

IT'S JUST GREEK TO YOU: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF IMPRESSION
MANAGEMENT AMONG GREEK ALUMNI IN ACADEMICS

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

IT'S JUST GREEK TO YOU: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF IMPRESSION
MANAGEMENT AMONG GREEK ACADEMICS

presented by Joy L. Daggs,

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my father, James Robert Daggs, whom I lost July 17, 2003, weeks before I entered the PhD program at the University of Missouri. Without my father, I would not be who I am today, nor would I be where I am today. He taught me resilience, perseverance, and eternal optimism. Without his support, I would not have had the courage to succeed or the motivation to follow through.

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I also dedicate this to my sisters and my nieces and nephews. Their tireless support has been instrumental in motivating me.

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Table 1. Participant Pseudonyms and Demographics

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NPC—National Panhellenic Conference—the governing body for the 26 traditionally white Greek organizations for women

NIC—National Interfraternity Council—the governing body for the traditionally white Greek organizations for men

NPHC—National Pan-hellenic Conference—the governing body for the nine traditionally African American

GOA—Greek Organizational Alumni

ABSTRACT

In this study, the author explored how Greek organizational alumni who are training to enter or are in the Academy professionally manage their Greek affiliation as a facet of their individual identity. Research on the self was prevalent throughout the 20th century, starting with Cooley's Looking Glass Self, including Goffman's Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), among many others. Impression management has also been a prominent construct in Social Psychological Research (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Using qualitative interviews, the study explored the lived experiences of Greek Organizational Alumni in the Academy. Overall, the results revealed that the participants do not disclose their Greek affiliation for a variety of reasons. Additionally participants revealed that they do not feel specifically privileged or stigmatized by their affiliation, but that their affiliation must be carefully communicatively managed. Implications for future research are also discussed.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction of the Problem

Hustling about at a Communication conference is normal for me. I am usually seeing old friends from other institutions and making new connections. This time it was a bit different. I was rooming with one of my colleagues whom I did not know as well and we began talking about our research interests, particularly, what my topic was for my dissertation. When I told my colleague it was management of Greek organizational membership as a facet of one's identity, she was shocked. She looked at me, wide-eyed, "You were in a sorority? Wow, I thought I was the only one! What were you?"

"An Alpha Delta," I replied.

"Really, I was a Kappa Phi. So we're like, the only two right?"

I went on to tell my colleague that we were in very good company and *not* the only two in our department. I went on to name current and former colleagues from our department that were members of Greek organizations. She felt relieved to know this, yet was surprised. She had disclosed this information to other colleagues and received a very cold reception, and it was seemingly assumed that she had not taken her undergraduate experience seriously. I had also fought battles about this aspect of my identity, which I credit for my confidence to pursue graduate education and have healthy friendships. I attribute my membership in a Greek organization to many of my aforementioned networking skills at conferences. However, even in networking situations where I am frequently told I am outgoing and can converse easily, I am reluctant to admit my Greek affiliation, due my perceptions of the stigma attached to it, particularly in the academic

community. In the classroom, I frequently ponder if it is appropriate for me to reveal that I am Greek to my students, even if I do not disclose my affiliation. The reactions I have received upon disclosure of my Greek affiliation, in addition to student misbehavior being attributed to Greek affiliation, whether affiliated or not, has led me to question how Greek affiliation is viewed in the Academy. In addition, I have also thought about my own actions and communicative reactions to my Greek affiliation. All of these factors have led me to the current study.

Identity and Impression Management

Identity has been studied extensively by sociologists such as Mead and Cooley. An exact definition of identity has been difficult to pinpoint, but according to Whetten and Godfrey (2002), identity is essentially “what makes a person a person” (p. 19). Identity is formed through interaction with others. Cooley (1902) was one of the first sociologists to highlight the importance of communication in forming one’s identity with the “looking-glass self.” According to Cooley, people see themselves as reflections in another’s eyes. This perspective emphasizes the importance of others in forming one’s identity. Communication messages are key in forming identity. The messages we may get about our habits, physical attributes, or personal tastes force us to make judgments and decisions about how we present these characteristics to others.

Making decisions about how or when to present personal characteristics is termed self-presentation or impression management. Goffman (1959) first presented the idea that people present different attributes of themselves as they deem appropriate in various social settings, much like actors in a play. His ideas have been dubbed “self-presentation.” Jones and Pittman (1982) created a more structural, systematic approach

to self-presentation. Jones and Pittman define self-presentation as, “an actor’s shaping of his or her responses to create in specific others an impression that is for one reason or another desired by the actor” (p. 233). Impression management is distinctly different from the construct of identity management. Identity management focuses more on the management of cultural group membership, such as race, ethnicity or gender (Imahori & Cupach, 2005). The focus of this study is impression management, strategically controlling the disclosure of information about Greek organizational membership in an academic context, be it among students, colleagues, or administrators. As the decision whether or not to disclose Greek affiliation is driven by the desire to create an appropriate image in the mind of the target, impression management is the best theory for this goal.

This purpose of this study is to explore how men and women in the academic context negotiate disclosure of their Greek affiliation, based on their perceptions of the views of Greek organizations by the Academy. In order to thoroughly understand the lived experiences and communication used by alumni of Greek organizations in the academy, qualitative methods will be used to attempt to construct the phenomenon of managing Greek organizational membership as a facet of one’s identity in an academic setting or Academia.

Justifications for the Study

There are a number of reasons I feel it is important to study how individuals in who were members of Greek organizations experience and manage the disclosure of their Greek affiliation in the Academy. Greek organizational alumni (GOA) who have entered the Academy as faculty or administrators or are preparing to enter the academy professionally as graduate students have been selected for this study because of the

unique intersection of perceptions and experiences of Greek organizations in and by the Academy. College campuses and Greek organizations have a unique relationship. Greek organizations rarely receive a neutral reaction (Turk, 2004); people either have strong positive or negative reactions to these types of organizations. Greek organizations can bring positive things to campus such as philanthropic work, increased student grades and increased student retention (Turk, 2004; Reese, 1998). However, at an opposite end of the spectrum, Greek organizations receive negative attention for hazing incidents, behavior problems, and perceptions of elitism and exclusivity (DeSantis, 2007). Movies and media coverage have been instrumental in creating and perpetuating a negative image of Greek organizations. In fact, DeSantis states, “most Americans, even those non-Greeks who have attended American colleges with Greek systems, know little about the inner workings of these groups—except perhaps what has been portrayed in movies such as *Animal House*, *Old School*, *Revenge of the Nerds*, *Legally Blonde*, and *Sorority Strip Party*” (p. 2). The aforementioned movies create an image of Greek organizations that is quite different than the images of Academia. Academia being a place of enlightenment and reflectiveness are seemingly in opposition to images of Greek organizations being places for reckless and irresponsible behavior. Negotiating these opposing facets of one’s identity can be challenging for GOA in the Academy. The challenge is the focus of this study.

Another interesting aspect of this study is that the nature of membership in Greek organizations is different than membership in work organizations. Membership in Greek organizations is voluntary, and therefore is different than organizations that are typically studied, which usually revolve around professions. Greek organizations have been

selected for study because membership in these organizations is accomplished through a mutual selection process. For those in stigmatized occupations, there is a difference in to justifying their occupation with the need to earn a living (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999), from those in an organization they voluntarily affiliated with that has a negative reputation. Earning a living is necessary for survival, earning the money needed to provide for oneself and perhaps a family; being a member of an organization that is not viewed positively is different, because the benefits are not obvious to an outsider.

Membership in Greek organizations is a conscious, free choice, much like religion or community and volunteer groups. Members pay dues in the organization, and membership is considered a third place organization or life enrichment activity (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Kramer, 2002), behind membership in work groups or family groups. Similar groups would be religious organizations, volunteer organizations, or community organizations. With the negative images of Greek organizations, there could be specific challenges that are difficult for members of Greek organizations to negotiate since it was their choice to become part of an organization with a negative image that does not have the benefit of a paycheck.

GOA entering the professional academic arena are faced with difficult decisions about communicating their Greek organizational membership due to perceptions by non-Greeks of Greek organizations. The academic arena could pose additional issues because GOA are in a setting where Greek life may be present, a college campus. In a new role on a college campus as a professional academic, negotiating affiliation is important for GOA, possibly more so than alumni who do not enter Academics professionally. Therefore, this study adds unique dimensions to the theory of impression management

and self-disclosure research by using a completely voluntary third-place organizational membership. Another interesting dimension of this study is adding the practical application of impression management to daily life and interpersonal interactions.

About Greek Organizations

Since the justifications for this study have been presented, the reasons for the specific selection of Greek organizations as the context for the study will be addressed more specifically. On many college campuses around the United States, there is a presence known as the Greek System, its members referred to as “Greeks.” On some campuses, “Greektown” serves as an area where some of the members of these organizations live. The houses are typically decorated nicely and have other advantages to the members over living in dorms. However, there is more to these groups of students than simply the unique symbols that the students frequently wear on their clothing or have imprinted on backpacks or key chains.

Current statistics provided by the National Panhellenic Conference, the governing body for 26 college women’s Greek organizations states that there are almost 3000 different chapters of their 26 organizations throughout the United States and Canada. Over 80,000 women were initiated into various chapters of these organizations in 2006 (NPC, 2007). Additionally, the North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) boasts 5500 chapters on 800 college campuses throughout North America (NIC, 2005). Greek organizations have a significant presence on many college campuses throughout the continent. The governing body for the traditionally African American organizations, both men’s fraternities and women’s sororities, the National Pan-hellenic Council (NPHC) has active chapters on both collegiate campuses and in communities across the

country. Current numbers indicate that there are 2700 active undergraduate chapters and graduate chapters nationally. There are approximately 1.8 million initiated members of NPHC organizations in total (J. Jones, personal communication July 2, 2008).

Greek organizations promote leadership development among members and frequently list academic development or personal development among their mission and goals. Greek organizations are, at a national or some cases international level, devoted to one organization for philanthropic work. These organizations range from cardiac care, foundations for the blind, domestic violence, and child advocacy. The umbrella organizations that support and oversee the operations of all Greek organizations echo these goals along with others such as not bringing harm in any way to other individuals, meeting financial obligations, and cleaning and respecting chapter property (NIC, 2005). NPC also reports that members feel a need to belong on a college campus, and Greek organizations provide a venue for them to belong. Membership in these organizations is also based on mutual selection, so being selected into an organization can be viewed as a privilege, in addition to the aforementioned leadership opportunities, connections with alumni and social opportunities. Since these organizations promote scholarship, leadership development and social connection, it is not unusual that some of the alumni of these organizations would enter the academic arena professionally.

Another reason Greek organizations have been selected is because Greek organizations are largely ignored in terms of scholarly research. As will be presented in the subsequent literature review, scholarly work on Greek organizations is frequently done from a standpoint of Student Life, looking at statistics of alcohol and drug abuse and dating violence (Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994). In fact, in searching for literature for

Greek organizations, it is difficult to find literature that does not focus on issues of drinking or gender violence in Greek organizations. Some studies have focused on gender constructions that are reinforced or refuted by fraternities and sororities (DeSantis, 2007; Boyd, 1999; Kiesling, 1997), which is moving toward a more comprehensive understanding of these organizations and what their purpose is for members. Greek organizations have been the subject of a recent book by a Communication scholar (DeSantis, 2007), examining the gender constructions of Greek organizations.

Images of Greek Organizations

Since some of the initial reasons for the selection of Greek organizational alumni have been presented, some more detailed reasons for exploring Greek organizations and the media images of Greek organizations will be explored. Greek organizations are very negatively portrayed in popular media. The 1978 movie *Animal House* starring John Belushi is a popular image of Greek organizations as unmotivated, party oriented, unkempt men who associate with women who are more concerned with appearance and marrying one of the aforementioned men than academic achievement or prowess. Other made for TV movies focus on hazing incidents that have resulted in dire consequences.

In the earlier part of this decade, Music Television designed a reality television show called “Sorority Life” focused on the new member process of two local sororities. A sponsoring company withdrew their support and sponsorship due to MTV’s portrayal of Greek life, which ignored the academic and leadership development and instead focused on heavy drinking on one member’s 21st birthday and various other parties (Greek101.com, n. d.). Popular press books such as Robbins’ (2003) book *Pledged* seem to attribute many negative behaviors of college students to membership in a Greek

organization. Robbins has been highly criticized for this book by Greek organization members, alumni and critics (Feeney, 2004), but the book is another example of the media construction of Greek organizations. Currently, an ABC Family show entitled “GRΣΣK” is under fire for its portrayal of Greek life. Some national organizations have contacted their collegiate and alumni members to contact ABC Family to pull the show from the airwaves.¹

Negative media portrayals neglect to mention the consequences for the organizations if the members were to actually engage in the behaviors presented in the media. Hazing is prohibited by all national and international Greek organizations. If a chapter is accused of hazing, there are substantial consequences that can include closing the chapter all together. The MTV show *Sorority Life* neglected to mention that the sororities that were chronicled were local and not governed by national or international organizations, therefore not responsible to a larger umbrella organization. Robbins’ book has also been criticized because it was one university with two chapters and not painting a complete picture of Greek Life. However, the impact of the negative portrayals and images may be the only images that those outside of Greek organizations have of what goes on inside the organizations, as mentioned earlier by DeSantis (2007). Therefore, when Greek alumni enter the academic arena professionally, these images and ideas precede them. Revealing affiliation with these negatively portrayed groups can bring about challenges for the alumni members. Since the groups have a negative reputation, the attribute can be discrediting, the very definition of a stigma, according to Goffman

¹ The same announcement appeared on several different organizational websites. Visiting the national organization websites will give information about the requested contact.

(1963). The present study seeks to describe the experience of being Greek and an academic, managing these images and attempting to put one's own best face forward.

Negative portrayals of Greek organizations by media are ironic when well-respected journalists such as Katie Couric, Joan Lunden, Donna Handley (editor of *Ms. Magazine*), Andy Rooney, Ted Koppel, Sam Donaldson, and Jane Pauley are all alumni of Greek organizations (Greek101.com, n. d.). In addition, several government officials at both state and federal levels are alumni of Greek organizations. With alumni who have gone on to be leaders and prominent journalists, the missions of these organizations and the popular portrayals of these organizations are not similar. Therefore, members of these organizations can have difficulty navigating issues with their personal identity because the images of the Greek organizations can be reflected upon its members. The connections between public organizational identity and the identification of individuals with organizational values will be discussed a bit later. This study is a step toward the call to examine organizational identity from a more interpersonal interaction perspective, an approach suggested by Dagg (2005) and a call echoed by Johansson (2007) in a suggestion to merge more interpersonal communication theory with public relations research.

Organizational Identity and Identification

As the reasons for the selection of Greek organizations have been presented along with the images, the importance of organizational identity and identification research will be presented along with their importance in framing this study. Organizational identity has been studied in two major ways. First, scholars have studied how individual organizational members internalize the values of their organization in their daily lives;

some instances even extend beyond the existence of the organization (Pierce & Dougherty, 2002; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Russo, 1998). As undergraduate members particularly, the members of Greek organizations are frequently identified by the symbols that they wear on their clothing or have on key chains or flip-flops. Within the Greek community, those symbols identify them on several bases. Greek symbols carry a great deal of personal meaning for the members, as the members have chosen to be a part of that particular Greek organization due to connections felt to the other individuals in the organization. Members may have also chosen to join for increased social opportunities and members also enjoy the benefits of increased leadership opportunities (Boyd, 1999) and the connections that can be made with alumni in terms of networking for future jobs.

