today, over 50 national organizations have adopted these policies (FIPG, n.d.). Locally, at EMU, both the IFC and CPC adopted these policies in September 1995 as part of their social policy guidelines regarding the use of alcohol at social events (Eastern Michigan University, 1995). This meant that even if a national group with a chapter at EMU had not adopted these policies as part of their national risk-management guidelines, they were required by their local governing council to follow them anyway. This led to less flexibility in the ways chapters could operate. Everyone had to follow the same policies. Now, violations of the FIPG Risk Management Guidelines represented violations of the Student Code of Conduct, the respective councils’ governing documents, and possible national headquarters risk-management policies. The NPHC organizations, comprising the Black Greek Council during 1995, did not adopt the FIPG policies but still held accountable to the Student Code of Conduct and any respective national policies (Eastern Michigan University, 1995). The adoption of the FIPG policies and the Board of Regents’ new policies affected who could or would join a Greek-letter organization at EMU. Chapter members had to be more selective during membership selection. They could no longer take just anyone. They had to make sure to identify potential members who would still bring social status to the chapter but also
follow these newly implemented policies. If a member of a chapter violated these policies, it could put the chapter’s survival in jeopardy.

Students attempted to change the Greek-letter image. Eastern Echo articles from that time detailed the efforts that the various councils made to educate their members on risk-management issues. Council leaders were not just trying to make efforts toward improvement. They were also trying to advertise a more positive Greek-letter experience to attract back to the fraternal experience the potential members who had become disinterested after seeing negative headlines in The Eastern Echo. Advertising may have helped attract the types of students that would help the chapters stay open. From 1993 to 1994, instead of the articles about alcohol and hazing violations, The Eastern Echo headlines included:

- “All Greek councils gather to defeat hazing,”
- “Program gives alcohol-free alternatives,”
- “IFC to host hazing seminar,”
- “Panhellenic Council awards top Greeks,”
- “Greeks sponsor program,” and
- “Fraternities to improve race relations” (Eastern Michigan University, 1993, 1994).

Finally, a committee formed at EMU, chaired by Gregory Peoples, Dean of Students, comprising administrators, faculty, staff, and students from across the campus (Eastern Michigan University, 1998). This committee was one of many subcommittees in the Greek Life Task Force (Eastern Michigan University, 1998). This subcommittee’s aim was to study current literature and trends in Greek-letter life, locally and nationally, examining the degree to which sorority and fraternity members were involved in major campus programs. In
addition, committee members sought to study the relationship between the EMU Greek-letter community and departments on campus. Many recommendations came out of the subcommittee’s research. One specific recommendation affected membership in the Greek-letter community:

The Dean of Students’ charge to the All-Greek Council should emphasize the provision of programming targeted at improving the academic success of Greeks in small chapters. The Dean of Students should work with the Director of the Holman Learning Center to assure that Center programming, which is already available, is effectively utilized by Greek chapters in formulating their programs. (Eastern Michigan University, 1998)

This recommendation created a higher standard of academic performance in the Greek-letter community. Coupled with the rest of the new policies implemented in the 1990s, this meant that potential new members of these chapters now had to have not only social status, but also willingness to follow policies implemented to lower liability and maintain higher academic requirements than before. The pool from which these chapters could recruit was growing increasingly smaller as more policies were implemented that directly affected membership.

Various committees had been formed in the 1980s and again in the 1990s, and students had long advocated for a full-time staff member dedicated to Greek-letter life; however, this hire did not happen until 2000 (Eastern Michigan University, 2000). Central Michigan University was the only other school in the Mid-American Conference at the time that did not have a full-time staff member dedicated to managing Greek-letter life. Hiring a full-time staff member to work with Greek chapters would likely affect the types of members who could or would join a Greek-letter chapter at EMU. Full-time staff members could work
directly with chapter leaders, administration, faculty, and staff to change the standards and expectations regarding how Greek-letter chapters at EMU functioned.

Hiring a full-time Greek-letter life manager influenced the evolving purposes of Greek-letter life at EMU. In the couple of years following the hire of a staff member, one sorority, Sigma Delta Tau, was recognized as one the best chapters nationwide (Eastern Michigan University, 2002). Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. was recognized as Chapter of the Year nationally (Eastern Michigan University, 2001). A Greek-letter roundtable was organized in early 2000 to unify the three councils on campus and open a dialogue (Eastern Michigan University, 2000). The types of articles that began to appear in *The Eastern Echo* had evolved:

- “Sororities study safer habits,”
- “Greek adviser Shinn takes office,”
- “Eastern sorority honored with Diamond Chapter award,” and
- “Student mentors on EMU campus” (Eastern Michigan University, 2002).

**Greek-letter organizations at EMU today.** Since 2000, a number of fraternities and one sorority have closed, and very few have opened. The remaining local fraternities, Kappa Phi Alpha and Arm of Honor, both of which had been at EMU for over 100 years, closed because of judicial issues. Currently, only one local organization remains: Sigma Nu Phi sorority. The remaining society is a reflection of the type of student currently joining fraternities and sororities at EMU. The local fraternity chapters closed after years of judicial issues. Without national offices to help govern and support these chapters, they were unable to recruit or keep members who would allow the chapter to flourish. Rather, they continued to attract the opposite type of student, which eventually led to closure of these chapters.
Today, all nine NPHC organizations are active at EMU, nine national fraternities and one colony are active in the IFC, and seven national chapters and one local chapter are active in CPC. Since 2000, only one new fraternity has formed. Alpha Kappa Lambda, an IFC group formed in 2004. In addition, Delta Sigma Phi, Alpha Sigma Phi, and Theta Chi have returned to campus since 2000. A colony of Sigma Lambda Gamma Multicultural Sorority was approved in May 2016, and a colony of Delta Lambda Phi is currently being organized.

Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 show the active Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University today.

Table 3

*College Panhellenic Council*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Founded Nationally</th>
<th>Founded Locally</th>
<th>National Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Xi Delta</td>
<td>Lombard College, IL, 1893</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>NPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma Sigma Sigma</td>
<td>Longwood College, VA, 1898</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Originally part of the AES, now NPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Gamma Delta</td>
<td>Syracuse University, NY, 1904</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>NPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma Delta Tau</td>
<td>Cornell University, NY, 1917</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>NPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Zeta</td>
<td>Miami University, OH, 1902</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>NPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma Kappa</td>
<td>Colby College, ME, 1874</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>NPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Sigma Tau</td>
<td>Michigan State Normal College, MI, 1899</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Originally part of the AES, now NPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma Nu Phi</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Local chapter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

*Interfraternity Council*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Founded Nationally</th>
<th>Founded Locally</th>
<th>National Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Kappa Lambda</td>
<td>UC Berkeley, CA, 1914</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>NIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phi Sigma Kappa</td>
<td>Massachusetts Agricultural College, MA, 1873</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>NIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma Nu</td>
<td>Virginia Military Institute, 1869</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>NIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theta Chi</td>
<td>Norwich University, VA, 1856</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>NIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tau Kappa Epsilon</td>
<td>Illinois Wesleyan University, IL, 1899</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>NIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Sigma Phi</td>
<td>City College of New York, NY, 1899</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>NIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phi Sigma Phi</td>
<td>South Bend, IN, 1987</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>NIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Tau Delta</td>
<td>Bethany College, VA, 1858</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>NIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Sigma Phi</td>
<td>Yale University, 1845</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>NIC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

*National Pan-Hellenic Council*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Founded Nationally</th>
<th>Founded Locally</th>
<th>National Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.</td>
<td>Howard University, Washington DC, 1913</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>NPHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.</td>
<td>Cornell University, NY, 1906</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>NPHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.</td>
<td>Howard University, Washington DC, 1913</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>NPHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.</td>
<td>Howard University, Washington DC, 1914</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>NPHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.</td>
<td>Butler University, IN, 1922</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>NPHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.</td>
<td>Indiana University, IN, 1911</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>NPHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.</td>
<td>Howard University, Washington DC, 1911</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>NPHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.</td>
<td>Morgan State University, MD, 1963</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>NPHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.</td>
<td>Howard University, Washington DC, 1920</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>NPHC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

Other Chapters Not Currently Affiliated with a Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Founded Nationally</th>
<th>Founded Locally</th>
<th>National Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zeta Sigma Chi Multicultural Sorority, Inc.</td>
<td>Northern Illinois University, IL, 1990</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>No National Council or Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma Lambda Gamma Multicultural Sorority, Inc.</td>
<td>University of Iowa, IA, 1989</td>
<td>1990s, now a colony again in 2016</td>
<td>No National Council or Conference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Greek-letter life at EMU today consists almost entirely of chapters with national headquarters. No opportunity exists for any new local organizations to form. In the current Greek-letter system, chapters must work within a layered set of policies. These policies include (a) their own internal policies set forth in local governing documents, (b) policies of their respective governing councils (IFC, CPC, NPHC), (c) policies set forth by a variety of departments and offices on campus (e.g., Department of Campus Life, Community Conduct and Standards, Department of Public Safety), (d) their national headquarters’ policies, and finally, (e) the policies set forth by their national governing councils (NPC, NIC, and NPHC).

In addition, this layered system means that chapter members pay dues to multiple entities: locally, within their own chapters, to their governing council on campus, to their national headquarters, and to their insurance companies.

Most of their national headquarters require annual accreditation. Each office usually sends a national headquarters staff member to check on the chapters and set annual goals for improvement in a number of categories. The chapters also participate in a local community...
standards assessment each year. Since the first full-time Greek-letter life staff member was hired in 2000, a number of leadership development programs have been developed specifically for the Greek-letter community. These programs include officer’s training institutes, a weekend-long leadership development retreat for all community members, an annual national keynote speaker, and scholarships to attend national conventions and leadership development opportunities (Eastern Michigan University, 2016b).

**An evolving purpose.** These activities constitute examples of an evolving purpose in the Greek-letter community at EMU. In the 1980s and 1990s, incidents may have occurred that raised questions of liability regarding keeping these organizations on campus. However, the last two decades for these organizations have included many new resources to help support not only the growth but also the existence of these chapters at EMU. These new activities have helped members of the Greek-letter community define their purpose, reflect on who they are as leaders, and focus on leadership development, service, and philanthropy.