The other major area of organizational identity research is the public identification of organizations (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). Research on public identification has revolved around organizations dealing with a crisis or “damage control” (Benoit, 1995; Benson, 1988). In studying organizational communication, this focus usually takes a rhetorical approach and represents a very calculated way of constructing an identity.

However, outside of the Greek community, the individual symbols do not necessarily have individual meaning, the mere identification as “Greek” brings with it several pre-conceived ideas about how the individual might view their education and their character. Frequently, those attributions are rather negative, as evidenced by the discussion of the media images that portray Greek organization members in a negative light. It is not only fictional media images, but media coverage of negative events as representative of the entire Greek community. Because of the negative images, affiliation

with these groups can be seen as quite negative and deeply discrediting to an individual. Goffman (1963) specifies that stigmatized identities can not only include physical deformities or mental defects, but group affiliations that are viewed as negative. Group affiliation stigma could be used to describe Greek organizations.

Research has not explored how the two areas of organizational identification intersect for organizational members. Public perceptions of an organization can affect an individual affiliated with that organization. Public perceptions of a company can reflect on employees of that particular company, but, as mentioned earlier, members can create distance between themselves and the organization by justifying their membership with the need to earn a living. However, when an organization is a third place organization or life enrichment organization that members are not receiving direct financial benefits from their membership, challenges in obtaining a positive perception from a target can be different. The challenges are not easily answered with a simple, "it's a job." Voluntary affiliation with a negatively perceived group requires more than a simple answer. In fact, members can have more difficulty distancing themselves from a group with which they are voluntarily affiliated that does not afford the members the benefit of a paycheck. The current study seeks to fill the missing link between the public identification of an organization and the interpersonal impact public organizational perceptions can have on organizational members in interpersonal interactions, particularly in the academic context.

Contributions to Communication Literature

While I have examined why Greek organizations have been selected for this particular study, I have not examined the contribution of this study to the field of

Communication. The most important contribution of this study is that it will seek to develop impression management theory in the Communication discipline. Social psychology literature has a significant amount of impression management research, but the research is largely experimental (Baumeister & Jones, 1978; Snyder, Lassegard, & Ford, 1986; Cialdini & DeNicholas, 1989). Very little research involves existing aspects of a person's real identity and how he or she would go about disclosing information based on their own personal attributes. However, because impression management involves the creation and presentation of messages, it is inherently communicative. Therefore, a communication perspective is invaluable in expanding this theory. Various segments of Communication have utilized impression management ideas in various contexts including interpersonal relationships (Manusov, Trees, Reddick, Rowe, & Easley, 1998; O'Sullivan, 2000, Becker & Stamp, 2005; Wildermuth, Vogl-Baur, & Rivera, 2006) and public relations (Sallot, 2002).

Additionally, there are many indirect tactics of impression management (Cialdini, 1989) that have not been thoroughly explored. This study seeks to explore the existence of direct and indirect tactics as they emerge from the data. This study will add to the existing framework and possibly help to develop some existing categories with specific evidence and strategies. New categories may also emerge from the experiences of the participants.

The present study will make many different contributions to many different areas of impression management literature. Since this study will use qualitative methods of inquiry, it will be a unique contribution to the impression management literature. Most existing literature is experimental in nature, using affiliations that are fabricated in which

the participants have little stake. In using an affiliation that participants have spent some time in forming, this study will take a unique perspective with impression management research. The qualitative method will not only be a different way of studying impression management, but doing qualitative interviews will allow the participants to illuminate their impression management thoughts and give depth to the impression management literature; not simply be a list of strategies. Communication literature that focuses on impression management focuses on creating an entire persona, be it in an online setting (Becker & Stamp, 2005) or in interpersonal relationships (O'Sullivan, 2000; Wildermuth et al., 2006). The present study makes a unique contribution regarding messages about one particular attribute that could potentially influence interpersonal relationships and interactions in a specific context, Academia.

Additionally, when negatively viewed or, in some cases, stigmatized attributes have been studied, the stigma or attribute studied has been in terms of health communication, such as HIV infection (Agne, Thompson, Cusella, 2000), gender stereotypes and sexuality (Schmalz & Kerstetter, 2006). Stigmatized occupations have been studied, (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) but I believe that "dirty work" can be justified more easily because of the need to earn a living. Membership in a third place or life enrichment organization or activity is completely voluntary. There has been little research on third place or life enrichment activities in general, and even less on how people communicatively manage their membership in third place or life enrichment organizations in interpersonal interactions. Examining how people manage their connection to life enrichment activities is important, because as Kramer (2002) found,

some people put their commitment to life enrichment organizations ahead of work or family commitments.

Additionally, there is not much in organizational identity literature as to how people who are members of third place organizations with negative reputations must manage the reputation of their organizations in their interpersonal interactions. Exploring these strategies can be transferred into other organizational memberships such as religious groups, community groups, or even national groups whose reputation may not be positive to non-members. The present study seeks to connect impression management to the third place or life enrichment activities.

Greek organizations in the academic context have been chosen because the reputation of the organizations, as mentioned previously by media portrayals and media coverage seems to run counter to the image of an academic. For those who are not members of Greek organizations, meaning is attributed by sources that are not necessarily those students wearing the symbols. The power of negative perceptions influences how others interact with members of Greek organizations in an interpersonal setting. Greek letters send a symbolic message largely influenced by the power of the messages attributed to members of Greek organization. The message is constructed through interpersonal communication, and so it is important to explore how images can influence interactions for the person who is displaying the symbols and projecting the meaning attached to those symbols, intentionally or unintentionally.

The present study will connect impression management, life enrichment organizations, and interpersonal communication. The study will also make a unique

contribution to organizational identity research, examining how organizational identity can be constructed and communicated at an interpersonal level.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

After previewing the overall goals of this study in the previous chapter, this chapter will lay out the theoretical framework for the study, Impression Management Theory (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Additionally, related literature on the self, self-disclosure, organizational identification, and Greek organizations will be reviewed.

The Self

In order to understand the idea of individuals carefully managing the images others form of them, it is important to understand how the self is formed. The study of the self has changed from a very functional, static idea of self to a more fluid self that changes depending on the situation in which the interaction occurs. As stated in the previous chapter, identity is essentially “what makes a person a person” (Whetten & Godfrey, 2002, p. 19). A common thread throughout identity research is that “identity is an interactional accomplishment” (Dellar & Zimmers, 1998, p. 597), meaning that essentially, the self is formed through relationships with others and each individual’s comparison of themselves to others (Whetten & Godfrey, 2002). Widdecombe (1998) states that individual identity is, “something available for use: something that people do which is embedded in some other social activity, and not something that they ‘are.’” (p. 191). All of these definitional elements unite to emphasize that identity is indeed something that is formed through interaction and that membership in categories and groups is important for others creating their own impressions of someone’s identity. However, it is also important to note that one characteristic is not one’s *entire* identity.

To be female, for example, does not encompass all aspects of one's identity. People have multi-faceted identities that can include religious affiliation, occupation, hobbies, relationships, and most importantly for this study, group memberships. Prevalent features of group memberships may create impressions of one's identity to others, such as Greek organizational membership.

Cooley's Looking Glass Self

Sociological theorists from the turn of the century have stressed the importance of interaction in forming an individual's identity. Mead's theories of symbolic interaction emphasize that a self cannot be even fathomable without a social, interactional context (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Another important theory of self identity is Cooley's theory of the looking glass self, which states that people see themselves in terms of their reflection in others' eyes (Cooley, 1902). Cooley states that the social self is "simply any idea, or system of ideas, drawn from the communicative life, that the mind cherishes as its own" (p. 179). Cooley goes on to state that one's self is not separated from society, but a vital part of society. People see themselves as reflections in the eyes of others. Cooley states that there are three major components to the social self, "the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance and some sort of self-feeling; such as pride or mortification" (p. 184). Holstein and Gubrium (2000) further state that although an individual is involved with forming their identity or self, social reflection plays a vital role in an individual's adaptations of him or herself. Cooley's idea was a bridge that links the idea of a fixed identity to an identity that is ever-changing.

Cooley's looking glass self is an important concept in framing this study. As we see ourselves in the reflections of others, we interact based on how we believe others see us. Our version of how others see us may or may not be accurate. However, our perceptions of how others view our characteristics dictate our decisions of whether or not to disclose information about ourselves or how we choose to disclose information about ourselves. Self-disclosure will be discussed in the next section.

Self-Disclosure

As it is important to understand that the self is formed through interaction, it is also important to understand that the self is presented through interaction. As individuals have several characteristics that make up who they are, what they share with others is their decision. Self-disclosure, as defined by Derlega, Metts, Petronio, and Margulis (1993) is, "what individuals verbally reveal about themselves to others" (p. 1). Self-disclosure is essential in forming interpersonal relationships. People must reveal information about themselves to connect with others.

Regulating self-disclosure is a cornerstone of social penetration theory, a seminal theory in interpersonal communication connecting self-disclosure and relationship escalation. As Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory states, when individuals first meet, they reveal information to each other that is not particularly intimate, but as the relationship escalates, the level of intimacy of the self-disclosure increases. Altman and Taylor also delineate three particular characteristics that may hinder or facilitate the escalation of interpersonal relationships, which are the personal characteristics of the participants, the outcomes of the exchange, and situational context. Personal characteristics of the interactants refer largely to personality traits. If people are

open and disclose a great deal, there will be a different dynamic than if they are simply shy and reluctant to disclose. In addition, if interactants feel that something is to be gained from an on-going relationship or more interactions, then that will change the dynamic. Finally, the situational context is also an important factor in terms of self-disclosure. If an on-going relationship is probable, then self-disclosure will likely be increased and monitored, based on the perception of receptiveness by the target. Self-disclosure is central to the idea of impression management, the theoretical framework for this study.

Impression Management

The self and self-disclosure are important constructs in framing this study because they are key components of impression management, the theoretical framework that shapes this study. The concept of impression management was initially introduced by Goffman (1959). Goffman approached the presentation of self as a performance. In daily interactions, Goffman believed that people would make conscious decisions about the appropriate role to play or the appropriate part of themselves to display in interactions. According to Goffman, actors also constantly manipulate their behavior, because they are always aware of the way that their behavior can be interpreted and the way that others can view them. Their relationships to others in the interaction can be important also in determining the facet of their identity they wish to portray. Metts and Grohskopf (2003) summarize impression management and self-presentation quite well by stating,

“Self-presentation refers to the process by which individuals, more or less intentionally, construct a public self that is likely to elicit certain types of attributions from others, attributions that would facilitate the achievement of some

goal, usually to acquire social rewards or advantages, or to prevent loss of self-esteem when future failure seems probable” (p. 360).

The concept of carefully communicating information about ourselves and managing the information others receive about us has inspired a significant amount of work in the area of social psychology. Jones was a leader in conducting experimental research focused on impression management or self-presentation. Jones and Pittman (1982) define self-presentation as, “an actor’s shaping of his or her responses to create in specific others an impression that is for one reason or another desired by the actor” (p. 233). In some ways, impression management could be viewed as strategic self-disclosure, as individuals make careful considerations about what information they should share about themselves in specific contexts, based on the audience present and the goals that the individual has in interacting with that person. Jones and Pittman outline five major strategies defined by the desired impression of the actor.

Jones and Pittman’s Typology

Ingratiation. The first strategy is ingratiation, when the individual is driven by the concern that others like him or her. Ingratiation is the most theoretically developed of the strategies identified by Jones and Pittman (1982). Ingratiation strategies can be driven by a number of goals and motivations, but is largely determined by the time, the place, and the nature of the relationship. For example, if the self-presenter is of higher status than their target, then he or she may use flattery as a strategy. Ingratiation is also driven by three major attraction seeking behaviors. The first is incentive value or why it would be important for the communicator to be liked by the particular target. Power is also an important determinant of incentive value. If the target has some sort of incentive power over the self-presenter, then there is more reason for the self-presenter to insure

liking from the target. Subjective probability is the second of the three determinants. Basically, subjective probability is the likelihood that a particular strategy will be successful on the intended target. This is especially important, because if the strategy backfires on the self-presenter, there could be significant implications for the self-presenter, based on whether or not the target has power over the self-presenter. The final of the three determinants is perceived legitimacy. Perceived legitimacy is related to the consistency of the self-presenter's strategies with his or her true self and how appropriate the strategies used are, given the specific situation. If likability was the goal of the self-presenter, ingratiation strategies are likely to be used.

Intimidation. The second piece of the typology is intimidation, the desire of the self-presenter to be feared (Jones & Pittman, 1982). The self-presenter using this strategy is quite the opposite of the ingratiation. The desire for likability is minimal. Obtaining power is an obvious reason for using intimidation tactics. The self-presenter wants to insure that the target is well aware that he or she has the capability to inflict physical or mental pain on the target if angered or stressed. Intimidation would be used as a strategy if the self-presenter was trying to assert power or gain obedience from his or her target.

Self-promotion. The third piece of the typology is self-promotion, the desire to be seen as competent. In an earlier version of this typology, self-promotion had been included with ingratiation, but upon further review, Jones and Pittman felt that self-promotion needed its own classification. Self-promotion can merge qualities of both ingratiation and intimidation. When using strategies of self-promotion, the self-presenter must be quite careful. Most often, positive self-presentation is believed to be exaggerated. Therefore, it is likely that the target will not believe that the self-presenter

is authentic if he or she is overly positive. Self-presenters are more likely to use self-promotional tactics if he or she feels that credibility is threatened or that the target might not see him or her as credible.

Exemplification. The fourth piece of the typology is exemplification, which means that the self-presenter wants to be idealized by the target projecting, “integrity and moral worthiness” (Jones & Pittman, 1982, p. 245). Those attempting to use exemplification want to be seen as “honest, disciplined, charitable, and self abnegating.” The best examples of those seeking this type of view by their audience would be clergy and those in high moral positions, as a person in that position would most likely want to see himself or herself to be seen as an ideal representation of personal qualities.

Supplication. The final piece of Jones and Pittman’s typology is supplication, the desire to be seen as helpless and vulnerable. In the case of those using this particular strategy, they would be seeking additional help. He or she would want their target to see them as weak, and therefore in a position of powerlessness. Jones and Pittman emphasize that this strategy is one of last resort, as it diminishes any power held in the interaction. Jones and Pittman equate this strategy to a wolf showing his throat in an attack when the wolf feels he is overpowered. By showing the throat, the wolf hopes to be spared by his attacker. In an interpersonal situation, the supplicant wishes to gain mercy or pity from their target, making the target feel socially responsible for the supplicant.

Direct and Indirect Tactics

In further application of Jones and Pittman, impression management also delineates between direct and indirect self-presentational tactics. Direct tactics are messages that the self-presenter uses to specifically communicate his or her own desired

impressions (Cialdini, 1989). Direct tactics are explicit communication tactics about the self. Indirect tactics are tactics that are “undertaken to enhance or protect one’s image by managing information about the people and things with which one is simply associated” (p. 46). Indirect tactics are more focused on affiliation rather than personal attributes.

Boasting. Cialdini et al. (1976) conducted one of the first studies regarding indirect tactics, “basking in reflected glory (BIRGing).” In this study, students at schools with prominent football programs were studied to note how much school apparel they wore following a victory as opposed to a loss. Cialdini et al. (1976) found that following a victory, students were more likely to wear school apparel and use pronouns emphasizing connection such as “we” or “us.” After a loss, more distancing language and behavior was apparent, using pronouns such as “they.” Cialdini and Richardson (1980) attribute this phenomenon to the principles of Heider’s (1958) balance theory. People often attempt to perceive positively associated things positively to maintain personal harmony. This idea of balance is of particular importance to this study. Balance is a key component in impression management theory. Most people strategically communicate information about themselves in an effort to be viewed positively (Cialdini et al., 1976; Snyder et al., 1986; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980). In the studies of indirect tactics of impression management, people used more associative tactics with positively viewed people and groups and more distancing tactics with negatively viewed people and groups.

In addition to BIRGing, Cialdini (1989) outlines many other strategies of indirect self-presentation that are of particular interest for this study. There are two overarching categories of indirect tactics. Connection focused tactics emphasize the strength of

connection to others. The first of these indirect connection focused strategies is boasting, proclaiming a positive link to a favorable other. This is the underlying idea behind BIRGing.

Burying. The next connection focused strategy is burying, or “disclaiming a positive link to an unfavorable other” (Cialdini, 1989, p. 51). Again, applying balance ideas, people would want to distance themselves from a negatively viewed others. If a self-presenter believes that an attribute is viewed negatively by the target, the presenter is likely to use burying tactics to not claim any type of link to the negatively perceived person or group.

Blaring. Blaring is a connection focused strategy that proclaims a negative link to an unfavorable other (Cialdini, 1989, p. 51). Blaring is another distancing tactic, as those who might have a negative connection to someone viewed as unfavorable would be more likely to pronounce their negative connection to this other to make it clear to outsiders that he or she is not linked to this unfavorable other. An example of this would be if a horrific criminal act was committed by someone with the same last name as the self-presenter and the self-presenter used strategies to make it clear to others that he or she was not related to the criminal.

Blurring. Blurring is the final connection focused indirect tactic, which disclaims a negative link to a positive other (Cialdini, 1989, p. 52). Blurring might be used if a self-presenter knows he or she is perceived negatively by a positive other, such as a positive political figure. The self-presenter would be unlikely to mention the connection or he or she might downplay the importance of the negative connection.

Other-focused tactics

As the connection focused tactics have been discussed, it is now important to examine the other-focused tactics. Other-focused tactics, as outlined by Cialdini (1989) are focused on controlling the perceptions of linkages to connected others. The old adage that we are known by the company we keep is important in examining the control of the perceptions of others to which we are linked. The following four strategies are indirect impression management strategies that are focused on enhancing or degrading the features of the liked other.

Burnishing. The first strategy outlined by Cialdini (1989) is burnishing, enhancing the features of a positively linked other (p. 52). If we are positively linked to someone or something, we are motivated to make it look even better in the eyes of outsiders. Very little empirical data exists on this use of this technique (R. Guadagno, personal communication, January 16, 2008, Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007), but Cialdini and Richardson (1980) gave students an alleged latent creativity test. The students who were told they performed poorly were more adamant in proclaiming a positive link to their home university. Cialdini (1989) speculates that in organizational settings, managers are likely to burnish the images of their employees who they had a direct hand in hiring.

Boosting. The second connection focused tactic that Cialdini (1989) emphasizes is boosting, or minimizing the unfavorable features of a positively linked other (p. 53). Even the most minor connections can elicit this behavior. Finch and Cialdini (1989) explored this phenomenon in a study where they told people they shared a birthday with Russian monk Rasputin. Those who were told they shared a birthday with Rasputin were

more likely to accentuate his positive traits than those who were not told they shared a birthday with the maligned figure.

Blasting. Moving toward examining more negative features of a linked other, blasting involves exaggerating the unfavorable features of a negatively linked other (Cialdini, 1989, p. 53). Referencing the same study used to identify the traits of burnishing, Cialdini and Richardson (1980) found that those who performed poorly on the creativity test were also quite likely to openly blast the rival university.

Belittling. The final tactic of indirect impression management strategies outlined by Cialdini (1989) is belittling, minimizing the favorable traits of a negatively linked other (p. 54). No empirical evidence exists for this particular strategy, but Cialdini sees that the tactic might particularly apply in an organizational environment. If a maligned organizational figure was a mentor to a particular person or responsible hiring them, the organizational member connected to the maligned figure would be likely to focus on the negative, rather than the positive traits of the maligned figure.

Application of Impression Management Theory

As this study is exploring how Greek organizational alumni in academia communicatively manage their Greek affiliation and their academic status, impression management is the best theoretical foundation for this study. Jones and Pittman's (1982) typology and along with Cialdini's (1989) indirect tactics are important for helping to understand the communicative goals of impression management techniques.

Additionally, the indirect tactics are important in helping to frame how communicators manage affiliation. While this theoretical lens will guide my data analysis, it will not limit my data analysis to a simple categorical breakdown. I am attempting to illuminate

an experience, and therefore it is the voice of the participants that will guide the data analysis. The tactics simply act as a framework for the theoretical foundations of the study.

Stigma

As impression management has been presented as the overarching theoretical framework of this study, there is another important component of this study, the presence or absence of stigma. In order to determine the presence or absence of stigma, it is important to define stigma. Furthering his work on identity in interactions focusing more specifically on attributes that are discrediting, Goffman (1963) examined how people with spoiled identities managed those identities in every day interactions. Goffman defined a stigma as, “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (p. 3), but goes on to explain that the attribute alone is not necessarily discrediting, but it is the context in which the attribute is displayed. For example, if an individual is Muslim, being Muslim is not necessarily stigmatized. Being Muslim is simply an attribute that designates the individual’s religious affiliation. However, in a situation where Islam is perceived negatively, being Muslim would be stigmatized. In a nation where Islam is followed by most people, being Muslim would not be stigmatized. Goffman states that “a stigma is really a special relationship between a stereotype and an attribute” (p. 4), and throughout society there are varying relationships between stigma and attributes.

Goffman (1963) states that stigma can be assigned in three ways. First, there are stigma that are present from birth over which the person has little to no control, such as being born with a physical handicap. The next type of stigma is one that the person has more control over and is likely due to some sort of decision that the person made or flaw

of character. This stigma could be related to profession or social behaviors. The third type of stigma is what Goffman refers to as “tribal stigma” due to racial or religious affiliation, and Goffman states that these could “infect” entire families.

The context of the stigma attribute is particularly important for this study. Greek organizations will be discussed a bit later in this chapter. In this discussion, the images and ideas of Greek organizations will be presented. The images and ideas about Greek organizations that are presented in the media are instrumental, although not solely responsible, for creating the images that those outside of Greek organizations hold about Greek organizations. Context is also extremely important in the stigmatization of Greek identity. The academic context has been specifically chosen for this study because it is the context where Greek organizations are most prevalent. When alumni of Greek organizations cross into the realm of Academia, they are faced with their own personal ties to their organization and their desire for success in the Academy. As will be discussed later in this chapter, on many college campuses, there has been an ongoing struggle with the necessity of Greek organizations on college campuses and college administrators. Therefore, the alumni are entering a context where they are straddling two worlds. In their previous role as an active member of the organization, their Greek affiliation was not considered a liability, as organizational members were immersed in the culture of Greek organizations. As professionals in academics, the role is viewed differently, as will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Now that we have defined what a stigma is and how it can be assigned, it is important to examine some strategies that stigmatized individuals use to manage the presentation of their stigmatized attribute in interpersonal interactions. Leary (1995)

outlines five strategies that stigmatized persons can use to manage the perceptions of their stigma in interpersonal interactions. The first is concealment, simply hiding the stigmatized attribute, if at all possible. If the attribute is not a physical attribute easily visible such as physical handicap, the attribute is easier to conceal.

The second strategy for managing a stigma is admission and destigmatization. Some stigmatized persons simply communicate their attribute to others, as they feel that it is simply easier than attempting to hide it (Leary, 1995). In openly portraying the stigmatized attribute, the bearer can use the opportunity to show that the attribute should not be viewed in a negative way. The attribute can also be seen as a benefit. This is more applicable in cases such as scars, that might be reframed as “badges of honor,” rather than marks of a stigma. Another possible strategy for destigmatization is to claim that the stigma is beyond the person’s control, such as a birth defect or genetic disorder.

The third strategy outlined by Leary (1995) is compensation, attempting to “make up” their negative attribute by conveying overly positive attributes of themselves in other areas. An example of this might be that if a person is viewed negatively as a member of a specific religious group or if the person is a parent and viewed as a less than dedicated employee, the person would try to enhance the positive attributes of themselves to improve their standing in the perceiver’s eyes.

The fourth strategy is exploitation. This strategy is quite similar to supplication as an overall impression management strategy. By exploiting a stigmatized attribute, the stigmatized person can obtain extra support and assistance. For example, if someone had a mental disorder such as depression that is stigmatized and can inhibit a person’s ability

to perform effectively in a job, the person might play the “depression card,” to try to obtain more support from others.

The final strategy for the stigmatized person to use is resignation. With resignation, stigmatized persons simply accept the fact that others view them as stigmatized. There is little to no attempt by the stigmatized person to change the views of others because he or she feels there is no benefit or gain to such effort. In a sense, the person just “gives up” on improving the impressions others have of him or her.

The stigma methods are comparative to some of Jones and Pittman’s typology. For example, resignation could be used along with supplication, as could exploitation. A person could use their stigma to their advantage to be seen as helpless. Exemplification could be used in conjunction with compensation, as a person might try to be seen as the very best at something to make up for their stigma. For example, if a woman felt that being female was detrimental to her in a certain occupation, she might rely on her intellect to make up for her sex.

Application of Impression Management Theory and Stigma

Impression Management theory has many interesting components that are applicable to this study. Examining how these components play out in a natural setting is a unique facet of this study. Empirical data exist examining the importance of protecting one’s own face and insuring positive perceptions, but the data is compiled in an experimental setting, where the participants are trying to create a positive impression with an experimenter with whom they have a passing affiliation and no need to make a continuous positive impression (i. e. Snyder, et al., 1986; Cialdini & DeNicholas, 1989; Finch & Cialdini, 1989). While experimental research is valuable in establishing patterns

and typology, research needs to focus on characteristics that participants have an actual connection with, as there is more for a person to gain or lose when the characteristic is more personally tied to him or her. Cialdini et al. (1976) and Cialdini & Richardson (1980) are two of few studies that examine people's actual lived experience with organizations or affiliations with which the participants have actual connection. More research is needed to further explore natural affiliations.

As the goal of the study is to explore the experiences of Greek organizational alumni who are entering Academia professionally and their communicative management of their membership, impression management is an excellent theoretical framework for this study. Because the focus of the problematic portion of their identity is due to an affiliation, the indirect tactics of impression management give an excellent framework to the study for examining how affiliation is handled.

In examining problematic identity, stigmatized identity framework is important to examine too. Stigma is typically conceptualized as having cultural or physical attributes that are viewed as discrediting. In order for the attribute to be discrediting, the attribute must be constructed in the culture as a negative attribute. As Goffman (1963) states, stigma are contextual. Many attributes can be stigmatized in one context, yet not stigmatized in another. As active members of Greek organizations, and among other members of Greek organizations, membership is less likely to be stigmatized. Media representations of Greek organizations tend to focus on activities that are not geared toward improving scholarship and knowledge, two major goals in the academy. Because those two images do not seem to connect, there is some reason to believe that in the context of academia, Greek affiliation may be stigmatized. However, one of the

important goals of this study is to find out if the conflict between media representation and the opinions of non-Greeks in Academia create a stigma for GOA in academia. If such a stigma is perceived to exist by the GOA, the study will examine how the stigma is communicatively managed. The extension of impression management techniques by Leary (1995) into stigmatized identity is also an excellent framework and extension for impression management and application to this study.

Message Construction and the Self

Impression management theory and research is very important in framing this study, but another very important aspect of this study is how messages are constructed based on perceived knowledge or intended audiences. Krauss and Fussell (1990) conducted a study examining how people make assumptions about their audiences when interacting with others. In the study, participants were asked to describe objects to both friends and strangers. The participants were to describe based on what they thought the knowledge level of the person was. Additionally, when participants described things for themselves, generalized others had difficulty understanding what the participants had described. However, when communicating to particular others, the messages were much more effective and understood by the particular others. Krauss and Fussell concluded that communicators construct messages based on the believed knowledge of those with whom they are communicating.

Understanding that people construct messages based on perceived knowledge of the receiver is important for understanding how people present themselves. However, another important facet is managing impressions and constructing messages for two audiences simultaneously present. Fleming and colleagues (1990, 1991) tested the

principle of presenting messages to various audiences in studies where they addressed the idea of a multiple audience problem. The multiple audience problem is the idea that when people are constructing messages, multiple audiences may be present, and the communicator may want to layer meaning to communicate different messages to different people who may be present simultaneously.

In the first study, Fleming, Darley, Hilton, and Kojetin (1990) conducted a series of studies where someone was to communicate one message and embed another message within the message. In the studies, the overall conclusion of Fleming et al. was that those in closer relationships with the receivers were able to quickly decipher the message that the communicator was sending covertly. However, strangers in the study were unable to decipher the encoded messages and therefore took the messages at face value. The studies also emphasize the idea that relationships are an important factor in determining message construction, as the communicators have more knowledge of each other if the relationship is closer.

A second study by Fleming and Darley (1991) focused more on the issues that the communicators face in crafting messages for multiple audiences that may be present simultaneously. Participants were asked to make four videos that were intended to be shown to different audiences. One was to be the truth, one a lie, one for the other participants and one for friends of the participants. The senders were to construct messages that the receivers could decode. Overall, the participants reported that there is a problem constructing messages when multiple audiences are present. Receivers also were skilled in figuring out the messages that they were supposed to receive. Both of these studies suggest that people are well aware in communication situations that there

are multiple audiences and different audiences require different message construction for effective communication. Impression management and message construction can be difficult when there are multiple audiences with conflicting goals present. For example, if a graduate student was trying to appear competent in front of a faculty advisor and their classroom students, the graduate student would have to be very careful and strategic in their self-presentations and message construction. The messages that would make the graduate student appealing to their students, being open and communicative could be difficult to coordinate with the desire to be seen by the graduate student's advisor as competent and capable.

Communication scholars have examined impression management and message construction in a variety of contexts. Public relations scholars have examined impression management at an organizational level, and many public relations scholars are calling for impression management theory application to public relations (Johansson, 2007), which relates to organizational identity that will be discussed in the next section. Johansson argues that public relations scholarship needs to use the ideas of Goffman's self-presentational theories in public relations. Johansson also calls for more interpersonal communication theory application to public relations research.

Impression management is an emerging topic for research in interpersonal communication, as many different researchers have examined the impact of impression management in a variety of interpersonal contexts. Manusov et al. (1998) studied how an explanation of a failure event would be interpreted by friends and strangers. The study found that strangers do evaluate each other based on the personal explanation of failure

events. Strangers also have more to lose in these interactions, even if the failures are not of particularly great magnitude (Manusov et al).

O'Sullivan (2000) also examined impression management in interpersonal relationships. O'Sullivan examined the use of various technological channels in terms of communicating information in interpersonal relationships. The study found that channel preferences correlated with the perceived threat of the information being communicated. For example, if a relational partner was communicating particularly troubling information, he or she was more likely to select e-mail as a venue for communicating this information as a way to avoid negative perceptions.

Becker and Stamp (2005) examined the impression management strategies of people who enter internet chat rooms. In the piece, Becker and Stamp developed a grounded theory model of impression management among chat room users, stating that chat room users work to create a specific persona in chat rooms, allowing them to experiment with different aspects of their identity. Some of these aspects may be things the participants are uncomfortable with in their daily interactions, such as approaching members of the opposite sex with confidence.