This progress does not mean Greek-letter chapters have not still hosted and attended parties and social functions. However, much of their time has been spent on fulfilling requirements to stay active on campus. Chapter members have had to find potential new members among the student body who could afford the financial costs of joining, maintain the required GPA, and give the time necessary to fulfill all requirements, in addition to bringing social status to the organization.

**Self-governance efforts of EMU Greek-letter community.** Members of the Greek-letter community at EMU today have attempted to employ buffering strategies to avoid any further external control or influence. The community members have implemented programming to help support existing chapters using a peer education program called
Fraternities and Sororities Together for Wellness and Responsible Decisions (FASTforWARD; Eastern Michigan University, 2017). The goal of the program is to provide a menu of topics from which chapter members can select to have presented to their chapters during meetings or at other opportunities. To date, over 30 programs are available for chapter members. Topics include mental health, sexual assault prevention, campus safety, alcohol awareness, LGBT inclusion, racial awareness, financial wellness, and academic wellness (Eastern Michigan University, 2017). An annual Meet-and-Greet event with the Greek Life Office and the Department of Public Safety (DPS) has been developed to improve relationships between the Greek-letter community and DPS staff (Eastern Michigan University, 2017). Every 3 years, community members participate in a survey given by the Center for the Study of the College Fraternity, called the Fraternity and Sorority Experience Survey (Eastern Michigan University, 2017). Data from this survey are used to plan programming and educational initiatives for the community (Eastern Michigan University, 2016b).

Many of the FASTforWARD programs focus on teaching chapter members at EMU about inclusive behavior. Despite national policies, chapter members who are participating in these programs learn how they can provide an inclusive and safe space for students who are members of minority groups. These programs may have an impact on the types of students who join Greek-letter organization at EMU. If potential members see chapter members participating in programming involving inclusive behavior, they may be more likely to pursue membership, particularly if potential members are members of marginalized groups. Chapter members participating in this education about inclusion might also start to seek
potential members from groups on campus they would not have pursued before participating in these educational initiatives.

Other changes have involved the CPC and IFC council. CPC and IFC chapters have adopted a Greek Life social policy, which applies whenever a chapter wants to host an event with alcohol. The policy requires them to register the event with the Greek Life Office, get approval, and provide a specific number of sober monitors for the event. Sober monitors for each chapter are trained to recognize alcohol poisoning. In addition, sober monitors learn what it means to be an active bystander who could help prevent sexual assault. All three existing councils have developed their own Greek-letter judicial board and governing documents, which include a reporting process and allow the Greek-letter community to self-govern in most cases. Since late 2012, each council has consistently enforced social policy and judicial structures, and no chapters have closed because of liability concerns. Grades have also risen consistently among chapter members in the CPC council; as of the fall of 2015, grades have reached the highest they have been in recorded history (Eastern Michigan University, 2016b). This upward trend of grades has changed membership standards. The women in the sorority community at EMU voted to raise the minimum chapter GPA requirement for the CPC council. Higher GPA requirements means chapters must search for women with higher academic standards to keep their chapters in good standing.

The annual Greek Standards and Assessment Program, an optional assessment program for chapters, has been in place since 2006. The assessment program emerged in response to the recommendations set forth by The Franklin Square Group, a group of college and university presidents and fraternity and sorority executive directors. The recommendations are called “A Call for Values Congruence.” Although no formal
consequences exist for not participating, the only chapters that have closed since 2006 are those whose members chose not to participate in the annual assessment. Thus, the assessment has become another form of self-governance and exclusion. If a chapter participates, members must meet with faculty, staff, community members, administrators, and alumni from EMU. At the meetings, participants discuss five community values: leadership development, civic engagement, positive relationships, intellectual development, and integration of purpose. Chapter members meet with evaluators who interview them and try to learn how their chapter operates with these five values in mind on a daily basis. Chapters receive a score and thorough feedback after each meeting. The process culminates each year at the Greek Awards Ceremony to recognize chapters that have excelled in each category and overall. National headquarters’ staff members receive notification of whether their local chapters participated, their scores in each category, the number of service hours their chapters completed, and the number of philanthropy dollars collected, as well as a list of individuals who were recognized. Chapters that have not participated in the process have closed. This is another sign of the evolving purpose of Greek-letter organizations at EMU.

The Greek-letter community at EMU today does not look much different from the way it did when it formed over 100 years ago. The community still consists of almost entirely White chapters in the IFC and CPC councils. Out of about 700 Greek members, the NPHC chapters make up only about 50 to 60 of the individuals who are part of the Greek-letter community. Although today more diversity may exist in the types of chapters offered within the Greek-letter community, diversity within each respective chapter is almost nonexistent. A clear racial division is evident among the chapters in each council. Only one local chapter, Sigma Nu Phi sorority, has been at EMU since before 1900. Somehow, over
the last 120 years, Sigma Nu Phi has managed to remain open, remain local, and avoid absorption by an NPC national organization.

Although Sigma Nu Phi members are a part of the Greek-letter community and have a long and celebrated history at EMU, they are certainly set apart from even their own council. First, they do not have a national affiliation. This means that any support or resources not from the campus community must come from alumnae who live locally. Additionally, the chapter does not exist to serve any national purposes. Members do not recruit women in the same fashion a national organization would, with a focus on quantity. Sigma Nu Phi members exist in their own bubble at EMU. Further, Sigma Nu Phi women do not look like the women in other chapters. The membership often comprises women who do not fit the stereotypical sorority mold. In addition, although affiliated with the CPC, Sigma Nu Phi members almost never hold leadership positions on the Council and are often viewed by their peers as “less than.” They are the only remnant of a Greek-letter community that formed at MSNC, and as such, no longer fits into the modern Greek-letter community at EMU.

Summary

The students who are members of EMU Greek-letter chapters have helped redefine the purpose of the community by choosing to participate or not in certain activities. They have used self-governance as a buffering tactic to decide which chapters should remain open and which should close. Thus, they have indicated the types of students who are welcome to join chapters in the community and which are not.

When faced with the question of relevance, Greek-letter members at EMU have sought answers. Member groups can make a case for the positive impact they have had on campus. They have managed to keep external control at bay. They have remained the largest
student group on campus. Their members participate in major service and philanthropy events, maintain average GPA higher than the rest of the student body, and win local and national awards for performance. Members of successful societies have limited the number of liability issues they produce.

Despite these positive contributions, national headlines about fraternal organizations are still concerning. EMU’s core technologies are to produce educators, local businesspeople, and nurses. Students at EMU who become alumni of the institution’s Greek-letter organizations thus far have not become lifelong donors to their alma mater. That means EMU’s Greek-letter community does not have the advantage of producing alumni donors for the institution. In this sense, EMU Greek-letter members are unlike their peers at University of Michigan, who may have the ability to give back in larger sums. Financially, keeping the Greek-letter community open at EMU does not benefit the institution. However, closing these chapters would not necessarily be easy for the institution. If these chapters closed tomorrow, students would not instantly stop affiliating with each other or cease to have the relationships they have developed. In fact, these groups would likely continue to operate as unsanctioned organizations, which could create liability issues for the institution.

Additionally, without the Greek-letter community at EMU, the institution loses the ability to claim they have something other institutions have. For many of the same reasons that EMU continues to invest in having a Division I football team, administrators will not attempt to eliminate Greek-letter organizations at EMU.

The Greek-letter community at EMU has shown what seem to be constantly evolving purposes. One hundred years ago, these organizations served as places to discuss literature and socialize outside of the classroom. With each decade at the institution came challenges
and opportunities, to which Greek-letter organizations were forced to adapt or face closure or absorption. However, with all the factors that have affected these organizations at EMU over time, they have remained largely unchanged in terms of membership. Over time, the dominant groups on campus have reproduced a culture that is inclusive of students from the dominant groups. It is still clear that not all are welcome to be Greek, and even within the community, there remain clear divisions by gender, race, and perceived social status.
Chapter 5: Summary of the Study and Conclusions

Statement of the Problem

Currently, I am the director of member development at Delta Tau Delta International Fraternity. In addition, I have recently served as the coordinator for Greek Life and Leadership at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). My daily work involves social Greek-letter organizations. I care about my students. I care a great deal about the success of the Greek-letter community at EMU and the success of the fraternity men of Delta Tau Delta. My professional frustration with the Greek-letter organizations at EMU prompted this study. I perceived a lack of support from these organizations regarding educating their members in creating a safe, healthy, inclusive community for potential new members or initiated members who identified as transgender. In addition, I felt the university administrators had the responsibility to help students navigate the politics at the national headquarter level. However, in my experience, administrators abandoned chapter members to interpret or guess whether they could extend a bid to a person who identified as transgender. Beyond that, I felt that national headquarters leaders were acting in an irresponsible manner: They knew their member chapters were initiating people who identified as transgender but were not providing members with the resources or education regarding creating an inclusive environment.

Over time, Greek-letter organizations have formed for many reasons. The first Greek-letter organizations formed as literary societies exclusive to men. Women formed their own versions of these organizations to prove their worth and ability in higher education. Over time, new organizations formed when religious groups were excluded from joining. The pattern of forming new organizations to include groups not previously welcomed has continued. Greek-letter organizations have been exclusive since their inception. They formed
to persist, not to change. As transgender students have continued to join Greek-letter organizations, past patterns have repeated. Greek-letter organizations are exclusive by nature; therefore, inclusion of new groups has presented new issues and an opportunity for further research on the history of these organizations. My desire to conduct that research, as well as to assist the students and the community about which I care so much, prompted this study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand the role and function of social Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University. In order to do this, I developed a contextual understanding of Greek-letter organizations in the United States. I focused on the development of social Greek-letter organizations on the EMU campus. In addition, I sought to place EMU in the context of Greek-letter organizations on American campuses. The achievement of these purposes is discussed later in this chapter.

**Research Questions**

In this study, I sought to develop an awareness and understanding of a group of students within the fraternity and sorority system for whom little professional guidance, literature, or established processes and procedures exist. The reasons for conceiving this study emerged from my own frustration and lack of understanding about how to support a minority group present in Greek-letter organizations on a campus, as viewed from my standpoint as a national headquarters employee. I felt a responsibility to understand the development and evolution of American Greek-letter societies on college campuses. The findings did not emerge by asking specific questions; rather, I discerned the findings through a series of conversations with students, faculty, staff, and through my own research on the history and purpose of Greek-letter organizations in America. My initial question started with
“How?” As I explored the history of Greek-letter organizations, I found patterns and trends emerging that revealed the way in which Greek-letter organizations have become inclusive or exclusive of student groups over time. During that literature exploration process, the following questions began to emerge to guide the study:

1. How did Greek-letter organizations begin?
2. What has been the place of Greek-letter organizations in higher education?
3. How have Greek-letter organizations evolved over time?
4. How did Greek-letter organizations emerge at Eastern Michigan University?
5. How have Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University evolved over time?
6. How are Greek-letter organizations organized?

**Research Tradition**

**Research paradigm.** In this qualitative study, I used a case-study approach to explore the role and function of Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University. This approach can best be described as constructivist and interpretive in nature. Researchers who choose the constructivist–interpretive paradigm rely heavily on naturalistic methods like interviewing, observations, or analysis of existing texts. My research was guided by my desire to understand and interpret social realities within the realm of Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University. My approach was constructivist in nature—my focus was on conducting an interpretive case study. My belief was that reality and interpretations of reality are socially constructed. “All knowledge, and therefore, all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and being developed and transmitted
within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 1998). I could not simply have asked my research questions and hoped to construct meaning. I actively observed and interacted with others within this social context to create meaning.

**Research methods.** Ethnography is one of the primary research methods used to conduct anthropological studies. Ethnography is the study of cultures through observation and interpretation. Ethnographic research is used in many different fields, including anthropology, education, and political science. Many ethnographic researchers complete their work in the field, within the culture they are studying. This research study was an ethnography of Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University.

**Unit of analysis.** In order to focus my research, it was important for me to determine and define a unit of analysis prior to conducting my research. Beginning my research prior to determining a unit of analysis could have led to me studying and analyzing more data than were required to answer my research questions. First, I defined a case using the definition given by Miles and Huberman (1994): A case is “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p. 25). The purpose of this study was to understand the role and function of social Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University. In order to accomplish this goal, students helped to inform the understanding of the cultural environment and social context at Eastern Michigan University. Therefore, the unit of analysis was the social Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University.

**Case study.** I used the qualitative case-study research design to conduct this study to understand the purpose and function of Greek-letter organizations at EMU. To implement the case-study design, the researcher investigates a phenomenon during a set period of time. Yin (1994) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary
phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between
phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13).

**Data Collection**

Much of the data I collected and analyzed were historical nature, gathered from the
EMU archives. I used many different types of sources from the archives to learn about the
history of the Greek-letter community at Eastern Michigan University, in addition to the
history of the institution itself. I used primary sources, which included meeting minutes from
various organizations, member scrapbooks, photos, yearbooks, letters, student conduct
reports, alumni newsletters, and various other documents. I took detailed notes in an
organized, systematic way in order to draw relevant conclusions. Secondary sources included
a small group of historical texts about the history of Eastern Michigan University, the city of
Ypsilanti, Michigan, the early education system of Michigan, campus life at various
institutions over time, and the history of normal schools. I completed participant observation
as part of my research. In addition, I connected with alumni who were Greek-affiliated
during their undergraduate years at Eastern Michigan University. I had informal
conversations with them and analyzed the data from those conversations.

**Data Analysis**

Much analysis occurred during data collection. I collected data initially by making
notes about ideas, patterns I noticed, and relationships among concepts and theories. Next, I
spent time organizing the data I collected. I also spent a significant amount of time reviewing
the data, notes, ideas, categories, generated themes, and patterns. I set aside any data that I
decided were not useful for this particular study. Finally, I used my conceptual framework to
help me make sense of the data I had collected. This helped me identify any connections I
made between my chosen conceptual framework, the data collected, and any other related material. Data analysis continued throughout all phases. Creswell (2003) described data analysis as an “ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study” (p. 190).

**Validity.** One of my main objectives in reporting results of this research was to ensure accuracy of the results. Because I was the main instrument in this research, the accuracy of the results depended on my ability to report those results accurately. This study, being qualitative in nature, was different from quantitative studies in the sense that it did not rely on a specific research instrument other than me. Throughout this study, I triangulated findings when possible, sought feedback, remained mindful of my biases and their potential effects, and actively searched for disconfirming evidence.

**Summary of Findings**

**The beginning of Greek-letter organizations as institutional actors.** Greek-letter organizations formed in the context of higher education. Greek-letter organizations have been situated in this context since their inception as literary societies hundreds of years ago. Greek Life is not autonomous; it is an actor within the system of higher education. The historical purpose of Greek-letter organizations was born out of the need for socialization and access to resources outside of the classroom. Members were all higher education students first. Because Greek-letter organizations comprise students at individual campuses, the organizations brought together students who may not have otherwise met.

Greek-letter organizations are not independent organizations acting on their own. Scott (2001) stated, “Individual actors carry out practices that are simultaneously constrained and empowered by existing social structures” (p. 75). Greek-letter organizations have not
existed without higher education institutions. Greek-letter organizations are empowered by a higher education institution, giving them the ability or right to exist, but at the same time constrained by those same institutions and the structures within those institutions. They have not existed without at least one of these other players for some time. Figure 27 shows Greek-letter organizations only exist within the context of higher education and their national affiliations. They do not function outside of these environments.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 26. Context of social Greek-letter organizations.

To understand Greek-letter organizations, it is important to look at the groups’ organization, goals, and structures. Scott (2001) suggested, “Institutions come into existence because players perceive problems requiring new approaches. Participants are motivated by their discomfort in ongoing situations to devise or borrow new and different rules and models” (p. 109). Over time, Greek-letter organizations have formed to provide students with something they were not able to access as part of the classroom experience. As the years
passed, new groups formed when members of those groups discerned a different or better way to organize or run a Greek-letter organization.

Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 4, many students may not have been welcome, through either written or unwritten rules or policies, in existing Greek-letter organizations. The term *technology of an organization* refers to “the work performed by an organization” (Scott, 2003, p. 230). The organization can have more than one core technology. “One or more technologies constitute the core of all purposive organizations” (Thompson, 2004, p. 19). This means that the technical core or function of the organization is the central mission or purpose of that organization. The technical core of Greek-letter organizations is to create a social outlet for members of the organization, which they cannot otherwise get by simply being a college student. The characteristic that allows Greek-letter organizations to differentiate themselves, and what they provide for their members, is a level of prestige or social status. When a member joins, the organization and the member both participate in a transaction from which each benefit.

National Greek-letter organizations are institutional agents for the member campuses that host their chapters. Scott (2001) noted every organization is a subsystem of the larger social system. This hierarchy of systems gives legitimacy, support, and resources to fraternal organizations. Greek-letter organizations on individual campuses are part of the larger institutional social system. Again, they are not autonomous actors. Additionally, the Greek-letter organizations on many campuses are affiliated with national organizations, and thus, are a subsystem of those national organizations. Higher levels of support and constraint can come from the national organization, the higher education institution, or both.
The purposes and core functions of Greek-letter organizations have changed over time. Initially, students formed these organizations to obtain social connection outside of the classroom. In addition, students sought ways to discuss topics missing in classroom discussions. However, as the offerings of higher education institutions have broadened, so have the opportunities for modern students to get involved outside of the classroom. Thus, the core function of these organizations has become diluted. Although students still have the opportunity to be social in Greek-letter organizations, the expectations and costs of membership have changed over time. In addition, the policies and guidelines from national headquarters and campus administrators that Greek-letter organizations must follow have become more detailed, placing more constraints on the organizations. Students seeking social connections can still find them, but much more is required of these organizations before they have a legitimate “right” to exist. Although these organizations have never been autonomous actors, in many ways, their level of autonomy over time has decreased.

Because Greek-letter organizations are embedded within the context of higher education, two completely different functions already compete with one another: the academic function and the social function. Higher education institutions have core academic functions. Greek-letter organizations have core social functions. In addition, higher education institutions have their own core technology, which largely depends on the history of each institution. However, the core technology of higher institutions is to produce graduates. Universities nationwide may have additional core technologies, but regardless, those core technologies are not the same as the core technology of social Greek-letter organizations. Figure 27 shows the various environments of social Greek-letter organizations in higher education.
However, higher education institutions and Greek-letter organizations share one thing necessary for each core technology: students. In order to be a member of a chapter, students must be enrolled and in good standing at the institution. In order to remain an active member, students must maintain a certain GPA. For an organization to be allowed to stay active on campus, the chapter members must maintain an overall minimum GPA average and adhere to certain standards imposed by the campus and the national Greek-letter organization. Over time, institutions have been affected by the Greek-letter organizations on their campuses, and conversely, Greek-letter organizations have certainly been shaped by the students who attend the institutions.

Figure 27. The environments of social Greek-letter organizations in higher education.
**Task environment of Greek-letter organizations.** Dill (1958) broadly defined task or resource environments as comprising things that are “potentially relevant to goal setting and goal attainment” (p. 410). The task environment is the part of the environment from which resources such as finances and personnel originate. The task environment allows inputs to become outputs. I considered Eastern Michigan University throughout its existence and determined that the academic area of EMU made up a significant task environment. Financial elements in this environment could be organized into federal grants, nonfederal grants, and tuition from students. Most higher education institutions have task environments largely consisting of these types of financial gains through academics. In addition, some (but not many) can generate revenue from their athletic activities, through ticket sales, and from broadcasting sports on television. However, the large majority of higher education institutions have a task environment created mostly by academic activities and the finances related to those activities.

**Students as part of the task environment.** Although I found it useful to examine the origins of EMU’s financial resources, financial resources were only one part of the task environment. Another relevant aspect I explored was students’ origins. For EMU, the geographical origins of students had not changed much throughout its history. When Greek-letter organizations first started forming at EMU in the early 1890s, students were mostly coming from southeastern Michigan low-income or middle-class families. Registration records showed that most came from rural areas within the state. Few students came from out of state. Students enrolled at EMU to study to become teachers, and the majority of the enrollees were women. In contrast, even though on-campus housing facilities are currently available, and many international students now attend EMU, only 14% of current students
came from outside the state (Eastern Michigan University, 2016). In addition, 5% of that 14% hailed from Ohio—EMU allows those students to pay in-state tuition (Eastern Michigan University, 2016).