Wildermuth et al. (2006) identified impression management as a strategy that people use in interpersonal relationships in attempt to create a persona as the "ideal relational partner." Impression management was one among many strategies that the participants in the study used to help to create a specific image for their relational partner. Other strategies included bragging, humor, shared activities, and gift-giving. O'Sullivan, Becker and Stamp, and Wildermuth et al. show the importance of impression management strategies in interpersonal interactions. However, the focus has been on

creating an overall impression and not clearly delineated from presenting an aspect of one's identity. For example, Becker and Stamp (2005) examined using impression management to create an entire on-line persona, not to deal with a specific personal attribute that has specific issues associated with it, such as Greek organizational membership. As stated earlier, impression management and identity management are two separate constructs.

Organizational Identity

As this study is focusing on how members of an organization manage their membership in this organization as a component of their identity, it is important to examine what organizational identification is and how organizational identity has been studied. Organizational communication scholars study organizational identity in two important ways: identification of the employee with their respective organization and the public identification of the organization. However, some organizational communication scholars delineate between organizational and corporate identity, stating that organizational identity is about how individual organizational members identify with the organization and that corporate identity is how the public perceives the organization (Whetten & Godfrey, 1998).

Ashforth and Mael (1989) examined how Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985) can inform organizational identification. In this piece, social identity was equated with group identity, or organizational identity in terms of internalizing some of the values and beliefs of the organization. Ashforth and Mael's definition does not mean that the organizational members have completely internalized and agree with the organization's goals and ideals, the definition simply examines that the organizational

member has some degree of connection with the organization. Organizational identity is also considered to be more easily changed and managed than individual identity (Whetten & Godfrey, 1998), as, if examining organizational identity from the perspective of public perception, a team of organizational members can reconstruct an organization's identity through a well-developed public relations campaign.

Employee identification

According to Cheney (1983a), the degree to which an individual internalizes the goals and values of an organization as his or her own defines organizational identification. Cheney (1983a) stresses the importance of organizational identification for influencing various employee behaviors such as “motivation, job performance, job satisfaction and length of service” (p. 343). Cheney (1983b) goes on to indicate organizational identities are important because these identities give meaning to work, as people internalize the values of the organization.

Kuhn and Nelson (2002) expanded the organizational identity literature, as they explored organizational identification as a communicative process. Kuhn and Nelson were seeking to find out more about the process of identification, based on membership in particular work groups. Utilizing multiple methods, Kuhn and Nelson studied an organization that had a specific division of labor between committees and teams. Employees were surveyed regarding their identification with their specific work team; this meant exploring their perceived “centrality” to the communication network along with their relative position in the network. Those members who were less central to the communication network identified more strongly with their work groups, while those who were more central identified more strongly with the organization as a whole (p. 21).

In the overall contributions of the study, Kuhn and Nelson outlined that the findings of their study also support the need for people to want to have strong identification with structures.

An important aspect of organizational communication involves how individual employees identify with their respective employers and profession. Organizational scholars argue that there can be a vast difference in how organizational members identify with their profession as opposed to their organization. Russo (1998) explored this difference in a study of journalists. In the article, Russo argues that people in many professions choose a career path, and therefore identify themselves as members of their particular profession long before they ever get a job in the profession. Russo found this to be particularly true of newspaper journalists.

Newspaper journalism has changed dramatically over the past several years, and subsequently, views of the journalists themselves have shifted regarding their jobs (Russo, 1998). The journalists become more entrenched in their communities, and identify with the community in which the newspaper exists rather strongly. Russo's respondents indicated that they also understood that the community was a driving force behind their own existence as an organization. If there was no public, there could be no newspaper, and respondents indicated their membership in the community and interaction with the public as an important piece of their membership in the organization. Russo's study is important in illustrating how various interactions converge to form an organizational identity, and it is important to this study since the respondents understand the importance of outside members in forming their organizational identity. The

respondents have an underlying sense of obligation to positively represent their own identity in terms of the larger organization.

Another important examination of organizational identity looks at how those who have jobs or professions that are deemed “dirty” manage their identity despite the undesirability of their occupations. “Dirty” work is defined as work that has an image that it is undesirable such as grave digging or sanitation work. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) proposed several strategies that people might use to defend their particular profession. Ashforth and Kreiner assert that many who work in occupations that one would consider “dirty” have many ways of managing this aspect of their identity in interpersonal interactions when they are faced with someone stating that their occupation is undesirable.

Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) outline three major strategies “reframing, recalibrating, and refocusing,” (p. 421) that those involved in dirty work use to address negative attributes of their respective occupation. The purpose of these strategies is two-fold; to address negative attributes by downplaying them and to address positive attributes by creating more positive attributes or by accentuating the positive attributes. Within each of the processes, there are several reasons that the workers are engaging in strategies, such as making their dirty work a “badge of honor” or by showing those questioning the value of their work the importance of the work. Ashforth and Kreiner also found that those in “dirty” professions can also easily disconnect from their profession by stating that it’s just a job, and they need to do it for money. Therefore, they are not making the decision to continue in this work based on their own personal characteristics, they needed so that they can make a living.

Fine (1996) additionally investigated an occupation that is unique in negotiating feelings among people that the work is simple or far too difficult for a common person to do. Fine explored how cooks and chefs talk about their work. According to Fine, cooking is not seen as a special skill, and chefs and cooks have to defend their identity. Fine called the work that the cooks do to portray their identity in various situations as occupational rhetorics. In this study, Fine emphasizes that it is the social situation that frames the necessary rhetoric that organizational members must use to define their work. One participant in Fine's study indicated that because chefs and cooks receive more respect now, their work was seen as a profession, and not just a job that anyone could do.

Organizational identification can be very powerful for organizational members if the members truly internalize the values of the organization, and this idea can be important for other aspects of organizational identity that will be discussed later. In some cases, it can transcend the organization itself, and continue even after the organization ceases to exist. Pierce and Dougherty (2002) studied pilots of Ozark Airlines as the pilots learned to exist within the larger structures of Transworld Airlines (TWA). The Ozark pilots had been part of the TWA organization for over a decade at the time of the study, but the Ozark mentality and ideals were still very much a part of the pilots' daily lives. Pilots displayed outward reflections of this identification with tattoos and use of the Ozark colors in TWA standard uniforms, but there were internalized values as well. In Pierce and Dougherty's study, the values of the organization were so internalized that they existed in the individuals beyond the organization's existence. The identification with the previous organization was so strong that the members refused to completely embrace the values of their new organization. These former Ozark pilots felt such a

strong connection to their previous organization that their status as a former member of that organization was an integral part of their personal identity. The internalization of the organizational values of the former organization was so strong that members felt the need to continue to mark themselves as members of their new, larger organization.

Greek organizational alumni can experience similar connection to their organization. Some Greek organizational alumni continue to be active with their organization, getting involved with national or international offices. Even though the particular chapter organization that they were a member of may no longer exist because the members have graduated from college and they have been replaced by new members, these organizational members can still be active in the organization because they have internalized the values of the organization. Sometimes chapters close due to low membership interest, and therefore the exact chapter someone was a member of may not exist anymore. Internalizing the values of the organization may be an important factor in how the organizational members communicate about their Greek affiliation. Identifying with the organization is a key factor in integrating the ideas and values of the organization into one's personal identity.

Public identification

The other prevalent area of organizational identity research deals with public organizational identity (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). Organizations have seen their primary duty over the past 40 years to communicate with customers and publics and forming a perception of their organization for these groups through public relations and marketing campaigns. Organizational communication scholars have paid significant

attention to these campaigns aimed at forming a public perception of an organization to the public.

Related foci of organizational identity research include corporate issue management, which is most important to organizations when a major transgression has been committed by the organization. A more colloquial term for this area of study in organizational identity research is “damage control.” Organizational communication scholars have studied this area in terms of the rhetorical structure of messages that are sent to the public through advertising and public relations campaigns in order to explain the organizational transgression or apologize for it (Cheney & Christensen, 2001).

With this heavy focus on organizational image management and communication, it is difficult for organizations to stand out among the messages that the general public is bombarded with on a daily basis. Organizations are constantly trying to construct messages to distinguish themselves from the other organizations, attempting to form an image in the minds of the customers (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). Organizational communication scholars continue to study the difficulty that organizations have in developing some kind of a “self,” because the line between the organization and its customers is becoming blurred. Media messages can be very powerful in helping consumers formulate an identity of a larger organization or brand. Several of these slogans are so much a part of the public consciousness that it is difficult to notice them as an important factor in formulating organizational identity. However, this large scale management of organizational face is vitally important in helping customers formulate an identity of an organization.

A public attack on organizational values can also affect organizational members. Kramer and Elsbach (1996) explored how the ranking of business schools in a Top 20 survey affected the students and the strategies the students used to manage their threatened identity. Kramer and Elsbach identified two major identity threats “(1) threats to the value of core attributes and (2) threats to perceived positional status of the organization.” (p. 455). In response to such threats, the participants had multiple strategies for dealing with such threats including, affirming their organizational identity by essentially devaluing the perceived threat. In the case of the MBA students in the study, the students would state that the study was not really indicative of the strengths of their particular department. The respondents also compared their own school to those that were more comparable to their own. Participants also highlighted their own unique attributes that the survey did not cover, or the participants also stated that some of the attributes that the survey did cover were not a fair comparison for their department.

Now that a theoretical framework that can ground a study of impression management by Greek organizational alumni in academics has been presented, the next section will describe the context of the study, Greek organizations.

Greek Organizations

Since the underlying theoretical framework and existing research underpinning the current study has been presented, this section will put the study in context. The following sections will discuss the formation and mission of Greek organizations, Greeks and college campuses, and the images of Greek organizations.

Formation and Mission of Greek Organizations

Greek organizations have a history as long as the United States itself, as the birth of what Greek organizations are today is traced back to the formation of the Phi Beta Kappa Honorary Fraternity in 1776 at the College of William and Mary in Virginia (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). Phi Beta Kappa is given this distinction because of the traditions that were part of the organization that subsequent Greek organizations have adopted, such as the use of Greek letters for a name, secret rituals, badges, and other symbols. As the curricula at early American universities did not allow for a great deal of intellectual freedom, young men in these universities formed organizations that were primarily “literary clubs and debating societies.” As the curricula and goals of the young men and the university began to change from being primarily focused in the areas of religion to a wider variety of subject areas, these societies became many modern day fraternities, the first of which is called the Kappa Alpha Society. These organizations considered expanding their “social” skills as learning about poetry and politics that were not part of their curricula. Greek letter organizations were important for expanding the academic interests of their members.

Today, 64 national men’s fraternities are governed by the North American Interfraternity Conference, formed in 1910. “The NIC has 64 member organizations with 5500 chapters located on 800 campuses in the United States and Canada with approximately 350,000 undergraduate members.” (NIC, 2005).

Currently, NIC is focused heavily on a public relations campaign that seeks to increase fraternity membership. After seeing an increase through the 1970’s and 1980’s, the 1990’s and 2000’s have seen a steady decrease in the number of fraternity members.

The mission of member organizations is to reach out to men who might consider membership in a fraternity, an estimated, “30-60% of the college population” (NIC, 2005, n. p.). This public relations campaign is largely the result of existing images of Greek organizations and the need to overcome the negative connotations of these images to attract new members and sustain their organizations.

In an attempt to change some of the images of fraternities in particular, many national organizations of fraternities have implemented new programs that are meant to benefit members spiritually and physically (Zagier, 2007). Some national organizations have removed the pledging process altogether, and some have implemented programs at the national level for developing their members as a total man. One chapter’s program can include “yoga classes, wine tasting, and trips to the opera” (n. p.). Fraternities are working to not only bring pride and commitment to their members, but to eliminate practices that may have led to their poor reputations.

Greek organizations exist for both men and women, so it is important to examine how women’s Greek organizations formed. There is some debate as to what was the first Greek organization for women. As women were admitted to universities, they began forming their own fraternities because they felt isolated and unwelcome at many universities (Turk, 2004). I. C. Sorosis was formed in 1867 at Monmouth College, which became Pi Beta Phi in 1888 (PiBetaPhi.org, 2007). Kappa Alpha Theta takes credit as the first Greek letter society, formed in 1870 (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). Women took the name fraternities from men’s organizations and did not distinguish themselves as “sororities” until several years later. As organizations for women, they were social in nature, but also allowed for intellectual discussion and women could be members of

several different organizations at once. However, in 1902, the organizations united to form the National Panhellenic Conference, allowing membership in only one organization at a time. Today this organization serves as an “umbrella organization for 26 inter/national women’s fraternities and sororities” (NPC, 2005). “Each member group is autonomous as a social, Greek-letter society of college women and alumnae. Members are represented on over 620 college and university campuses in the United States and Canada and in over 4,600 alumnae associations, making up over 3.6 million sorority women in the world” (NPC, 2005).

The National Panhellenic Conference has made several sweeping changes in these organizations for several years, the most noticeable likely that the organizational goals have shifted from being more for intellectual discussion to having more social goals, differing from the beginning of the organizations.

Currently, the NPC Mission Statement reads as follows: “The National Panhellenic Conference exists to promote the values of and to serve as an advocate for its member groups in collaboration with those members, campuses and communities” (NPC, 2005, n. p.). As will be discussed later in this chapter, this statement is quite different from the images of Greek organizations.

From these beginnings, many Greek organizations for both men and women have evolved throughout the United States and Canada. Greek organizations, although organization with similar goals and traditions are present at European universities, are exclusively a North American phenomenon (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998).

Two other categories of Greek organizations also exist. The National Pan-Hellenic Council, Inc. (NPHC) is the umbrella organization for the nine traditionally

African-American fraternities and sororities. NPHC was formed in 1930 at Howard University and currently oversees nine fraternities and sororities (NPHC, 2007). Like the NPC organizations, NPHC organizations were formed on college campuses as a means of support and community outreach for African American students, much like the organizations previously described for women. NPHC organizations were formed on college campuses when African Americans were denied fundamental rights being afforded to whites. Social support was a definite benefit of the organizations, but reaching out to community members was the foremost goal of the organizations.

NPHC organizations do not discriminate or limit members to only African Americans, nor does NPHC discourage its organizations from working closely with NIC and NPC councils that may exist on campus. The NPHC exists to “to foster a more stable environment on campuses for local NPHC councils, provide a forum for dialogue, and provide training for and management of it's [sic] respective councils” (NPHC, 2007, n. p.). The NPHC acts simply as an organization of support for its nine member organizations. The NPHC organizations also allow members to be initiated after they have graduated and become alumni. The organizations carry a great deal of prestige in the African American community, as leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, George Washington Carver, Maya Angelou, and Jocelyn Elders, just to name a few were Greek (Greek101.com, n. d.).

A new wave of Greek organizations that has not incorporated as a united group of organizations yet is emerging. Sororities and fraternities that have interests in providing support for particular cultural groups have formed. The membership is not limited to the specific cultural groups, however, in mission statements, the organizations report

supporting the interests particular racial or ethnic groups such as Asians, Latinos, or Jews have formed at individual colleges and universities across the country. These organizations have been founded with the same intentions as the aforementioned organizations, with the mission of providing social and academic support their members.² Most of the organizations are small, with only a few chapters across the nation. The organizations have been founded within the past two decades, so their influence and presence on college campuses is still growing. No umbrella organization exists for these organizations.