As the time of this study, EMU still consisted mostly of student coming from within the state. Data reports from the institutional research website showed that most of those students coming from Michigan came from highly concentrated areas around southeastern Michigan (Eastern Michigan University, 2016). In 2016, 69% of EMU students received need-based financial aid, and over 82% of students applied for need-based aid (U.S. News & World Report, 2017). Academically, EMU’s admissions department reported that the average student coming to EMU scored 23 on the ACT and 1100 on the SAT (Eastern Michigan University, 2016). This information shows the kind of academic and socioeconomic backgrounds new EMU students have brought to the EMU task environment.

**Institutional rules.** National umbrella groups such as the National Panhellenic Conference, the Association of Education Sororities, the National Pan-Hellenic Council, and the National Interfraternity Conference have instituted rules and guidelines over time about who can and cannot be a member. However, because Greek-letter organizations are situated within the context of higher education, these rules and guidelines also situate students in the general student body. In fact, the academic requirements to be in a Greek-letter organization are often higher than the academic standards required to be enrolled with good academic standing.

Table 7 shows the organizational environment summary and comparison of both the academic environment and the Greek-letter organizational environment as a result of membership practices over time.
Table 7  
Organizational Environment Summary (Academics & Greek-Letter Organizations Results of Membership Policies Over Time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academics</th>
<th>Greek-Letter Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical Core</td>
<td>Produces graduates – teachers, nurses, businesspeople</td>
<td>Produces undergraduates and alumni who contribute dues, service, and time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task/Resource Environment (institution)</td>
<td>Grants, tuition, and alumni donations</td>
<td>Dues from undergraduates, alumni dues, and major gifts from alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task/Resource Environment (students)</td>
<td>Predominantly White, middle-class students up until the late 1940s and early 1950s when Black students arrived on campus. Since then, the campus has become increasingly diverse.</td>
<td>Predominantly White, middle-class students in NPC and NIC orgs and predominantly Black students in NPHC orgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Environment</td>
<td>Influenced by students from local communities, mostly from southeastern Michigan</td>
<td>Influenced by students at EMU. They must be in good standing, afford membership dues, and meet membership requirements of individual organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Environment</td>
<td>Federal Agencies – Higher Learning Commission, State Agencies, etc.</td>
<td>NPC, NIC, NPHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial Activities</td>
<td>Higher Learning Commission and other accrediting bodies depending on the colleges and programs within the institution</td>
<td>Housed within NPC, NIC, NPHC, and local student governing boards at respective campuses (CPC, IFC, and NPHC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, each campus may have policies and guidelines specifically written for Greek-letter organizations that require students to maintain minimum GPA scores, adhere to certain conduct policies, or to participate in leadership trainings or events. A long list of topics regarding policies imposed by either the national governing bodies of sororities and fraternities or EMU have affected students who have joined Greek-letter organizations over time. Topics have included:

1. Grade point average requirements
2. A certain number of credits completed at college level before joining
3. Membership dues paid to the local and national organization
4. Race (historically)
5. Religion (historically)
6. Major (historically)
7. Gender (Title IX)

Organizational framework for Eastern Michigan University and Greek-letter organizations. Now that I have applied the foundation of organizational theory to the national system of Greek-letter organizations nationally, the next logical step is to apply this information to the institutions I discussed in Chapter 4: Michigan State Normal School (MSNS), Michigan State Normal College (MSNC), Eastern Michigan College (EMC), and Eastern Michigan University (EMU). Eastern Michigan University is a complex organization. This framework was critical to my understanding of how Greek-letter organizations historically formed and evolved specifically at EMU as the institution evolved over time from MSNS to MSNC to EMC, finally becoming EMU. Specifically, I sought to learn how
the EMU higher education environment has shaped and been shaped by EMU Greek-letter organizations.

As mentioned, Greek-letter organizations are embedded in the context of higher education. Social Greek-letter organizations at MSNS, MSNC, EMC, and EMU have been embedded in the larger subsystem of the institution over time. EMU has the core technology of producing graduates. When MSNS was in its early days, the core technology was to train and produce teachers. Greek-letter organizations began to form at MSNS to provide a social outlet for students who felt they were not receiving activities they wanted in the classroom. In a sense, the early founders of Greek-letter organizations felt the need to provide something that MSNC could not. They wanted to provide a social outlet, and eventually, produce alumni of these organizations. These two different core technologies do not necessarily compete but they do not necessarily work in harmony with one another either.

Scott (2003) described the technology of an organization as “the work performed by an organization” (p. 230). Thompson (2004) wrote, “One or more technologies constitute the core of all purposive organizations” (p. 19). As previously mentioned in the discussion of the formation of national Greek-letter organizations, participants of institutions are motivated when they perceive a better or different way to do things. Greek-letter organizations at EMU formed over time from the perception that neither the institution nor existing Greek-letter organizations could meet the social needs of groups of students.

For EMU as an institution, promoting academics and producing graduates is its core technology. EMU produces teachers, nurses, and local business owners. EMU’s core technology is not the same as the core technology of the Greek-letter organizations within the EMU context. However, the institution and the Greek-letter organizations within its context
still share one thing—the students. Students’ participation in social organizations supports the core technology of the institution. In order to be a member of a chapter, a student must be enrolled at EMU. In order to remain an active member of a Greek-letter organization, a student must maintain a minimum GPA. In addition, for the organization itself to remain active on campus and be seen as legitimate, the organization must adhere to certain standards. EMU is affected by the Greek-letter organizations on its campus, and those organizations are absolutely affected by the institution and the way it has changed over time. Institutional leaders realized students were finding ways to meet their own perceived needs outside of the classroom, and they continue to do so today. The students learned they could form these organizations to meet their needs; however, they would also have to follow the university’s policies and guidelines. Because social Greek-letter organizations at EMU comprise members who are students at EMU, the institution and the Greek-letter organizations within its context are interconnected and always will be.

**Task environment of Greek-letter organizations at EMU.** The task environment “denotes those parts of the environment relevant to its supply of inputs and its disposition of outputs” (Scott, 2003, p. 231). This means that the task environment is responsible for establishing where necessary resources come from in order for the organization to produce outputs. The key resource for both Greek-letter organizations and for EMU as a higher education institution is the students who attend EMU. The students attending EMU have always been what determined the makeup of the student body, and to an extent, which Greek-letter organizations have existed on campus. When new types of students have changed the makeup of the student body over the years, these new students may have found
they were excluded from traditional fraternal organizations. They were welcome to be Greek, but they had to find a new way to do so.

One of the key resources for Greek-letter organizations over time at EMU has been a specific type of student. Obviously, members of Greek-letter organizations must first be students at EMU. In addition, they must be able to afford the time and financial cost to join. Further, they must see the value in joining the organization in terms of what they will get out of it. Similarly, the organization members must view a potential member as an asset to the organization. The only way these organizations have been able to survive is through recruiting members to carry the organization forward. Thus, students are the single greatest resource in terms of the continued legacy of Greek-letter life at EMU.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the students who attended MSNS in its earliest years were mostly from the southeastern Michigan area. Their families were likely part of a lower to middle socioeconomic class. Many of those early students were women who were studying to be educators. At the time, the types of students coming to MSNS determined the types of Greek-letter organization that formed. These students determined the purposes, values, missions, and goals of the organizations. As the institution changed, so did the types of students attending. When the selection of majors expanded, new students arrived from further away and with new interests. New Greek-letter organizations formed on campus, reflective of the religious, academic, or athletic interests of these new students. For example, as Black students began attending MSNC, new organizations formed for those students. As veterans began to return to campus, fraternities opened or recruited veterans as members. Although Greek-letter organizations at EMU individually have been exclusive over time, the changing student body has always determined the diversity in the makeup of the community as a whole.
Thus, the task environment has determined the type of Greek-letter organizations at EMU from the day the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club was formed in 1892.

**Competition within the task environment.** For Greek-letter organizations at EMU, the last 120 years have brought new competition for their main asset: student participation. In the late 1890s and early 1900s, publications of the campus yearbook, *Aurora*, showed only a handful of student organizations available to join. At that time, EMU hosted several Greek-letter organizations, a men’s union, a Christian student organization, and some literary societies. These organizations had different purposes, and being a member of one did not necessarily conflict with being a member of another. In 1903, for example, 1,002 students attended MSNC, and 13 social Greek-letter organizations formed. Only four of those fraternities were for men. With only a handful of other types of organizations for students to join, the Greek-letter community at MSNC enjoyed a sort of monopoly concerning options for student involvement outside of the classroom. Currently, over 270 student organizations exist at EMU serving a variety of purposes. If students seek to socialize with peers who have unique common interests, they can likely find groups to join. The variety of options brings a lot of competition into the equation for Greek-letter organizations at EMU. Now, even though over 20,000 students attend EMU, with so many more ways to be involved, Greek-letter organizations must compete with many other organizations for members.

In addition to competing with other social opportunities, Greek-letter organizations at EMU must also compete with other aspects of students’ lives. Many students commute to campus, work multiple jobs, and raise families. These nontraditional students may not want to spend money on Greek-letter membership. Many variables influence students’ interest in joining Greek-letter organizations at EMU. Successfully recruiting members may be more
difficult than it was when those organizations established out of the need to provide a social outlet. Arguably, today’s students meet that need in many other ways.

**Institutional Environment**

**Academic institutional environment.** In an open system, a system element has contact with its environment and all that is part of it. Scott (2003) defined the open system as “congeries of interdependent flows and activities linking shifting coalitions of participants embedded in wider resource and institutional environments” (p. 29). The institutional environment is the external environment that provides a type of legitimacy to the organization (Scott 2003). Eastern Michigan University does not exist by itself; the institution participates in activities that occur in the environment in which EMU exists. For example, like many other public institutions, EMU must maintain its legitimacy by meeting standards of various accrediting agencies, notably, the Higher Learning Commission and other state and federal agencies. If EMU fails to comply with and meet these standards, EMU may lose its accreditation and thus lose the legitimacy associated with that accreditation. Without that legitimacy, EMU would likely experience great losses in enrollment, faculty, staff, and funding.

**Social Greek-letter organizations at EMU and the associated institutional environment.** Unlike EMU’s institutional environment, social Greek-letter organizations operate in a completely different institutional environment, embedded within the context of EMU. Similar to the way the university must meet standards of accrediting bodies, nationally-affiliated Greek-letter organizations must meet standards and expectations set forth by their respective national organizations. These standards come in the form of accreditation guidelines, GPA minimums, and risk-management guidelines. Organizations
affiliated with national organizations must also adhere to policies and guidelines imposed by national umbrella groups to which their national organizations belong. For example, the national sorority, Sigma Kappa, must follow guidelines and policies imposed by their national organizations as well as by the National Panhellenic Conference. J.P.N., the first sorority formed at MSNC in 1893, was the only one of its kind until it took on Greek-letters as Pi Kappa Sigma and began to open chapters at other schools throughout the nation (Eastern Michigan University, 1893). Pi Kappa Sigma became a national chapter, affiliated with a national governing conference, the Association of Education Sororities (Seaton, 1949). Later, in the mid-1900s, Pi Kappa Sigma was absorbed on a national level by Sigma Kappa (Eastern Michigan University, 1959) and thus became obligated to follow Sigma Kappa policies and the policies and guidelines associated with the national umbrella group with which Sigma Kappa was associated.

Local Greek-letter organizations at EMU do not have a national office to impose guidelines and policies; however, because they are embedded within the context of EMU, they must affiliate with the local student-run governing council, the College Panhellenic Council, which imposes its own set of guidelines and standards. Because the other member chapters of the council are affiliated with the National Pan-Hellenic Council, the only local chapter at EMU, Sigma Nu Phi, must also follow the same policies and guidelines imposed by the NPC on the other chapters at EMU.

Finally, local and national chapters at EMU are still not autonomous actors. They must follow any standards, guidelines, and policies imposed by the University on Greek-letter organizations. Thus, social Greek-letter organizations exist in a complicated institutional environment, with many layers of governance and groups with which they must
comply. In addition, institutional environments can differ for each social Greek-letter organization, depending on the policies of their national organization or national umbrella group.

**Cultural environment.** Muwonge (2012) noted that researchers often combined the cultural environment with the institutional environment in literature; however, Muwonge claimed the cultural environment and the institutional environment were not necessarily the same. In many cases, these two types of environments even contradict one another. Smircich (1985) defined culture as “webs of meaning, organized in terms of symbols and representations . . . to study social significance—how things, events and interactions become meaningful” (p. 63). Scott (2003) expanded on the idea of culture: “Culture may be employed either as an external variable that may infuse the organization . . . or as an internal variable that characterizes the values or style of a particular organization” (p. 319). This means that the cultural environment gives the organization the right to exist. It is important to examine the cultural environment further because it is complex, composed of many different variables. Figure 29 shows the process that occurs when a student is input from their cultural environment into the institutional environment of both the university and Greek-letter organizations. Ultimately, the output is either a graduate of the institution, a Greek organization alumni, or both.
Figure 28. Process of taking a student from their cultural environment and placing them as an input into the institutional environment of a university and then a social Greek-letter organization.

Culture relating to EMU students. Because students attending the various incarnations of EMU over time have come mostly from southeastern Michigan, it is important to gain a better overall understanding of the culture of this area. As detailed in Chapter 4, students who attended MSNS in the early years were White students from specific regions in Michigan. Most of these students came from rural areas near Ypsilanti. They enrolled at MSNC for teacher preparation, which was unavailable at other nearby institutions. Because most of the students shared socioeconomic status, religious affiliations, and race, little diversity existed at MSNC in the early days. By the end of the 1890s, however, enrollment had increased dramatically, bringing new students to MSNC. The majority of the students at this time were women. As the areas around MSNC began to diversify, so did MSNC and its student body. With the segregation of schools, many Black students came from Detroit and its surrounding areas to learn to teach in Black schools. This influx of Black students brought a change to MSNC. As Black students began to attend in higher numbers toward the end of the 1940s, they formed organizations on campus for Black students. Thus, Ypsilanti’s location so close to Detroit brought a new type of student to MSNC, but the change meant many of the social issues occurring in cities across America affected EMU.
After the Vietnam War, veterans began to attend EMU in larger numbers, taking advantage of the G.I. Bill. This brought students from areas outside of southeastern Michigan, and caused enrollment to increase dramatically again. At the same time, the institution was growing through the formation of new departments and programs; in fact, the college had become a university. From that time forward, enrollment grew steadily, as did the number of course offerings, on-campus housing, and the international student program. Even with the growth at EMU over time, students today still largely come from the same southeastern communities they always came from. The EMU student body today continues to reflect the cultural environment in which the institution is situated.

**Culture relating to EMU Greek-letter members.** Much like they have shaped the cultural environment over time at EMU, the students who attend the University have always shaped the cultural environment of Greek-letter organizations. However, the makeup of the social Greek-letter organizations at EMU is not necessarily a true reflection of the cultural environment surrounding them. Although the founders of the first sorority and fraternity at MSNS founded the organization with the desire to provide a social outlet, members made clear from these beginning that these organizations were exclusive in nature. Only certain students were selected as members of these early groups—in fact, many were sons and daughters of faculty members, male athletes, or leaders of other groups like the Lyceum or Men’s Union. As the first fraternity and sorority formed, other groups began to form as well. Each organization contained a subculture that members perceived was different from all other subcultures. Muwonge (2012) claimed this conflict occurred when members affiliated with the same organization interpret the behavior and language of other group members through their own subcultural biases. Each member’s (or
subsystem’s) set of beliefs, values, and assumptions becomes their unquestioned reality, they then perceive behavior inconsistent with their own biases as irrational or even malevolent. (p. 37)

Groups of students within the student body at MSNC began to organize for several reasons, including an interest in pursuing a common activity, a belief they could have a better or different social Greek-letter organization, a lack of invitation to join an existing organization, or a combination of all of these reasons. In a way, these groups formed personalities, attracting certain types of students. As the characteristics of the student body began to shift, as previously described, members of existing Greek-letter organizations had to determine the types of students they would allow to become members. Although the student body began to change demographically, many of the social Greek-letter organizations that had been present at MSNS since the early 1890s, did not change the type of member they were allowing to join. For example, if a student’s religion did not align with the standards of an organization, a new group formed that welcomed students of a certain denomination. When Black students were not welcome, or by policy were prohibited from joining social Greek-letter organizations on campus, they formed their own. This pattern continued as new types of students have come to EMU over the years. The types of students attending the University has influenced membership patterns. In addition, over time, segregation has been a large part of the continued existence of social Greek-letter organizations. Today, the community remains divided by gender, race, and socioeconomic class.

Summary of organizational concepts for EMU and social Greek-letter organizations at EMU. The combination of frameworks offered by Parsons (1960), Thompson (1967, 2003), Scott (2003), and Muwonge (2012) provided a useful method for
understanding the organizational concepts applicable to this study. This framework also expanded upon the earlier understandings of organizations through the systems approach (rational, natural, and open). Using this framework, I combined these previous schools of thought with a consideration of the cultural environment to provide a clear picture of how social Greek-letter organizations functioned within the context of Eastern Michigan University. Applying this framework to EMU as an institution showed that academics is the technical core of Eastern Michigan University, but social Greek-letter organizations at EMU serve an entirely different purpose. Social Greek-letter organizations embedded within the context of Eastern Michigan University means two technical cores exist in one environment; though different, they operate in ways that affect each other. Members of social Greek-letter organizations at EMU are still EMU students first and must navigate the environment of the institution; then, as members of Greek-letter organizations, they must navigate all policies and guidelines that are a part of the associated institutional environment.

Conclusions

Research Question 1. How did Greek-letter organizations begin? Greek-letter organizations began when Phi Beta Kappa formed in 1776 at the College of William and Mary as a fraternity mainly for wealthy White Anglican men (Hastings, 1965). The group had many characteristics of present-day fraternities, including rituals, oaths, a motto, a badge for external display, and a strong tie of friendship. The founders created the organization to meet off campus with the purpose of discussing topics not included in the college curriculum. Additionally, a joining member was told,

You may for a while disengage yourself from scholastic cares and communicate without reserve whatever reflections you have made upon various objects;
remembering that everything transacted within this room is transacted sub rosa. . . here, too, you are to indulge in matters of speculation that freedom of enquiry which ever dispels the clouds of falsehood by that radiant sunshine of truth.

(Hastings, 1965)

The students simply wanted to have a place to go to discuss and debate intellectual topics without worrying about how faculty or peers would perceive them. Thus began the movement of social Greek-letter organizations in America.

Students at other institutions began to show interest in this type of fraternal activity, and as graduates from William and Mary attended other higher education institutions, they helped to form chapters at campuses like Yale and Harvard (Hastings, 1965). Greek-letter organizations were started by students and for students in order to provide something that students felt they did not receive in the curriculum. Students across the nation began to form Greek-letter organizations to participate in this type of social activity at their respective institutions. In turn, higher education institutions were perceived as more legitimate if they were able to offer students this type of experience in addition to classroom activities. If one school had Greek-letter organizations, and another did not, there could arguably be a perception of one institution being more legitimate compared to the other.

**Research Question 2. What has been the place of Greek-letter organizations in higher education?** This was a complicated question to answer because Greek-letter organizations have evolved over time in order to maintain their place in higher education. When Greek-letter organizations began, they formed to provide social outlets for students who felt their institutions should provide opportunities to socialize. However, as actors embedded within the context of higher education, Greek-letter organizations have had to
respond to changes in higher education over time. For example, after each post-war period, fraternities often provided housing for men returning to campus when higher education institutions could not. Alternatively, fraternities provided housing at schools where dormitories were not yet available for students enrolling from outside the immediate area.

Formerly the need of dormitories was not felt so keenly; since our situation in a large city insured the registration of a majority of local students. With the growth of the rural movement, both in population and teaching possibilities, there has recently been an influx of out-of-town students who must be accommodated in some way. (Whiting, 1934)

Sororities provided off-campus gathering places for women, although they sometimes had to meet in secret. As things shifted on campus, and Greek organizations adapted, the Greek-letter organizations had to meet other student needs. An excerpt from an annual report from Alpha Sigma Tau sorority showed the way many Greek-letter organization members and national headquarters felt:

The fraternity was not organized to support and carry out the policies of the dean of the school, nor to bring a greater enrollment to the school, nor the house and feed students, nor to support student enterprises, nor to subsidize other student activities such as athletics, although it has done all of these things and been used for all of these purposes. The fraternity was organized by the individual student to further his personal development within a group of students with similar backgrounds, ideals, standards, and objectives. (Walton, 1935)

Although fraternities and sororities have continued to be social in nature, and members continue to participate in activities they have valued over time, they have also had to meet
other needs within the context of higher education. Because they exist within that context, Greek-letter organizations must continue to serve the needs of students at those institutions. The students, after all, are their biggest resource in terms of survival. Thus, organizations once formed simply to provide social connections for like-minded individuals now serve many purposes in higher education.