Greeks and College Campuses

The mention of Greek organizations tends to elicit strong emotional reactions, both positive and negative (Turk, 2004). The positive supporters tend to focus on the “services provided to the members and the community services performed.” (Turk, 2004, p. vii). Those with negative impressions tend to see Greek organizations as “shallow, elitist, and unworthy of scholarly attention.” (p. vii). These polarized opinions are very important in framing this study. In the following paragraphs, the presence of Greek organizations will be examined from multiple campus perspectives.

Academics. Greek organizations are frequently an important part of college campuses, but their recognition is not always positive. Many faculty and administrators tend to look at these organizations as little more than an excuse for drunken behavior. Although studies do not show a significant difference in academic achievement in terms of grade point average (Winston & Saunders, 1987) between Greeks and non-Greeks,

² This information was garnered by examining the websites of three particular multi-cultural Greek organizations. Information was similar on all three webpages, but the researcher does not feel it is ethical to reveal which websites were examined to gather information regarding the missions of the multi-cultural organizations because that would entail mentioning individual organizations.

there is a marked difference that students who are members of Greek organizations are more likely to stay in school and graduate (Reese, 1998; Winston & Saunders, 1987). Reese (1998) reports that a longitudinal study conducted by the Center for Advanced Social Research (CASR) at the University of Missouri surveyed over 1500 alumni from Greek organizations and found Greek organization members were more likely than non Greeks to stay in school.

Randall and Grady (1998) believe that Greek organizations are missing an opportunity to expand their missions in terms of expanding their members' critical thinking skills. According to Randall and Grady, Greek organizations could do a great deal more through programming in cooperation with their national and international headquarters to expand the opportunities for intellectual growth. Additionally, Randall and Grady believe that Greek organizations could also be more encouraging of academic achievement at both the chapter and national levels of the organizations.

Administrators. Early on in the history of the Greek system, academic administrators were frequently criticized for their devotion to their own Greek organizations (Luwer, 1999). However, as time has passed, those allegiances have given way to more conflict between Greek organizations and college administrators. Administrators also have issues with Greek organizations and have frequently purposed eliminating the organizations all together. The proposals for such decisions frequently come from stories of incidents involving alcohol or violence that receive high publicity (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). Due to some of this negative publicity, in the late 1980's nearly 60 colleges and universities began to evaluate the presence and necessity of these organizations on their campuses (Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994). Rarely have the organizations

been removed from campuses. Administrators have two major reasons for not eliminating Greek organizations on campus. First, Greek membership can assist with the retention of students. Second, Greek alumni were more likely to make a monetary donation to their university than non Greek alumni (Reese, 1998). This is of particular interest at large, land grant universities that have frequently been heavily funded by the state, because, as state funding becomes lower, these universities are forced to rely on outside donors to support the universities. Therefore, it is unlikely that university administrators will take action to eliminate Greek organizations considering the donation practices of Greek alumni.

Another reason that administrators are unlikely to take action against Greek organizations is due to their community and philanthropic events. According to the National Interfraternity Council and National Panhellenic Conference (1997) as cited by Whipple and Sullivan (1998), members of Greek organizations were much more likely to be involved in campus organizations outside of the Greek community, and, once they became alumni, were more likely to be involved in community organizations. Outside memberships benefit not only the students, but the image of the university. As stated by the NPC (2005), administrators continue to allow and actively support new chapters of Greek organizations to open on campus because Greek organizations make many positive contributions to college campuses.

Images of Greek Organizations

With positive statistics about the involvement and self-esteem of Greek membership, it would seem that there should be no problem for members of these organizations to show a great deal of pride when interacting with those outside of the

organization. Paxton and Moody's (2003) research on group attachment would seem to indicate that Greek organizational members do feel that sense of pride and belonging. There should be no reason, from this evidence, that members or alumni of these groups should have trouble interacting with those who are not members of their organization.

Despite the benefits for the members of Greek organizations, and the seemed advantage in campus involvement and other civic organizations, members of Greek organizations are not recognized for campus and civic involvement with their organizations; members are more frequently viewed by the media images of the organizations. Media stories that seem to focus on negative incidents of hazing and alcohol abuse color the perceptions of members of Greek organizations. The negative images of Greek organizations seem to far exceed the aforementioned statistics regarding community involvement and staying in school. As mentioned earlier, fraternities are frequently associated with hazing incidents or other poor behaviors. Sororities are often cited (DeSantis, 2007) for encouraging eating disorders and being more focused on physical appearance than academic achievement or leadership.

In early 2007, the Delta Zeta chapter, a sorority at DePauw University, received some negative national attention. The chapter was attempting to reorganize or recolonize, a practice common among chapters at colleges and universities where membership is waning. In recolonization, current members take alumna status and the sorority begins recruiting from scratch. Delta Zeta at DePauw University had been experiencing a decline in membership and was in the process of recolonizing when 23 of the 35 members received notices from the national office that they would no longer be members of Delta Zeta. Many, including the members felt that the women who had been

selected were the only members who were overweight or minorities (Dillon, 2007). Delta Zeta's national organization maintains that the actions taken were "based on the organization's principles." (Delta Zeta, 2007). However, DePauw University simply closed the chapter of Delta Zeta and would not allow them to recolonize. The Delta Zeta case received widespread national media attention and was presented as another case of Greek organizations promoting homogeneity.

Movie and television images also tend to show members of these organizations in a negative light. The 1978 comedy *Animal House* starring John Belushi even today seems to be the standard against which members of fraternities and sororities are stereotyped against. This movie portrays a fraternity that drinks incessantly and neglects their academic responsibilities. Despite the movie's "over the top" comic appeal, it seems to be an image that members of Greek organizations must overcome. In 2002 and 2003, MTV partnered with the website and Greek life supporter Greek101.com to produce reality television that gave a more realistic portrayal of Greek life to help overcome this prevalent image. After the first season, Greek101.com was not supportive of the images that MTV portrayed, however, they held out hope that their input would be influential in the second season (Greek101.com, n. d.). In the middle of the second season, Greek101.com pulled their sponsorship of the program, no longer providing apparel to the cast members or advertising sponsorship. Greek101.com's decision was due to MTV's continued focus on negative images of Greek organizations such as excessive alcohol consumption and womanizing by fraternity members, neglecting any scholastic or philanthropic efforts.

More recently, ABC Family has come under fire from Greek organizations for their new series called, ΓΡΕΣΣΚ. Several NPC organizations posted the following message to their websites:

This message is being sent to you regarding an upcoming television show that will be airing on ABC Family on July 9 titled "Greek." Many concerns have been expressed by both undergraduate and alumnae members from all National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sororities. As a result, NPC has prepared a letter for members to write to the president of ABC Family. The show negatively portrays Greek life and as a member of the Greek community, it is your duty to stand up to the untrue and negative stereotypes this show is portraying. I encourage you all to take an active role in this matter (June 27, 2007).

Although it might be easy to assume that media images are not truly responsible for the disconnect between the images of Greek organizations portrayed, opinions of Greek organizations, and perceptions of Greek organizational members by those outside Greek organizations, research suggests that media portrayals are highly influential in shaping opinions. Anastasio, Rose, and Chapman (2005) conducted two experimental studies to see how changing media interpretation of an event by manipulating the coverage would affect the perceptions of the audience. In the experiment, one of their scenarios involved Greeks and non-Greeks. A member of a fraternity was accused of vandalism of a campus building. The participants were assigned to particular experimental groups and were asked to view the coverage of the event. The manipulations were done by having the reporting journalists seem to slant the event, and non-Greeks and Greeks were used for the "person on the street" interviews. In this particular experiment, Greeks favored more lenient punishment for the offending individual, whereas non-Greeks favored harsher punishment (Anastasio et al., 2005).

While this finding might seem to be intuitive based on tendencies of people to favor those like themselves, there should have been a more absolute divide, which there was not. Anastasio et al. (2005) concluded that it was indeed the manipulation of the media coverage and media opinions that influenced the perceptions of the participants. Anastasio et al.'s findings are important in supporting the media's role in the conflict between the images Greek organizations wish to portray and the impressions that those outside of the Greek system may have of Greek organization members. As the media manipulates the images of Greek organizations, people create their own images based on the media's information. So even if an organization has a positive mission, if the media portrays the organization negatively, the organization is more likely to be perceived negatively by those outside the organization.

As the information in the previous section indicates, Greek organizational alumni have several obstacles and issues to deal with in terms of creating a positive impression of themselves and their Greek affiliation in the academic community. The Academy is a place of enlightenment and scholarly activity. The images of Greek organizations do not coincide with an effort to portray oneself as intelligent and enlightened. Greek organizations exist only on college campuses, and only a certain percentage of people can gain admission to college and all that it offers, giving members of Greek organizations an invisible privilege (McIntosh, 1988). However, the media images of these organizations is negative, therefore socially constructing the membership as discrediting. Therefore, managing the privileges of membership with the socially constructed stigma can be difficult for GOA in the Academy.

The combination of these ideas leads me to the following research questions:

RQ₁: How do Greek alumni manage their Greek affiliation in the Academy?

RQ₂: How do Greek alumni experience, if at all, stigma and privilege in the Academy?

Gaps in the literature

Since the study has been grounded in an appropriate theoretical framework and relevant literature has been reviewed, the gaps in the literature that this study seeks to fill will be discussed. As mentioned earlier, much impression management literature has been conducted in social psychology and is largely experimental, not examining attributes that are personal to the participants. The present study will examine an actual personal attribute of the participants. Existing communication literature has examined the creation of an overall identity in impression management. The present study will be more focused on micro-level interactions aimed at managing on one specific attribute.

In terms of organizational identity, current organizational identity research is focused on personal identification with an organization and its mission and the public image of an organization. Little to no research examines how organizational identity can be communicated at an interpersonal level. The present study will contribute to moving toward using more interpersonal perspectives in the communication of organizational identity.

Finally, most impression management research is quantitative, not getting at the depth and lived experiences of participants. The present study used qualitative methods, which add depth and dimension to impression management tactics. Additionally, qualitative methods allow us to explore the lived experience of impression management

among GOA in academics. The qualitative methods will be discussed in depth in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Methods

This chapter will situate the study within the appropriate epistemological and ontological setting. The study is a descriptive hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990) with the overall goal of describing the lived experiences of alumni of Greek organizations in the academy. A further description of the methodology of the study will be presented. Finally, the design of the study will be presented in detail.

Interpretative paradigm and qualitative research

Due to the nature of the research goal, which is to understand the phenomena and lived experiences of impression management among Greek organizational alumni in academic settings, this study is situated in the interpretative paradigm. The interpretative paradigm is, “based on a dialogic, social constructionist approach to the world” (Mumby, 1997, p. 8). Anderson (1996), using a similar term hermeneutic empiricism also states, “Evidence of the individual is to be given from within the study of the particular, historic, relational practices in which the person emerges” (p. 135). In relationship to this study, both Mumby and Anderson’s reflections on the interpretative paradigm state that the goal of research done from this paradigm does not attempt to construct one generalizable picture of reality, but one that is socially constructed, based on the experiences of the individual participants. As the goal of this study is not to generalize across contexts but to explore the unique experiences of individual participants, Mumby and Anderson’s respective insights help to situate this study firmly in the interpretative paradigm.

Creswell (1997) states that qualitative researchers, “strive for ‘understanding,’ that deep structure of knowledge that comes from visiting personally with informants,

spending extensive time in the field, and probing to obtain detailed findings” (p. 193). Since the idea behind the overall goal of the study is to answer the question, “What is it like to be Greek and an academic?,” it is vital that a method be used that allows for the participants to speak from their experience and construct the experience themselves. Therefore, qualitative methods were the most appropriate choice for this study. In the following paragraphs, I will describe major distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research, articulating how each applies to the present study to further explain why qualitative methods are the best choice for this study.

Bryman (1999) outlines eight distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research. First, a major distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is the role of the research. The goal of quantitative research is to generalize to larger populations and to predict outcomes. The goal of qualitative research is to explore the lived experiences and interpretations among the participants. Some quantitative researchers see qualitative research simply as a first step in designing a more detailed quantitative study. While some qualitative researchers are reluctant to state that qualitative research can stand alone, others, like me, believe that qualitative research can provide a depth and richness that cannot be provided by quantitative research. As in this study, the lived experience of a distinct population cannot be generalized to any and all Greek alumni in all professions. However, the descriptions provided by the participants can help us to more thoroughly understand their experience.

The second distinction outlined by Bryman (1999) is the relationship between the researcher and the subject. In quantitative research, there is to be little contact between the researcher and the participant, in fact, even the language of “subject” as opposed to

“participant” in quantitative and qualitative research respectively indicates the connections between the researcher and the researched. Qualitative researchers are closer to their participants, making more sustained contact with their participants over a longer period of time. As will be discussed further in the interview section, I met each of my participants face to face for an extended period of time, contact that would not be appropriate in a quantitative study.

The third distinction Bryman (1999) outlines is the perspective of the researcher. In quantitative research, the researcher has a detached, omnipotent relationship with the research and the subjects or participants. In qualitative research, the researcher maintains a close connection with the participants, and in some cases, is quite connected. In this study, I am much like the participants in the study. I am a Greek organizational alumnus who is in Academia. Also, as mentioned earlier, I had more direct contact with the participants, engaging with them personally in conversation, either in a face to face setting or via telephone.

In the fourth distinction, Bryman (1999) describes the role of theory in quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative research, theory is used as a predictor of likely outcomes in the research. Theory is used to generate hypotheses of what the researcher thinks might be found in the research. Hypothesizing is highly inappropriate in qualitative research. Qualitative research seeks to give voice to the participants. Therefore, the researcher should not make predictions about what he or she believes will be found; findings are to emerge from the data. Theory is used to guide, but not blind the researcher. In this study, impression management is a theoretical lens that I

will use to guide my analysis of the data, however, it will not blind me to other issues that may be more prevalent or important in the data gathered from the participants.

As the participants are sharing their own lived experiences, the protocol for collecting data needs to allow for the participants to elaborate on their own personal experiences. Therefore, another clear distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is the strategy and structure of the research instrument (Bryman, 1999).

Quantitative research is very structured, as there are clear hypotheses and specific information that the researcher is attempting to gather. Qualitative research is much more open-ended, allowing the participants to share their stories of their personal experiences, uninhibited by the goals of the researcher.

The research findings are the next clear distinction between quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research seeks to make covering law theories and distinctions that can be generalized across contexts. Qualitative research situates the findings in a setting. The findings of this study may be considered transferable, but are not meant to be generalized to a larger population. Other groups such as religious organizations or national organizations may experience unique challenges in specific contexts managing impressions, so the results may be transferrable, but not generalizable.

Quantitative research posits that reality is static and “out there” to be found. It is external to people, and people simply interact with a reality that already exists. In contrast, qualitative research and the interpretative paradigm see reality as constructed by people and social interactions. Reality is not simply “out there,” people can create their own reality through their own experiences and communication. The participants in this

study are talking about what it is like to be Greek and in academics, the experience is constructed through their narratives and what they perceive to be real.

The final distinction outlined by Bryman (1999) is in the nature of the differences in data between qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative data is described as “hard” and “reliable,” meaning that is considered precise and easily replicated by another researcher. Qualitative research manufactures rich, deep data that describes, in detail, the experiences of the participants. Qualitative data does not seek to be precise or easily replicated by another researcher. As qualitative data is situated in a unique place and time, replication is impossible. Qualitative research is meant to be transferable and verified by the participants. Verification by the participants for this study will be described later on in this chapter. I used four methods to insure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of my data.

Methodology

As I have stated that this study is firmly situated in the interpretative paradigm and distinctly different from quantitative research, it is now important for me to describe the methodology that will guide the design of the study. The methodology helps to describe the rationale behind a specific study design. This study is a descriptive hermeneutic phenomenology. According to van Manen (1990), hermeneutic phenomenology is “a human science which studies persons” (p. 6). van Manen also describes phenomenology as a “theory of the unique; it is interested in what is essentially not replaceable” (p. 7). Adding the term descriptive to this definition means that the study will describe the lived experiences of the participants. van Manen outlines eight features of phenomenological research that I will discuss as related to the present study.

The first feature is “phenomenological research is the study of lived experience.” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). The driving force behind the research questions is the general concept of “What’s it like to be Greek and an Academic?” I want the participants to share their stories and their feelings to get at what it has been like throughout their academic careers being Greek and being academic. I want them to tell the story of their lived experiences.

The next feature is “phenomenological research is the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Whether or not an experience is real or not real is not important in phenomenology. The important thing in the study of a phenomenon is that the participants believe or feel it is real. As the participants see the experience is their reality. Phenomenology can illuminate their experience to others and bring the experiences or perceptions into public consciousness. Much like Cooley’s Looking Glass Self, to the participants, reality may not be what actually happened, but their perceptions of what actually happened. Phenomenology allows for the illumination and description of lived experience.

The third feature of phenomenology, according to van Manen (1990) is “phenomenological research is the study of essences” (p. 10). In this statement, van Manen refers to the systematic nature of the research of lived experience. Researchers need to have a specific goal as to what part of lived experience they wish to explore and have a definite plan for finding out what it is that the participants live. Researchers cannot just go in and look at a process, but researchers must engage with the participants and develop a relationship with the participants to allow the researcher insight to what the “it” (p. 10) is that they are studying. In engaging the participants in a focused discussion

about their lived experiences, the researcher can use the words of the participants to tell the story of their lived experience and give voice to the participants.

The fourth feature of phenomenological research is “phenomenological research is the description of the experiential meanings we live as we live them” (p. 11). The meaning behind this feature aligns quite nicely with the goals of qualitative research and the interpretative paradigm. Phenomenological research does not seek to find relationships between experiences and variables; phenomenological research seeks to understand and give meaning to the experiences of the participants. Experiences have meaning to individuals in their personal lives, and sharing those experiences can be valuable in explaining and understanding our own personal experiences in context.

The fifth feature of phenomenological research is that it is “the human scientific study of phenomena” (p. 11). As stated previously, phenomenological research is the systematic study of lived experiences. With this feature, researchers must have a guided plan of methods to guide their investigation. Although lived experience is not systematic; the study of lived experience must be in order make sense of it and illuminate a specific phenomena. If lived experience is not studied systematically, the aforementioned experiences cannot be shared in a meaningful way with others. The experiences would just be random information shared with others.

The sixth feature of phenomenological research is that it is “the attentive practice of thoughtfulness” (p. 12). Phenomenological research engages with deeper philosophical questions of meaning of experience. By reflecting on our experiences and systematically researching our experiences, we can gain a greater understanding of those experiences. With the previous features systematic study and sharing of experiences,

thinking about the meaning of our experiences and how our experiences shape our lives and perceptions allow a more thorough understanding of the meaning of our experiences.

The seventh feature of phenomenological research is “phenomenological research is a search for what it means to be human” (p. 12). In searching for what it means to be human or whatever other roles we enact, we gain more awareness of who we are and what that means for our life’s experiences. When we become aware of the meaning of our experiences, we can situate them in the larger context and understand the impact our experiences have on who we are. For researchers in the interpretative paradigm, the goal is to understand a situated experience, not to generalize. Being human is not a generalizable experience, so understanding and illuminating a personal lived experience is the goal of the researcher.

The final feature of phenomenological research is that it is a “poetizing activity” (p. 13). In quantitative research, separating the experience of the participants does not take away from the nature of the results. However, in phenomenological research, the two cannot be separated. In “poetizing,” van Manen states that phenomenological research can simply bring language to an experience that was not there previously. The participants do not live the experience again, but through finding the language to articulate the nature of their experiences, the participants and the researchers may experience things in a new way.

As I have laid out all of the features of phenomenological research, it connects quite well to the overall goals of the research. Each feature speaks to the same overall goal of illuminating the experiences of GOA in academia. The next section outlines the execution of the actual study.

Design of the Study

As the study has been firmly situated in the interpretative paradigm and the philosophy behind the study has been described, it is essential to lay out the exact procedure that was used to accomplish the goal of uncovering the lived experience of Greek Alumni in academia. Qualitative interviews were used to access the experiences of the participants. For the design of the study, I utilized Kvale's (1996) seven step process for conducting an interview study. Kvale states that the seven steps to conducting an interview study include thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting (p. 87). Each of these steps will be addressed in detail.

Thematizing

Kvale (1996) describes thematizing as essentially the planning of the interview study, the what, the how, and the why. In the previous chapters, I have presented the background research that has informed this study. Interviewing was the best method for studying this phenomenon because it allowed the participants to elaborate on their experiences and tell stories that were unique to them. I have also learned about different techniques of interviewing and, based upon the goals of obtaining the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the participants, chose an interview method for this study. I used a semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions. The design of the interview protocol will be discussed in the next section.

Designing the Interview Guide

Once the purpose of the study and interviews is clear, Kvale's next step is to design an interview protocol that meets the guidelines of the study. Keeping the research

questions and the philosophy of a descriptive hermeneutic phenomenology, I designed an interview guide with open-ended questions that could more specifically illuminate the experiences of the participants. The interviews focused on issues of perceptions of Greek organizations, personal experience in disclosing Greek affiliation, and perceptions of how the academic context influenced disclosure of one's Greek affiliation. The complete interview protocol is available in Appendix A. I also asked each participant to fill out a brief demographic questionnaire, also in Appendix A.

The interview began with questions I call "pump priming" questions. Pump priming questions were not particularly threatening, but allowed the participants to get into the mind frame of the interview and connect with their own Greek experience. Also, starting with non-threatening questions that are very open-ended sets the tone for the interview. If the interview starts with wide open questions that are meant for the participants to elaborate, the participants should understand that they need to elaborate throughout the interview process, not just give brief answers.

As the interview progressed, I asked questions that more directly pertained to my research questions. As the participants told their stories, I listened carefully to them. As I needed clarification or felt that the participants mentioned something unique or interesting, I asked probing questions to get the participants to elaborate further on their answers. Questions that were a bit more specific and directive were saved for the end of the interview, as I needed to take time to develop a rapport with the participant before getting to the more interrogative questions. Although I used the same interview guide for each interview, all interviews are not the same. As Holstein and Gubrium (1995) articulate, interviewing is an interactive process, and since each interview is a new

experience, the interviewer and the interviewee create a unique experience in each interview.

Interviewing

Once the interview protocol was designed, Kvale's (1996) next step is the actual interview process. In this section, I will discuss who the participants were, how they were recruited, and the setting of the interviews.

Participants. A total of 31 people participated in the study. There were 21 women and 10 men. Of the participants, 10 were alumni of NPC sororities (traditionally white organizations for women), 4 were alumni of NIC fraternities (traditionally white organizations for men), 11 were alumni of NPHC sororities (traditionally African American sororities) and 6 were members of NPHC fraternities (traditionally African American fraternities). In terms of academic status, one was currently working toward a Master's degree, four had terminal Master's degrees, were not currently enrolled in graduate school, and were staff members, eight were PhD students, three were adjunct faculty, four were tenure-track faculty, four were tenured faculty, and six were administrators. If participants were in two categories (i. e. PhD students and tenure track faculty) I grouped them into their status that required more academic stature. In the case of the previous example, I would group a staff member that is a PhD student as a PhD student, but I would group a PhD student who was a tenure track faculty member as a tenure track faculty member. Table one lists all participants' pseudonyms, age, and academic status.

Table 1. Participant Pseudonyms and Demographics

Number	Participant	Sex	Age	Academic Status	Organization Type
1	Charlene	F	28	PhD Student	NPC Sorority
2	Renee	F	30's	PhD Student	NPC Sorority
3	Regina	F	28	PhD Student	NPHC Sorority
4	Mavis	F	50's	Administrator	NPC Sorority
5	Mary	F	30	Tenure Track Faculty	NPC Sorority
6	Suzanne	F	29	Adjunct Faculty	NPC Sorority
7	Rebecca	F	33	Tenure Track Faculty	NPC Sorority
8	Melissa	F	35	PhD Student	NPC Sorority
9	Jamal	M	38	PhD Student	NPHC Fraternity
10	Pam	F	20's	PhD Student	NPC Sorority
11	Katie	F	28	PhD Student	NPC Sorority
12	Reggie	M	34	PhD Student	NPHC Fraternity*
13	Chris	M	38	Tenure Track Faculty	NIC Fraternity
14	Jeff	M	26	Staff with Master's Degree	NIC Fraternity
15	Lena	F	31	Staff with Master's Degree	NPHC Sorority *
16	Sandy	F	50's	Staff with Master's Degree	NPHC Sorority
17	Whitley	F	29	PhD Student	NPHC Sorority
18	Florence	F	50's	Administrator	NPC Sorority
19	Diane	F	61	Adjunct Faculty	NPHC Sorority
20	Norm	M	44	Tenured Faculty	NIC Fraternity
21	Cliff	M	24	Master's Student	NIC Fraternity
22	Phil	M	50's	Administrator	NPHC Fraternity
23	Dana	F	50's	Administrator	NPHC Sorority *
24	Ralph	M	50's	Administrator	NPHC Fraternity
25	Earvin	M	50's	Tenured Faculty	NPHC Fraternity
26	Kelly	F	39	Adjunct Faculty	NPHC Sorority
27	Melvin	M	50's	Staff with MBA	NPHC Fraternity *
28	Sabrina	F	43	Tenure Track Faculty	NPHC Sorority
29	Vanessa	F	41	Tenured Faculty	NPHC Sorority
30	Claire	F	40's	Administrator	NPHC Sorority
31	Martha	F	50's	Tenured Faculty	NPHC Sorority

*denotes alumni initiate

Sampling and recruitment procedures. As this was a qualitative study, there was not a goal for generalization, the goal was transferability and illuminating a particularly unique phenomena. Therefore, sampling was very purposeful, utilizing very specific criteria for selecting participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 121). The purpose of this study was to understand how Greek organizational alumni who are a part of academia

manage their membership in a Greek organization in professional academic settings. Therefore, participants had to be alumni of Greek organizations who were currently pursuing or had completed graduate education with plans to enter the academy professionally, either as a faculty member or member of academic staff or administration. No stipulation was placed on how long the participants need be alumni.

Participants were recruited first through connections I have with people whom I know are alumni of Greek organizations. This initial sampling gave me nine participants. I sent each person the e-mail recruiting script that is available in Appendix C. Using my connections was advantageous, because it pointed me in a specific direction toward interested parties who were willing to participate in the research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). These participants were able to put me in touch with more participants, and so forth. This method is called snowballing, which uses informants or participants to assist the researcher in locating other persons who fit the participation criteria (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Using both of these methods was quite effective for this study.

After receiving names and contact information from the participants of other potential participants, I sent out the e-mail recruiting script to each person whose name was given to me by a participant adding the sentence, “I got your name from _____” so that the possible participant would know how I learned about them. I had little trouble recruiting participants with this method, and once I made initial contact, most participants were quite willing and accommodating. As the participants were in academics, they had either completed the dissertation process or were about to begin the process, and therefore they were happy to help me out. Several participants told me they actually had fun during the interview process.

Setting. The interviews took place in a setting that was comfortable to both the participant and me. For the most part, most interviews took place in the participants' offices. If an office visit could not be arranged, at the participant's request, we met at local restaurants and coffee shops. If I could not meet a participant in a face to face setting due to geographic constraints, I conducted the interview via phone using the digital recording device to record. I only had to do this eight times. All participants received a copy of a consent form and were asked to sign a written consent form available in Appendix D. Participants received a \$5 gift card to Starbuck's, a national chain of coffee shops, for their participation. However, many of my participants were sympathetic to the plight of a financially struggling graduate student and politely declined the gift card.

Theoretical saturation was reached after 20 interviews. Theoretical saturation is a phenomenon in qualitative research, meaning that participants are starting to say similar things, so there is little to be gained by getting additional participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). However, I conducted additional interviews to increase the depth of development of my data. I only had six African American participants in the first 20 interviews. I had names of more possible African American participants, so in order to gain more of a comparative understanding of the two major types of Greek organizations, I conducted additional interviews. Interviews ranged from 13 to 62 minutes and were recorded on a digital voice recording device. The average interview length was approximately 31 minutes.

Transcribing

Once the digital voice recordings were made, they were transferred to a secure computer for transcription purposes. I used a professional transcriber for the interviews. I asked the transcriber to sign a confidentiality agreement to insure that the transcriber would keep identifying information about the participants private and that the transcriber would destroy his copies of the recordings within ten days of receipt of my final payment. I uploaded the files to a secure file transfer network, and the files were kept on my computer and that of the transcriber, both secure. Once I received the files as rich-text documents, I formatted them with line numbers and spacing for reading ease. I also typed participant demographic information received from the demographic survey I asked each participant to complete. I then printed each transcript using my home office printer. The transcriptions were used to double check against the recorded interview for accuracy and preliminary data analysis. Identifying information about the participants was removed. In total, there were 304 pages of single-spaced, type-written data using 12-point, Times New Roman font.

Once all of the interviews were formatted and printed, I listened to each interview again carefully to check the accuracy of the transcripts. I used the printed transcripts to notate any discrepancies between the actual audio and the transcription. I have difficulty reading text on a computer screen for extended periods of time, so I felt the paper copies were better for extended engagement with the data. Also, I found it easier to verify the data against the recording using the printouts, as I could notate the transcription by hand as I listened to the recording. I added missing words, and to gain forcefulness as necessary for data analysis, added indicators of vocal inflection or other emphasis given

by the participants, such as hitting the desk, pausing, etc. After reading through each interview, I made any necessary corrections in the document and then I loaded each document into the N6 data analysis program (formerly NUD*IST).

Analysis

The next step in the interview process is data analysis (Kvale, 1996). Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of qualitative data analysis simply looks for emergent categories or themes that emerge from the data. According to Owen (1984), “Themes, then, are less a set of cognitive schema than a limited range of interpretations that are used to conceptualize and constitute relationships” (p. 274). Owen states that in order for a theme to emerge, it must meet three criteria: recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. Recurrence means that at least two parts of a text have the same meaning, even if different wording is used. Repetition is an extension of recurrence, in that the meaning is occurring multiple times over different texts or recordings of data. Forcefulness refers to vocal emphasis or other nonverbal indications that the participant uses to emphasize certain words. In textual analysis, forcefulness can be indicated by a change in typeface, such as underlining or italics. Using Owen’s standards for emerging themes, I began to systematically analyze the data.

In the data analysis process, the lens of Impression Management theory was used to inspect the data and look for themes that emerge from the data using Owen’s (1984) criteria to delineate themes. First, I read through the data twice using the print outs mentioned in the previous section.