**Research Question 3.** *How have Greek-letter organizations evolved over time?* Early Greek-letter organizations formed in similar ways for similar purposes, first as literary societies on campuses. Students met to discuss topics not available or offered through curricula. There was a social aspect to all of this. As Greek-letter organizations continued to form at higher education institutions nationwide, they began to form solely as social outlets and not for discussing literature. These organizations maintained values of service, philanthropy, and academics, but their main purpose was to offer a place for students with similar interests and beliefs to gather. Students at early higher education institutions were mostly homogeneous in race and socioeconomic class, depending on the geographical location, type of institution, and curricula offered. As higher education began to be available to new types of students, new religious groups, more women, Black students, and students of other ethnicities, the nature of the student body slowly began to shift at these institutions.

As the student body evolved, many of these new students were not welcome in existing Greek-letter organizations. Marginalized groups decided to form Greek-letter organizations of their own, founding organizations for groups not welcome in other organizations. For example, Charles Moskowitz founded Alpha Epsilon Pi at New York University in 1913 when a fraternity offered him a bid because of his well-known athletic ability (Rosenburg, 2015). When Moskowitz asked if his other Jewish friends could join, he
was told that the bid was only for him (Rosenburg, 2015). He decided to start a fraternity that would include Jewish men. Other Jewish fraternities and sororities formed around the country, including Sigma Delta Tau and Tau Epsilon Phi (Rosenburg, 2015).

Organizations inclusive to minority groups continued to form on campuses where minority students were likely not welcome. For example, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. formed in 1911 at Cornell University (Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, n.d.). The purpose of the organization was to stress the importance of academics, but “Alpha also recognized the need to help correct the educational, economic, political, and social injustices faced by African Americans” (Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, n.d.). The lack of diversity of individual Greek-letter organizations has not improved much over time, but the diversity of types of Greek-letter organizations has changed over time as new groups of students were excluded from historically White fraternities and sororities.

After each war, veterans returning to campus or coming to higher education for the first time may have found it difficult to find places to live on campus or to connect with the experiences of other students on campus. Many of these men formed or joined fraternal organizations. Often, fraternity houses were needed to house the large number of students on campuses as enrollment numbers exploded across the country.

In addition, fraternities and sororities have received a great deal of scrutiny for alcohol, hazing, and drug use, particularly in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. As a result, campuses, national headquarters, and umbrella governing groups developed new policies to address these behaviors. Greek-letter organizations had to begin to educate and enforce these policies or run the risk of closing. Currently, these organizations are more structured and organized than ever. Requirements and standards emanate from multiple levels of oversight.
Much of Greek-letter groups’ organizational time is now spent meeting these requirements, standards, and educating members on all required curricula.

**Research Question 4. How did Greek-letter organizations emerge at Eastern Michigan University?** Greek-letter organizations emerged at EMU much as Greek-letter organizations emerged at other higher education institutions. Students at MSNC formed a literary club called the Lyceum in the mid-1850s (Eastern Michigan University, 1853). The Lyceum group met to discuss literature not currently offered in the classroom. The group debated, read, practiced oratory exercises, and discussed current events. Eventually, the original Lyceum members split into a handful of other literary clubs according to the different interests of the students involved.

As enrollment increased and Greek-letter organizations were forming at higher education institutions both near MSNC and across the country, MSNS students began to form societies more social in nature. For example, in 1892, the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club formed, and even though later they practiced toasts as part of their weekly or monthly meetings, the group was first formed on an evening when a group of male friends gathered to enjoy a package that had been mailed from one of the boys’ mothers as a gift. Thus, the Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club, a social gathering of students with common interests, evolved into the first Greek-letter organization at MSNC (Eastern Michigan University, 1892). Shortly afterward, in 1893, the first sorority, Pi Kappa Sigma, formed (Eastern Michigan University, 1893). After these first two chapters formed, many other students quickly followed suit and formed social Greek-letter organizations based on their needs and interests.
Research Question 5. *How have Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University evolved over time?* Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University have evolved over time in a similar fashion to the evolution of Greek-letter organizations at other institutions. Greek-letter organizations at MSNS began as literary societies and then quickly became more social in nature. After the first men’s fraternity and women’s sorority formed in 1892 and 1893, respectively, many others formed in rapid succession. Early in the process, many of the organizations formed at a local level by MSNS students, not necessarily affiliated with a national organization. In fact, from 1892 to 1912, only local Greek-letter organizations formed at MSNC. However, many of those local organizations began to send alumni to other campuses, either for school or for jobs, where these members opened new chapters. Many of the local organizations that began at MSNC became national presences, including Pi Kappa Sigma, The Washingtonian Toastmasters’ Club, and Alpha Sigma Tau. Other chapters opted to remain local and unique.

After 1912, Theta Lambda Sigma (a sorority formed originally only at normal schools) opened, only other sororities affiliated with the Association of Education Sororities came to the University (Eastern Michigan University, 1912). These sororities were formed to support women learning to be educators. This pattern continued until 1924, when the first sorority formed at the University that was not specifically a teachers’ sorority (Eastern Michigan University, 1924). In the early 1930s, national sororities and fraternities started to become permanent fixtures within the Greek-letter community at the University. This pattern matched the national trend. As institutions across the country began to offer new programs, attracting new types of students, the diversity in the types of Greek-letter organizations on campuses increased. Ninety-three known national Greek-letter organizations had formed
before 1931 (Anson & Marchesani, 1991). Thus, fraternity and sorority life as a national presence in higher education had become embedded. After the 1940s, the majority of the organizations that formed at the University were nationally affiliated. Many of the existing local organizations struggled to remain open or were absorbed by a national organization. Of the local organizations that formed at the University after 1940, none remains open today. In addition, the 1940s brought Black students to the University in large enough numbers that the first historically Black Greek-letter organizations formed in 1949 (Eastern Michigan University, 1949). In the 1960s, a handful of Jewish fraternities and sororities formed at EMU, as well as most of the remaining national black Greek-letter organizations.

Another evolution of Greek-letter organizations occurred after the Vietnam War when antiestablishment attitudes led to the rise of independent fraternities and sororities whose members sought to form fraternities and sororities for all. Those organizations did not survive past the first few years, but enough formed to make a statement.

The 1980s and 1990s brought policies and standards into EMU Greek-letter organizations, imposed by national fraternities and sororities, their respective governing umbrella groups, and the EMU administration. These policies forced Greek-letter organizations on campus to either meet these new standards or risk having their chapters closed. These new standards altered the activities of Greek-letter organizations at EMU and professionalized the community and the organizations. However, the enforcement of these new policies and standards, imposed from all parties, has made it more difficult for student groups to open new chapters at EMU. In fact, one policy even prohibits new local organizations to form.
With only one remaining local organization at EMU today, only national organizations can and will be present from this point forward, maintaining standards and oversight from multiple levels outside of the campus. The social Greek-letter organizations that exist now at EMU are organized into three governing councils: the College Panhellenic Council (CPC), the Interfraternity Council (IFC), and the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC). These councils segregate by race, looking much the same in membership as they did in the late 1940s. Current Greek-letter organizations must follow the highest number of standards and rules imposed since they were first organized in 1892. Not following these policies or meeting these standards could result in a chapter closing. In short, Greek-letter organizations are not and never have been autonomous actors in higher education, and those at Eastern Michigan University are no exception.

**Research Question 6. How are Greek-letter organizations organized?** As has been established, Greek-letter organizations are not autonomous actors; rather, they are embedded in the context of higher education. Thus, I can establish that Greek-letter organizations are not organized as closed systems. Greek-letter organizations function within the context of higher education institutions. That means Greek-letter organizations are open systems, because “interaction with the environment is essential for open system functioning” (Scott, 2003, p. 89). Greek-letter organizations are complex systems with hierarchies. They have been shaped and formed largely in response to the environments in which they are embedded. Schwab labeled this perspective “‘rationalism,’ the opposite of reductionism. In rationalism, explanation entails looking outside of an entity to the environment or a higher system in which it is embedded” (as cited in Scott, 2003, p. 92).
Individual Greek-letter organizations are part of much larger systems. National Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University are elements in a larger system of national fraternities and sororities that have many chapters at other higher education institutions. These national groups are also members of larger umbrella organizations, made up of other similar national organizations. An individual Greek-letter organization at Eastern Michigan University is also a part of the university system. Because all members of the fraternity or sorority are students at the institution, the organization is also a part of a Greek-letter community, embedded within the Eastern Michigan University community. A fraternity at EMU is also part of a local governing council, with its own structure. Within each individual fraternity and sorority, there is also a system of hierarchy. Each organization has a president and other executive board members, leadership positions, and a structure for handling disciplinary issues. Within each governing council on campus is a similar structure. Within each national fraternal organization is a hierarchy, which often includes an office with paid staff, as well as a governing executive board, and possibly, a foundation for fundraising. All of these entities function independently but must also interact with one another for each individual organization or actor within the system to remain operational.

If leaders at Eastern Michigan University decided to stop allowing fraternities and sororities to organize on campus, the individual chapters would close; the national organizations and their umbrella groups would likely feel financial effects but remain operational. If a national organization decided to close all of its chapters nationwide, the students and the Greek-letter community at EMU would feel the impact. If the local governing council decided to suspend or expel an organization from being recognized on campus, again, the national organization and its umbrella group would feel the impact. Any
time one of these parties revises a policy, all the other groups are affected. These groups are interdependent.

**Defining boundaries.** From an open-systems perspective, it can be difficult to identify the boundaries of Greek-letter organizations, but they are certainly present. “Given the essence of organizations as open systems, their boundaries must be sieves, not shells, admitting the desirable flows and excluding the inappropriate or deleterious elements” (Scott, 2003). Boundaries contribute to organizational rationality (Scott, 2003). Greek-letter organizations often use techniques to attempt to insulate themselves from their social environments. I observed one example of this in recruitment of potential new members. Recruitment criteria can immediately exclude groups of students. Advertising recruitment events a certain way or at a certain time may prevent certain groups of students from attending. Charging money for annual dues may prevent other students from joining. Stated and unstated criteria for who is a “good fit” may exclude others. Recruitment criteria are just one type of insulation attempt. After recruits become members of a Greek-letter organization, they learn more about that organization, its members, its activities, mission, and values. They learn about the organizational norms, the ways to behave and not to behave. Putting members through this process further separates them from the external environment, setting them apart, further insulating the organization from the external environment.