Once the transcripts were loaded into N6, I typed any and all labeling information into N6 so that the program could label the interview files. Labeling information included demographic information compiled using the demographic form that I asked participants to fill out at each interview. Then, I would read through each interview again. As I found ideas that I thought might develop into useful themes in the interviews, I used the “free node” feature of N6 to highlight text and define the codes. Once I was done coding all of the documents, I viewed all of the nodes that I created. I printed off all of the free nodes to compare the data that was coded. I read through the coded data again to double check myself for consistency in coding. I looked at the codes that I created for similarities to see if some needed to be two separate categories or collapsed into a larger overall theme. To connect and collapse the codes, I physically piled the printed papers with similar codes together to group overall theme categories. Then, once the data was collapsed, I re-examined the themes I had before me in accordance with the research questions. Then, on a separate piece of paper, I organized my thoughts as to how present and organize the themes. Once the data was completely coded and themes defined, I began Kvale’s (1996) final step of the interview process, verification.

Verification

In qualitative research, reliability and validity are inappropriate ways of discussing the data as an accurate representation of the experiences of the participants. Verification is the term that is used that is similar to reliability and validity in quantitative research to insure that the research is appropriately illuminating the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2003). Verification is a way of creating trustworthiness of the data, the way of addressing the question, “Did I get it right?” Creswell (1997) outlines

eight techniques for verification including prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation (using multiple methods such as interviewing, textual analysis and participant observation), peer review and debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich, thick description, and external audits.

Four forms of verification were utilized in this study, double the minimum standard of verification suggested by Creswell (1997). First, Creswell suggests that the researcher be clear about any biases he or she may have in doing the research. As mentioned in the introduction, I am an alumna of a Greek organization who has entered academia professionally. I am a member of the population I studied. I have had experiences and discussions about my Greek organizational membership as a part of my academic experience. I have wondered if it is appropriate for me to disclose my affiliation because of fears it might tarnish or conflict with my desire to be an academic. As an instructor, I am faced with decisions about disclosure to my students every day. Non-Greek students could feel I am biased. Other Greeks might feel I am biased toward current members of my own organization. I wanted to do this study to situate my own experiences in a larger context. I acknowledged my own biases and worked to set them aside and allowed the voices of the participants to illuminate the experience of being Greek and being an academic. As I analyzed the data, I played devil's advocate with myself to insure that I was truly representing the experiences of the participants; not using the participants to justify my own biases and experiences.

Second, in the analysis portion of the study, "thick, rich description," (Creswell, 2003, p. 203) of the participants was utilized, and large segments of their interviews are presented as to show the participants in their truest light, and to allow the participants to

explain the themes that emerge from the data through their own opinions and experiences.

Thirdly, I contacted four of the participants in the study for member checking (Creswell, 1997). In member checking, the emergent themes are checked with the participants to ask if the information presented rings true to the experiences of the participants. For this portion, I selected two women and two men from the participant pool, one from each demographic group (one African American woman, one African American man, one Caucasian woman, and one Caucasian man). I sent each participant a one page summary of the results to review. I asked the participants to give me their reflections and thoughts about the summary of the data. The members were happy to serve as member checkers and indicated that they felt the data was indicative of the experiences of Greek organizational alumni in academics. The African American female member check was a bit surprised about one particular part of the data findings, but indicated that she felt that the findings were indicative of hers and others' experiences. She did not indicate that she felt the findings were incorrect, just not what she expected to read.

Finally, I used a peer reviewer who is not connected with the data collection or analysis in any way. This person is called a peer debriefer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I felt it was best to use a peer, particularly this peer, because she is not Greek and was not connected in any way with the data collection. Additionally, she is well versed in qualitative methods and research design. Not being Greek, she would be able to give me an opinion that was even more objective. After writing up the results, I sent her a complete copy of the results section to review. I briefed her about the methods that I was

using to analyze and collapse the data, so that she understood how I examined my data. After a designated period of time, we talked via telephone regarding the existence of the emergent themes. We extensively discussed the themes we found and discussed how each theme related to the other. She gave me insights that were appropriate for telling me if she felt that the data analysis reflected the experiences of the participants.

Now that all methods of data collection have been thoroughly explored, the next chapter will present the findings of the data collection.

Chapter 4: Results

The goal of this chapter is to present the results of the study that were obtained using the methods outlined in the previous chapter. The results will be presented as the themes from the thematic analysis are defined and explained in relationship to each research question. At the end of the chapter, interesting results that emerged from the data will also be presented.

Research Question One

The first research question asked, “How do Greek alumni manage their Greek affiliation in the Academy?” In answering this question, participants reflected on overall impressions that they believe others have of Greek organizations, therefore impacting their own feelings about how they should communicate about their Greek affiliation in an academic setting.

Cooley’s Looking Glass Self

As discussed in chapter two, Cooley’s Looking Glass Self (1902) is an interactional theory of the self that focuses on the perceptions that individuals have about how others see them. According to Cooley’s theory, the perceptions that people believe others have about them will influence their communicative decisions about themselves. For example, if a person felt that someone would be impressed because he or she had met a particular celebrity, he or she might openly disclose that connection. Additionally, if someone felt that they had an attribute that would be viewed less positively, he or she might be a bit less open about disclosing that attribute. The most important part about the Looking Glass Self is that it is focused around people’s perceptions of how others view

them. Whether those perceptions are right or wrong is not important because communicators will formulate messages based on their own socially constructed perceptions.

The Reflection Perception

The first theme is entitled “the Reflection Perception” in relationship to the concepts of Cooley’s Looking Glass Self (1902). In order to explore how others see themselves as reflections in another’s eyes, the first theme describes what the participants perceive to be the reflection of their Greek affiliation in the eyes of others.

Understanding the perceptions of others lays the groundwork for understanding how GOA manage affiliation in an academic setting.

The participants in this study said that they felt others have very negative perceptions about Greek organizations as a whole. Adjectives that appeared frequently included, “elitist, anti-intellectual, partiers, drinkers, and privileged.” In addition to those general adjectives, many participants, particularly women, described how others seemed to view the organizations as not serious and having very little value. Mavis, a female administrator described some of those adjectives in this excerpt:

“Um. I think probably the general population, uh, that have, people who have been in college, [I: uh huh] I have a feeling they still view the Greeks as, um, wealthy. You know, privileged. Um, and uh.. um. sort of upper middle, upper middle class. Uh, I don’t think they view them as particularly intellectually powerful or having much intellectio-, intellect. Um. Uh. And so, you know, so people probably who have been to college and on college campuses view them as the big partiers and all that kind of stuff and not the intellectual giants or anything like that.” (Interview 4, lines 265-271)

Mavis had worked in several different capacities on various college campuses and had a wider perspective of how different levels of students, faculty and administration felt about Greek organizations. She did not necessarily delineate between men’s and

women's organizations being viewed differently, but a few other participants did make a slight distinction between men's and women's organizations. Many participants singled out women's organizations as not being viewed as particularly serious, but did not indicate that men's organizations were much more serious.

Pam, a female graduate student, feels that women's Greek organizations are viewed specifically negatively. Pam described how others viewed her Greek affiliation in this segment:

“Well, people will will always have their, their negative stereotypes. And I think it can be generalized to, to sexist stereotypes. But I mean, people, I'll say that I was you know, affiliated with the Greek system and then'll say, “Oh, well is that just the little meeting where you just get together and talk about.. which tampons are the most absorbent and cookies and things like that.” [both laugh] [laughing] Like that's all we do! But, but I think people, um, just just make these generalizations that it's it's this huge waste of time, where we get together and do fluffy women stuff.” (Interview 10, lines 165-171)

In the previous segment, and other women mentioned this as well, the affiliation was not taken as being serious. Ironically, Dana, an African-American female participant expressed similar feelings about how she felt that others viewed her affiliation with the organization, even though she felt that her organization had a strong reputation in the community for providing community service and awarding scholarships to college-bound young women. She states:

Because um, maybe, because maybe they think it's fluff or its uh, some kind of little girly sorority girls, we're going to all get together and have a sleepover or something..... And, you know, the typical, when you think of sorority girl, I mean I'm sure that conjures up in your mind some, some certain ideas of of you know, the, blonde hair, blue eyed girl with the long hair and the, she's wearing little sweats with some kind of something written across the back. [both laugh] Yeah. But, you know, I , you know, there's not a typical sorority girl I don't think, but I think people think of them, have some stereotypes.” (Interview 23, lines 155-157, 168-173)

Dana made it clear she did not feel that she fit this stereotype, but she even though she

felt that her organization had a strong reputation, she still felt this stereotype was quite prevalent.

Another prominent descriptive phrase for discussing how participants felt that others view Greek organizations was that members of Greek organization pay for their friends. Norm, a Caucasian male participant describes this feeling in this excerpt:

I think they view us as elite clubs. I think they view us as fairly superficial. I think they view us as intellectually underdeveloped. I think they view us as racist and sexist. Um. And I think they view us... I think there's an aspect to this that that I'm not would be something like um, an inability to develop relationships like normal people. That somehow, the Greek organization becomes a crutch for us. We can't meet people, engage in conversations, develop relationships the normal way. And so, we join a club, we pay our dues, and um, this allows other socially retarded members [I chuckles] like ourselves to um, feel comfortable with each other. (Interview 20, lines 323-329)

Norm rather forcefully articulates how he feels others view Greek organizations and summarizes the negative adjectives that many participants described quite well. His wording about buying friends is unique, but this feeling about the organizations was articulated, perhaps with a bit less force, by other individuals throughout the interviews.

Not all participants felt that all views of Greeks were entirely negative. Sandy, an African American female participant described conflicting views of Greek organizations, particularly among students.

One, they see Greeks as demi-gods. On one hand, they love em. And then on one hand they hate em. Uh, within the minority student community, especially. They want to see them as being perfect beings. Perfect in the ideal sense of their ideals and principles and visions for their organizations. And they cannot be human. You know, um. And so. They want them to set the, the stage. Set the tone for the student community. And yet, when they do that, then they're accused of of uh, being elitist, and that only they can be leaders. So, that's a perception that came out of that. Um. They do perceive them as a, a bond that's unbreakable. That everybody sticks together, whether it's right or wrong. There's that perception, that once you become a part, you lose your individual identity. That you're more a part of the group. Um. They view them, some ways, as again, positive. You're the leaders. Um. You do community service.

You're doing so many great things for our community. Um, and then they see them as being very social. Only there for parties. Um, they see them, uh, perceive them as being the source of conflict, uh, no I'm sorry, competition. Sometimes healthy, sometimes unhealthy. Um. Again, I'm trying to reflect on some of the things that came up in this open forum. Um, but I would say that those were, oh I know what it is. In membership, a perception is that they stereotype. And they only invite in a certain kind of people into their organizations. So they were clone groups. (Interview 16, lines 274-290)

This particular quote is interesting on many levels. On one hand, Sandy describes that Greeks are viewed negatively, a sentiment echoed by many other participants throughout all of the interviews. However, Sandy also mentions that other people in general have a view of Greeks that they are leaders. Elitism was particularly articulated among African American participants. Reggie, an African American male described the elitist perceptions:

You know, "Why would anybody join an organization because you know, you know, Why would anybody join an organization because they think that uh, they're better than everybody else and they, you know, that's who they want to associate with." I I mean, prob-, possibly elitist. Um, you know, for for the Black community, uh, people probably ask that question. You know, what are, what is the function of you know, Black Greek organizations, you know, now that we're you know, now that the nation's somewhat more integrated? (Interview 12, lines 300-307)

In this quote, Reggie also mentions that people may not see the need for Black Greek letter organizations in the Black community, because of the progress that the African American community has made since the early part of the 20th century, when many of the organizations were founded. Regina, an African American female also addresses the element of exclusivity perceived by those outside of the Greek system. In this quote, she addresses not only the exclusivity, but some of the other less negative emotions that are associated with those on the outside of Greek organizations looking in:

Um, I think that, of course non-Greek students, I think that there was kind of a, a curiosity, and also kind of like a disgust. Like what I found is that people are

really, just basically, just curious. Like they just, it's the outside looking in. "I just want to know. [chuckle] What do you do?! Like, you know, just tell me what you do." You know, and I think we had people who, even if they weren't interested in the organization, they liked them. You know, I think that most of us, even those of us who are in organizations, you know, became members of this organization because we saw this ideal. Now whether or not we got that ideal, you know, is different. But I think that was there. Um, other students, quite frankly, I think were jealous. And were hateful because, um, one of the things that they tell us all the time was like, you know, it is an exclusive organization. And for it to be exclusive, everybody can't be a member. And that upsets some people who feel like they should be members of an organization but just because of the way it's structured, everybody can't be a member. Which is life! Right? [I: yeah] But I mean, there are lots of different things where, you know, people can't be, you know, members. Like Country Clubs. Everybody can't be a member. Or frankly, certain churches. Everybody can't be a member. So, in the same sense, you know, um, in Greek organizations, everybody can't be a member. (Interview 3, lines 104-119)

Regina acknowledges that yes, the organizations may be exclusive, but the organizations, in her opinion, are no more exclusive than others clubs and organizations that one might encounter throughout life. However, she points out that Greek organizations maintain a negative reputation because of the perceived exclusivity of the organizations.

Not all views of Greek organizations were entirely negative. Much like Sandy's view of a love and a hatred of Greek organizations, some participants felt that people outside Greek organizations had more positive images of the organizations and the contributions that the organizations can make to the campus community. Katie points out on her campus, one of her faculty members saw value in the sororities for women, but not the fraternities for men:

They, it seemed like, like the sororities, They, the sorority women were usually seen as, you know, really organized, on top of things, just, you know, good students. The males were more the goof-offs. They still, there were a lot of them that still did well in school, but there were still some. Like I had one faculty member who I actually worked with at my undergrad institution, after I got my Master's, I worked there for three years. And his son got involved in a fraternity and he said, "You know what? I really like the sororities. I think they have so many great things to offer. But I don't think the fraternities have as much to

offer.” And his son ended up quitting the fraternity because he didn’t think it was focused enough on grades and on, you know, those kind of aspects. It was way too social, I guess? (Interview 11, lines 138-146)

DeSantis (2007) supports this view, stating on the campus where he works, sorority women typically have the highest grades on campus. The academic performance of sorority women on many college campuses was typically higher than that of fraternity men, or even independent women or men. However, as stated earlier, many female participants described feelings of not being taken seriously as a member of a Greek organization.

Phil, an administrator, summarized the negative and positive feelings about Greek organizations stating:

You know, I think the institution respects the the system, but recognizes the difficulties that it causes. Some of these frat boys uh, get pretty silly and do some pretty crazy things. Uh, which is uh, you know, pose problems for the institution. But by the same token, they do, you know, uh, you know, teach character and all, all the good stuff. So there’s a value in it. So I think the institution is uh, is uh, on a whole, pleased with the organizations, um, because kids will be kids--if they weren’t Greeks, they’d be [chuckling] doing something. (Interview 22, lines 40-45)

Phil states what will be discussed in more detail in the following section. While some administrators see the value that Greek organizations can provide and contribute to the campus community, there are other aspects of the organizations that are not nearly as positive. However, Phil states that it is more likely the Greek insignia that single out the students, rather than the Greek affiliation, meaning that because the students are marked by Greek insignia, their antics are more likely to be attributed to their membership in the organization. Phil did not believe that membership in the organization caused students to engage in deviant behavior.