**Managing the task environment.** Thompson (1967) argued, “Organizations seek to manage their input and output boundaries, employing varying tactics to manage these exchanges.” Greek-letter organizations must protect themselves from disturbances from the task environment. Additionally, they must be willing to modify their boundaries both through boundary-spanning and boundary-shifting activities (Scott, 2003).
Buffering tactics. All organizations have a technical core or core technology. Although Greek-letter organizations started as individual societies on individual campuses to provide social outlets for students, over time they have morphed into much larger entities with relationships to many other organizations. From a national fraternity or sorority perspective, the core technology of Greek-letter organizations is to produce lifelong alumni members from the undergraduate students joining on campuses. That means Greek-letter organization leaders will seek to seal off their core technology from outside environmental influences in order to produce alumni, a very specific output. In order to continue to exist, these organizations must have student members who become contributing alumni. “All organizations . . . are highly motivated to secure enough stability and certainty to be able to function effectively in environments that contain unknowns and uncertainties” (Scott, 2003, p. 200). These buffering techniques reduce uncertainty within the organizational environment. These techniques may help reduce uncertainty, but often come with a cost. Figure 30 shows the way that Greek-letter organizations may use buffering strategies to protect their organizations from certain types of members.
Greek-letter organizations often use buffering strategies to protect the technical core from certain disturbances.

**Coding.** Greek-letter organizations use a buffering technique called coding. Scott (2003) claimed coding occurred when organizations “classify inputs before inserting them into the technical core” (p. 200). Processing inputs this way allows Greek-letter organizations to maintain a certain type of membership by excluding certain potential members. Coding occurs in Greek-letter organizations during recruitment processes and even after a potential new member receives a bid to join. Before potential new members are initiated with full membership, they must go through a new member education process, usually lasting around eight weeks. During this time, if the organization leaders or the potential members decide there is not a good fit, the potential members may be coded out of joining the organization. Even after a member is initiated, coding can still occur. For example, members may fail to pay membership dues, fail to earn a minimum GPA, or engage in behavioral issues. Greek-letter organizations have policies and systems that allow them to code these members out and project a level of standards to the external environment. Figure 31 shows how the buffering
technique of coding can sort certain types of potential members out of the organization before they can become a member.

Figure 30. Coding techniques, like membership policies, or unspoken practices, can keep certain types of members from joining a Greek-letter organization.

Using coding techniques helps Greek-letter organizations reduce uncertainty and satisfies their national headquarters and higher education institutions by maintaining expected standards. Not all coding techniques are necessarily positive. Coding can mean that certain racial and ethnic groups, socioeconomic groups, and others are coded out of having access to membership.

Forecasting. Forecasting is another buffering technique used by Greek-letter organizations. As noted in Chapters 3 and 4, over time, environmental impacts have reduced the number and types of members in Greek-letter organizations. When Greek-letter
organizations suffered low membership numbers during and after WWII, many fraternities had to close. Without undergraduate members paying dues to the national headquarters, the national headquarters cannot maintain operations. When large numbers of veterans returned to campus following the G.I. Bill, fraternity and sorority membership numbers exploded, and organizations had to figure out how to handle issues that accompanied managing larger organizations. These are just a few examples of the ways that the environment has affected the way Greek-letter organizations have operated.

Over time, organizational leaders had to learn how to forecast or predict changes in order to survive. Scott (2003) explained, “Organizations taking account of such regularities can accommodate for them” (p. 201). Greek-letter organizations need members to survive. When leaders anticipate changes in higher education, national organizations must make accommodations and adjustments accordingly. For example, if reports of hazing and sexual assault are increasing, leaders of national organizations must determine how to educate members to reduce this trend. Otherwise, potential new members may not continue to join, and higher education institutions may not continue to allow Greek organizations to open or exist. When new types of students start enrolling at higher education institutions, Greek-letter organizations must decide how to either attract or exclude these populations. Ultimately, they must maintain a certain level of membership to keep the doors open.

**Bridging tactics.** Just as Greek-letter organizations use buffering techniques to protect the technical core from the external environment, they must use bridging tactics “as a response to—as well as a stimulus for—increasing organizational interdependence” (Scott, 2003, p. 203). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) stated, “The typical solution to problems of interdependence and uncertainty involves increasing coordination, which means increasing
mutual control over each other’s activities” (p. 43). Greek-letter organizations have never been autonomous actors and thus use bridging tactics when working with their national headquarters and the institutions of higher education in which they are embedded. Figure 32 shows the way that an undergraduate chapter at an individual campus and a national headquarters might use bridging tactics to share resources with one another.

*Figure 31. Bridging tactics between undergraduate Greek-letter organizations and their respective national headquarters*
One benefit of bridging with a national headquarters is the increase in resources made available to chapters. The national headquarters gains more members who pay dues and who can possibly become lifelong supportive alumni. However, bridging can come with its own trade-offs. The students may have resources available to them, but they must also follow national policies, national governing guidelines, membership guidelines, and pay dues. The national headquarters may have more control over some of the students’ activities but they also take on the relationship with the University, as well as any liability that a student or an undergraduate chapter may bring with them.

**Cooptation.** Scott (2003) defined cooptation as “the incorporation of representatives of external groups into the decision making or advisory structure of an organization” (p. 204). Greek-letter organizations have practiced cooptation as a bridging technique since the early years of their existence. When a single chapter expands to other campuses and creates a national organization, new oversight and advisory structures emerge. This process benefits the individual chapters because they receive more resources, guidance, and can compete on campuses for members by advertising these resources during recruitment. Affiliating with a national organization carries legitimacy.

As national organizations formed across the country, they formed networks or umbrella groups to provide oversight and standards. Now, individual chapters must incorporate two external groups into the decision-making or advisory structures of their organizations. Additionally, when individual chapters formed on campuses, they began to incorporate administrators from the higher education institution as advisors. This kept the chapter and the campus administration on the same page with expectations, standards, and kept an open line of communication between the two parties. These acts of cooptation over
time by Greek-letter organizations may have been beneficial, but have also brought many new levels of oversight. These organizations may formed by students for students, but they quickly became governed by many other involved parties.

**Associations.** Associations are “arrangements that allow collections of similar or diverse organizations to work in concert to pursue mutually desired objectives” (Scott, 2003, p. 205). Greek-letter organizations used cooptation as a bridging technique, which led to the formation of associations. As more organizations became nationally affiliated, those organizations created umbrella groups. At a national level, these are the National Panhellenic Conference, the Interfraternity Council, the National Pan-Hellenic Council, the Multicultural Greek Council, and the National Association for Latino Fraternal Organizations. These national umbrella groups formed to expedite the affiliation of national groups that were similar in nature. However, within each council, little diversity exists in terms of the type of chapter that associates. At Eastern Michigan University, and at many other campuses, institutional leaders and students worked together to form local governing councils that function similarly to these national umbrella groups. For example, locally, all NPC-affiliated chapters are associated on campus with the College Panhellenic Council. Each individual organization is associated with this council, which provides guidance and oversight for chapters that are similar to one another. EMU also has an Interfraternity Council and a National Pan-Hellenic Council for other member groups.

**Mergers.** A merger occurs when “two or more interdependent organizations become a single-collective actor” (Scott, 2003, p. 205). Mergers have occurred over the years at both a national level and at a local EMU level. As discussed in Chapter 4, many sororities were formed at normal schools across the country and became national organizations when
chapters opened at other normal schools. As normal schools began to change and serve other populations of students, these organizations struggled to maintain their identity and membership numbers. Those chapters affiliated with the Association of Education Sororities. The AES agreed to join the National Panhellenic Conference. Many NPC chapters at a national level agreed to absorb entire chapters. Figure 33 shows the difference between the merging process and gives the merger of Sigma Kappa nationally with Pi Kappa Sigma nationally during the 1959 to 1960 school year.

![Figure 32. Mergers at Eastern Michigan University.](image)

One example of this type of merger began at EMU. Pi Kappa Sigma formed at MSNC in 1893. Later, it opened chapters at other normal schools across the nation and affiliated with the AES. When the AES was absorbed by the NPC, Pi Kappa Sigma remained a national chapter, but struggled to maintain membership numbers and compete on campuses. In the late 1950s, Pi Kappa Sigma agreed to have all its existing chapters absorbed by another national sorority, Sigma Kappa. The two organizations merged and became one acting organization. These mergers happened in many other forms and on other campuses.
across the country, as detailed in Chapter 4. Mergers have been necessary for many organizations to continue to exist. Mergers have allowed some chapters to continue to exist in some form, but have also allowed the chapters doing the absorbing to grow and become a more powerful presence in terms of membership numbers.

Greek-letter organizations have used buffering and bridging tactics for survival. They must protect their technical core of inputting undergraduate students in order to create the output of alumni and maintain a financially solvent national organization. They have used buffering techniques over time to protect this need. However, because they have never been autonomous actors in higher education, they have also needed to use bridging techniques to maintain harmony with higher education institutions, their national organizations, and other groups with which they have become increasingly interdependent. Both the buffering and the bridging techniques have come at a cost but have allowed Greek-letter organizations to maintain a presence on American higher education institution campuses today.

**Achievement of Purposes**

The purpose of this study was to understand the role and function of social Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University. In order to accomplish this goal, I developed a contextual understanding of Greek-letter organizations in the United States. After conducting this study, I have gained a deeper understanding of the role and function of social Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University, as well as an understanding of the history of these organizations. I have analyzed how the role and function of these organizations has changed over time and then applied a conceptual framework to further that understanding. I have applied organizational theory to illuminate the ways that social Greek-
letter organizations have emerged, evolved, and functioned at Eastern Michigan University. In addition, I conducted this study to achieve other purposes.

**Informed effective decision making and advising about policy.** An important objective of this study was to gain knowledge to inform my practice as a leader in the field of higher education and student affairs, specifically, as a professional working closely with members of Greek-letter organizations. Prior to this research project, I believed that a lack of knowledge on the subject of the inclusivity of membership among Greek-letter organizations was influencing the quality of Greek Life experience for students at Eastern Michigan University. Further, I assumed that leaders at Greek-letter national headquarters were unwilling to provide answers to their member chapters recruiting certain types of students into their organizations. I had ideas about what Greek-letter organizations could be; however, I needed to understand the realities of Greek-letter organizations. This study has informed my thinking and deepened my knowledge base, thereby shaping my daily actions as a leader in the field of higher education and student affairs.

**Gained a deeper understanding of national Greek-letter organizations.** Before conducting this research, I had a limited understanding of how Greek-letter organizations operated on a national level. Although I had some experience volunteering for national headquarters for a brief time, which required travel and a structural understanding of paid staff and volunteers, my understanding of national organizations was limited to that brief time. National Greek-letter organizations have both similarities and differences. I have communicated with a small number of national organizations operating member chapters at Eastern Michigan University. At the time of this study, I worked for a national fraternity headquarters. However, to gain a full understanding of the way national organizations have
functioned, I conducted this research. Now I have a deeper understanding of the history of national organizations, the differences in the purposes of various organizations, and the differences in membership practices and policies. In addition, I have gained more confidence and competence in communicating and collaborating with national headquarters to support the students with whom I have worked.

**Gained a better understanding of my personal experience as a lifelong member of a Greek-letter organization.** Although I am fortunate enough to be a member of a Greek-letter organization, I have mixed feelings about whether that experience was all it could have been. I have often mentioned that being a member of a Greek-letter organization helped me build confidence and leadership skills. In addition, membership provided me with a social context that helped me enjoy my college experience. However, as a professional in the field, looking back, I acknowledge sometimes the chapter, campus professionals, and national headquarters fell short in educating members of the community on a variety of issues. As an undergraduate, I did not often ask questions about membership practices. Members did not take time to reflect formally on the purpose of our organization, nor did we discuss whether we served as a positive force on campus or welcomed students of all backgrounds. As a professional with a more advanced body of knowledge and skillset, I looked at the gaps in programming and resources for members of Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University, and in particular, for the men of Delta Tau Delta. I spend my workdays attempting to close those gaps so that current undergraduates have experiences that reflect what they were promised.

**Developed myself as an individual, a professional, and a scholar.** The final purpose of this study was to develop myself as a professional, an individual, and a scholar.
Mentors and classmates have told me repeatedly that this process would require a different type of commitment, discipline, and endurance, compared to any other challenge I have faced. I wanted to take on this challenge. I believed this process would push me further, both professionally and academically, and it did. This process taught me endurance in a completely different context. It was challenging in every way imaginable. However, by completing this research study, I proved to myself that I am competent in my field, that I am able to endure what sometimes seemed like endless hours of writing—or not writing—and that ultimately, I could become an expert in a subject I previously knew little about.

What Does This Study Mean for Me?

Although I have achieved the purposes of this study, I learned new things along the way that have meaning for me as I move forward in my career as an educational leader. I became a more critical thinker and learned to ask critical questions. I used to love the Greek-letter experience simply for what it offered me. Now I have examined the Greek-letter experience in terms of the history of these organizations and reflected on how they have contributed to exclusivity in the American higher education landscape for hundreds of years. In addition, I learned to determine where I could make the biggest impact—and I realize I can only make that impact if I choose my battles. Greek-letter organizations have been a part of the American higher education system for a very long time. Some traditions are deeply woven into the fabric of these organizations.

Problems exist that I cannot change because they are outside the scope of my work. In order to make a difference, I must to continue to work with students, have conversations with my peers, conduct research, and think critically about the role these organizations play in higher education and in the lives of the students with whom I work. My decision making
abilities have become more effective. As I continue to learn about national Greek-letter organizations, specifically in the context of Eastern Michigan University, I understand why I often felt frustrated working at an institution with a diverse student body. The history of Greek-letter organizations has not helped motivate these groups to diversify or practice inclusivity.

Now, as I work for a national fraternity, my frustrations come from different sources. As of this writing, I work in an environment based on one organization’s traditions, rituals, and history. In many ways, I am working in a context that is much less inclusive, compared to the overall context of Eastern Michigan University. Working in these settings—both local and national—throughout my research helped me to understand the complicated relationships that exist between higher education institutions and national organizations. My experiences, coupled with my research in this area, have allowed me to take a step back from my previous knowledge to consider my future career path as it relates to working with fraternities and sororities.

**What does this mean for educational leaders?** Although my case study involved Eastern Michigan University, in order to place my research in a larger context, I studied the history of Greek-letter organizations in American higher education. By doing so, I was able to learn more about the beginnings of Greek-letter organizations in the United States. This research helped me discern the values and beliefs that many national organizations brought with them when they established or absorbed chapters at Eastern Michigan University. By having a depth of knowledge outside of my experiences at EMU, I was able to understand the history of Greek-letter life at EMU and assimilate its story of inclusivity and exclusivity. My research may be able to help other educational leaders understand the complicated
relationships between national headquarters, higher education institutions, and student communities. It is impossible to disconnect the history of Greek-letter organizations from their current existence. Educational leaders need to learn as much as possible about the history of these organizations if they expect to make effective decisions for students.

I believe this case study of EMU provides an inspiration for other educational leaders to begin to think critically about the Greek-letter communities in American higher education. By objectively asking where, how, and why each organization was established, I saw clearly how and when these organizations have been exclusive over time. By examining the exclusive nature of Greek-letter organizations, educational leaders can identify the appropriate strategies to use when members of these organizations seek ways to be inclusive to groups of students not currently represented in their organizations. Additionally, educational leaders, particularly those involved in Greek-letter life, can find it difficult to look internally to solve issues that may arise within their Greek-letter communities. Instead, Greek-letter life professionals gather at conferences to try to talk about issues that come up nationally. Although that type of gathering and problem solving is important, I hope my research can serve as a model for ways in which individual Greek-letter communities have formed. Educators should study the history of the host institutions, the types of students attending, and early and influential faculty. Although national organizations certainly have had a major influence on the EMU Greek-letter community, Ypsilanti, the state of Michigan, individual students, staff, faculty, and administrators have all played a major role in shaping the Greek-letter community over time.

In order to make effective decisions as educational leaders, it is important to have extensive background information about the institution, the origins of the Greek-letter
community, and the history of each of the national organizations represented on campus. Educators should be aware of the makeup of the Greek-letter community in terms of the types of students included or excluded from each organization. Educational leaders must continue to ask critical questions and be strategic in navigating the politics of institutions and the Greek-letter organizations with whom they work.

**Limitations**

Any research study presents limitations. In this study, the data and findings pertained to the experiences of students within the Greek-letter community at Eastern Michigan University. As such, the findings may be analytically generalizable to other universities, Greek-letter communities, and other student organizations. A second limitation of this study was my role as the primary research instrument. Although I was committed to behaving ethically and with integrity, and I was careful to protect the validity of the study, it is important to acknowledge that my presence as the research instrument meant my biases were present. A third limitation was the level of my own understanding regarding the conceptual framework I chose. I believe this study will add to the knowledge regarding the purpose of Greek-letter organizations and the role they have played over time; however, other researchers may consider perspectives or issues that I did not perceive during my study. This study represents what I was able to understand through the knowledge I gained. Despite these limitations, I believe this study represents a high level of scholarship that will help to advance knowledge and form best practices within the scope of higher education and student affairs, as well as create dialogue about working with fraternities and sororities.
Recommendations for Future Study

In this study, I explored the purpose and function of social Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University. To place this goal in a larger context, I explored the history of social Greek-letter organizations at higher education institutions in the United States. Despite the relative specificity of the topic, several questions emerged that warrant future investigation.

**Local social Greek-letter organizations.** During my investigation of the history of social Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University, it became apparent that local fraternities and sororities function differently, compared to fraternities and sororities affiliated with a national fraternal headquarters. Local chapters still have oversight from their higher education institution, but they avoid the pressures and structure imposed by a national organization and other umbrella groups. I found that throughout history, the characteristics of local group members were more likely to resemble the characteristics of the EMU student body. For various reasons, local organizations have slowly disappeared from the EMU Greek-letter community. In fact, policies now exist that prevent new local organizations from forming. This topic deserves more attention. The Greek-letter community at EMU has the potential to serve more students if more local organizations were present and willing to accommodate types of students who may not currently be welcome in the Greek-letter community. Further study on the specific history of these local organizations and their impact on the EMU community could help illuminate the differences in purposes between organizations that do not serve national interests and those that do.

**Chapters that have transgender members.** Some fraternities currently in the Greek-letter community at Eastern Michigan University have members who identify as
transgender. These chapter members have already navigated policies and practices related to the inclusion of transgender members. Some of the chapter leaders have asked their national headquarters for guidance around policies, and some have chosen to make their own decisions about membership. Only one of the national fraternities represented at EMU currently has a policy statement on transgender membership. The lack of guidance means students interested in joining other EMU fraternities must guess whether they will be welcome or even allowed to join. It would be interesting to study the chapters with members who identified as transgender to learn what the chapters have done to work toward inclusion. The experience of transgender students and chapter members could reveal useful data about the nature of social Greek-letter organizations at Eastern Michigan University.

**Women’s fraternal organizations at Michigan State Normal School.** It became apparent to me early in my research that many early social Greek-letter organizations at MSNS formed for women. These groups consisted entirely of women studying to be teachers. Some of the Greek-letter organizations began at MSNS as local chapters and ended up having an influence nationally as other chapters opened at normal schools across the United States. At the time, MSNS provided an environment in which these organizations formed, grew, and rapidly multiplied. That process has certainly changed over time as the institution has changed.

Future researchers could explore facets of this process, including the impact of those early women’s organizations; and the students, faculty, and staff involved in the founding of those organizations. It would be interesting to discover why some of those organizations no longer exist on a local or national level. It would also be interesting to explore why more of the original women’s Greek-letter organizations at EMU have persisted over time, while all
but one of the original men’s Greek-letter organizations have closed. Of course, early in the
EMU’s history, the institution enrolled more women than men, leading to the formation of
more women’s sororities. However, there were also times in EMU’s existence when more
men attended. EMU stopped being a normal school long ago, yet more women’s sororities
have been able to maintain their existence at EMU than fraternities over time. Educators may
find it helpful to know the reasons behind this pattern.
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