So, as the first part of the Looking Glass Self (1902), the participants have

described how they feel that others view the Greek affiliation portion of their personal identity. The participants described how they feel people view Greek organizations in certain both positively and negatively. With both positive and negative views of Greek organizations present, participants find it difficult to decide if affiliation is perceived positively or negatively. The majority of participants, even those that did mention positive views of Greek organizations felt that the positive views were less prevalent than the negative views. The perceived reasons for the reflected image will be discussed in the next section.

Reasons for the Reflection

As the previous theme described how participants felt others viewed Greek organizations, this theme describes the participants' perceptions of why the reflected image is how they perceive it to be. Three major culprits were identified, including media coverage, organizational public relations, and individual members.

Media Coverage. As the perceived views of Greek organizations have been presented, a logical question to ask is "Why do you think people view your organizations like this?" As communication literature and other identity literature has stated identity is formed through social interaction and information (Cooley, 1902; Goffman, 1959). Organizational identity can be communicated through media sources and public relations campaigns (Cheney & Christenson, 2001). Media images can also be instrumental in forming people's perceptions of various ideas such as ideal body type, ideal romantic relationships, and other important topics. Essentially, people's perceptions can be triggered by a variety of things, including their own personal experiences and experiences with individuals. Although I did not ask directly for reasons participants thought that

others viewed them in certain ways, participants were able to quickly identify sources of the views of outsiders. Many participants pointed the finger squarely at the media's fictional portrayals in media or coverage of news events. Several participants mentioned the movie *Animal House* by name, as Renee points out in this quote:

Just in general, if you just go to a variety of schools, I think they definitely have misperceptions and mostly I feel it's what, first what the media has fed them. Then what pop culture has fed them. I say one of the worst things that's ever been done to the Greek community is *Animal House*. That was the worst. One of the worst, worst things ever could have been done to our community. (Interview 2, lines 401-405)

Another prominent source of media constructions were simply focused on what the news media chooses to cover regarding Greek organizations. Claire, an African American female participant stated that it was the "last story" that shaped the perceptions of many outside Greek organizations:

Claire: Um, I guess.. to be, I just, I would say it's a, it's a true lack of knowledge. They really don't get the true concept of what we were formed for and what we really do. They only have the last story that they heard.

Interviewer: Yes.

Claire: And so, that's all that they know. And they base their whole knowledge-base on that last story that they heard. So, if the last story that they heard was a newspaper article that talked about drinking or partying or whatever, that's what they know. And that's what they tend to believe. That's all that they do. Instead of really trying to educate themselves and try to find out exactly what are they, why were they formed, what do they really do. So, I think, I think that's overall, that's what I think is the biggest misconception of what Greek life is is my last story. That last story is usually a negative one. (Interview 30, lines 90-101)

This participant feels that whatever gets the most media attention is what people will use to form their views and beliefs about Greek organizations. Pam, a Caucasian participant, concurs with her, stating:

I think that there's a potential to see Greek organizations as detrimental because in the media we hear of poor decisions being made and and and hazing and things

like that. I mean, in short, philanthropy doesn't make the news. Or if it does, it's on like the 7th page, something that people don't read. But if people make a bad decision involving alcohol or something like that, then that makes the front page. And it leads people to think that uh, the Greek organizations just come together and do harmful, detrimental things, and and that's not the case. (Interview 10, lines 185-190)

Some participants felt that negative press about mishaps involving Greek organizations was deserved in some cases when people are engaging in detrimental behavior. Melvin, an African American male who is actively involved with his chapter and an alumni initiate, feels that the media focuses far too much on sensationalizing the negative behaviors of Greeks, and not enough promoting the whole picture of what he calls "Greekdom:"

Melvin: I don't know if enough emphasis is put on the positive sides of Greekdom. You know, when you look at TV. When you look at the media in general. When they talk about Greek life, it is not in the positive manner, it's the negatives. You know, I know it's all about sensationalizing and selling the news and selling whatever media, you know, the paraphernalia item you're talking about, but not enough of actually pointing out what Greekdom does. You know?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Melvin: The philanthropic side of how much money they raise for the various different charities and what they do with it. (Interview 27, lines 608-616)

Melvin views the media images as an obstacle to overcome when discussing Greek life. The media play an active role in determining how people interpret and view events in general, not just perceptions of Greek organizations. Two major media theories illuminate this phenomenon, Cultivation Theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976), and Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Cultivation theory (Gerbner & Gross) states that when people continuously see certain images on television, those images are what they believe to be real about a situation with which they may have little personal

experience. Gerbner and Gross cite examples such as Americans in general having little idea what goes on in a court room, except for what was seen on television. The same can be said about Greek organizations, most people who are not in the organizations have little idea what actually goes on in the organizations except for what is seen on television or in media in general. In application and in reference to the comments of the participants, as media images might show binge drinking or hazing incidents as indicative of typical Greek members, then those outside of Greek organizations are likely to believe those images, because those are the images they see. Melvin's comments are an example of how Cultivation Theory creates images of Greek organizations for those outside of the organizations.

Agenda Setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) states that media coverage has a strong impact on what issues people focus their attention on. For example, during presidential elections, media might draw attention to a specific issue that the public may not have been overly concerned about. However, with continued coverage, people might begin to pay more attention to the issue at hand.

In terms of the present study, Pam's comment, "philanthropy doesn't make the news," is indicative of Agenda Setting. Pam believes that media choose to cover the incidents of hazing and negative Greek organizational behavior, rather than focusing on the more positive aspects of Greek life, such as philanthropic events and contributions. Although people did not mention Cultivation Theory or Agenda Setting theory by name, their responses align quite well with the explanations for people's ideas about Greek organizations based on both theories. Claire's comments are a marriage of the ideas of the two theories. All three of the comments are indicative of feelings participants had

about the media's influence on perceptions of Greek organizations by non-Greeks.

Organizational Public Relations. Another way participants felt that non-Greeks formed opinions of Greek organizations was by seeing the organizations in action and by the organization's publicity of their own actions and events. Organizations as well as media are key factors in forming the opinions of those outside of the organizations. Rebecca, a Caucasian female participant, agrees that media is instrumental in forming the opinions of outsiders, but also stated that outsiders can only form their views on what they see, and that is not always the complete picture of the organization. She states that Greek organizations need to be more assertive in terms of shaping messages about what goes on in the chapters and the goals of the organizations.

I think in general they view them through the stereo-, stereotypical way that the media portrays them. I think that's how parents see it. I think that's how independent students see it. Cause all the independents see, is they don't-- Independent students don't see, they don't see chapter meetings, they don't see the um, they don't see any of the philanthropy stuff that goes on. They don't see the bonding things that go on. They don't see retreats. They see banners. They see going to [another school]. They see being involved in our, [another school]'s recruitment, standing on the sidewalk, jumping up and down. I mean, they only see the outside visible things that happen outside the house. They don't see what happens inside the house. And so I think they still think it, no matter where it is, is what you see on TV. It is that stereotypical drinking fest party, all the time. When that really isn't what it is. Drinking is there. But it wasn't the overarching theme of the sorority. I mean it's there, but it's not the whole goal of the organization. (Interview 7, lines 305-316)

Rebecca is a faculty member and an advisor to the chapter of her Greek organization on campus. She has had extensive experience with the chapter and the campus where she works. She focuses on the public relations issue of organizational identification, stating that the only image that people can form is the one they see, and the public activities are the images people outside of the organization see. This ties in quite nicely with the ideas presented by Johansson (2007). Johansson called for more interpersonal communication

theoretical framing of public relations research. Johansson cited Goffman's ideas for self-presentation, because public relations can be a great deal of self-presentation and performance for an organization. What the organization performs publicly is what people tend to believe. Using this lens, the organizations need to be more conscious of their public performances in order for others to form the desired images of them (Johannsson).

Jamal, another chapter advisor discusses this idea that Greek organizations need to do a better job of making their good works more publicized. He states:

But I think.. you know, the longer people become witness to some of the activities and and and goals and whatnot of of these organizations, they, I, hopefully I think they, they get to see another side. They get to see the philanthropy that goes on, on the campus and in the community. They get to see all of the services that we provide. And opportunity that we create for others through our, through our activities and and and community service activity. Um. And so, you know, I think there is a overwhelming emphasis on the social, since they are social organizations in nature. But that's not all we do. But, I think it interesting though is, that's all we tend to promote. So, I think we can do a better job promoting the other aspects of, of what it means to be a Greek, uh, member on a, a campus like [institution]. (Interview 9, lines 271-280)

Jamal's comments are quite similar to Rebecca's and Johansson's ideas, in his comments, Jamal makes it clear that he believes that organizations tend to only promote the social aspect of the organizations, rather than the philanthropic events or other goals of the organization. In essence, Jamal and Rebecca state that the organizations are agenda setting by promoting only the less substantive aspects of their organizations. Ironically, this agenda setting tends to reflect negatively on the organizations and cause problems in terms of personal impression management.

Individual Members. The media and the organizations themselves are largely held responsible for the images of Greek organizations. However, some participants recognized that some of the blame can also be placed on individual organizational

members who do not exhibit behavior reflective of the goals and values of the organizations. Renee made an impassioned description regarding those members who do not reflect positively on Greek organizations because of their behavior:

Um, I truly believe every Greek chapter on our campus has three different members. They have the members who understand the values and they're living up to those values. They have the members who are doing the work but they don't really understand why they're doing it and so they're really kind of caught in the middle. And then you have the bottom third who is just there because they're drawn to the party and the stereotype and the alcohol. And unfortunately, I think those are the ones that a lot of our faculty can be exposed to sometimes. And that those are the ones that have, um, our faculty view the perception of the rest of the Greek community on. (Interview 2, lines 141-149)

Renee's description is focused more specifically on the individual members of Greek organizations who exhibit poor decision making and bad behavior. The members who exhibit those behaviors tend to reflect on the larger Greek community. Jeff, a staff member believes it is simply the marker of the Greek letters that can intensify the perceptions of poor behavior.

Um, and typically we see a lot of faculty that look down on Greek life in some regards, I think. And partly it's because there's like students in the back of the room or sitting in the front of the room who is not paying attention, who's asleep, but yet he's wearing a let-, you know, Greek letters. Um, so I think that image really hurts us. They don't see the, the student sitting next to that student who's not wearing Greek letters today, but is, you know, a 4.0 student or, a Dean's student. So I think that it's, it's easy for them to pick out the students that are wearing letters but are also in their class and hungover or um, not attending class and things like that. Um, so some of its perception is reality. (Interview 14, lines 100-108)

Jeff agrees with Renee, that some of the members who join because of the stereotype tend to reflect on everyone else affiliated with Greek organizations, and that the stereotype creates challenges for other members who do not fit those stereotypes. However, participants acknowledged that the stereotypes have some basis in reality, and that if seeing the stereotypes in the media and seeing people who meet the stereotypes is all that

people see without interacting with the organization, people have no way of really knowing what goes on in the organizations. Melvin summarizes the feelings about Greek organizations in this excerpt, stating:

Whereas you have some of those who think it's just elitist. You know, where they just think they're better than everybody else, they know they're better than everybody else, they act like they're better than everybody else, they're stuck up, you know, and they have this whole mentality that because you're Greek, that's how you are and that's how you act towards everyone. Now there are some that fit that stereotype, you know, there, every stereotype has someone who meets it. [I: Yes] Otherwise it wouldn't be a stereotype. [I: mm hmm] Um. So when you see it, and the people who have that feeling go, "See, I told you." [laugh] No, I mean, I don't.. But I say, they they look at that, say, "I told you that's what those people do. I told you that's how they are. I told you that's how they act." So you're going to always have those two camps. You know, those that wish they could be and and have fun with them, and those that just will never ever be a part of it. And that, and don't feel that it's a viable way, uh, for society to look at things. (Interview 27, lines 185-196)

Melvin feels that the stereotypes are important factors in determining how others view Greek organizations. Melvin justifies the views of others stating that there are indeed people who meet the stereotypes. However, he feels, as many of the participants did, that the stereotypes are used too often by those outside of Greek organizations to judge everyone who is affiliated with the organizations.

In summary, participants identified three specific sources of opinions for those outside of Greek organizations in forming their opinions of Greek organizations, the media, the organizations, and the organizational members. The first two areas are established areas of organizational identity research (Cheney & Christenson, 2001). However, the emergence of the third area of the role of individual members is a part of organizational identity research is interesting. In organizational communication research, there is a great deal of emphasis on the toll of emotional labor of individual organizational members on their psychological well-being (i.e., Hochschild, 1983; Tracy

& Tracy, 1998), but the impact that individual organizational members can have on communicating organizational identity in everyday interpersonal interactions remains relatively unexplored. The impact that the participants feel individual members of Greek organizations have on the communication of organizational identity and the impact it can have on the perceptions of outsiders is an interesting expansion of organizational identity.

Managing the Reflection

The previous themes described the reflection participants believe others see of Greek organization and the reasons the participants believe the reflections are as they are. In this theme of managing the reflection, the participants describe how they communicatively manage their Greek affiliation.

Impression Management. In Chapter 2, I reviewed some theories of impression management. Parts of these theories turned out to offer useful insights into how GOAs communicated or concealed their Greek identity. The work of Jones and Pittman (1982) and Cialdini (1989) emerged from the data as being of particular relevance. Jones and Pittman identified specific strategies that people might use in communicating about themselves in order for the other person in the interaction to form the most positive impression of them. Impression management is a calculated decision by an individual to manage the information communicated about her- or himself to create a desired attribution from the other party in the interaction (Metts & Grohskopf, 2003). Cialdini (1989) took impression management a step further, delineating between direct and indirect tactics. Indirect tactics are of particular importance to this portion of the data, as the participants were discussing their links to their Greek affiliation, rather than their own personal attributes. Cialdini articulated a typology of other focused tactics, whereby

interactants look to improve the image of something to which they are positively linked and distance themselves from something to which they are negatively linked. In this study, only one participant mentioned being a bit ashamed of Greek affiliation. The rest of the participants discussed their Greek affiliation with pride and fondness. Even though the one participant felt a little bit ashamed of her affiliation, she still used similar tactics when discussing her Greek affiliation.

One particular strategy for managing their affiliation emerged from nearly all of the participants: silence. Nearly every participant stated that in an academic setting, their Greek affiliation was not something they disclosed immediately or freely. The strategy of silence is an indirect impression management tactic discussed by Cialdini (1989) called “burying,” disclaiming a positive link to a negatively viewed other (p. 51). For example, if someone was close friends with a person who was in the news for committing a crime, the friend of the criminal would be unlikely to affiliate him/herself with the criminal. By not disclosing a link to something perceived as being negative, the participants are not openly admitting their link, therefore using an impression management strategy. Additionally, Leary (1995) stated that persons who have an attribute they believe to be stigmatized will conceal the attribute, if possible. By not disclosing Greek affiliation, participants are using concealment in addition to burying. Participants had a number of reasons for choosing not to disclose their Greek affiliation including it does not come up, it is irrelevant, it does not help in academics, or they do not want to appear biased.

“It just doesn’t come up.” Many participants stated that they did not disclose their Greek affiliation because it just was not something that comes up in their academic

setting. Some participants felt they had moved beyond their college years, and that their Greek affiliation was primarily a college experience, therefore there was little need to bring it up in the academic setting. As Phil states:

Uh, like I say, I don't, I don't wear my Greek affiliation on my sleeve and so I, when I'm in staff meetings, I don't talk about [chuckle] my, you know, my fraternity. I, you know, I really view uh, the Greek experience as primarily a college experience, when you're in college. [I: mm hmm] Uh, and I've just never had an occasion to talk about it, uh, in any of my professional life. Um. So I'm probably, I'm I'm probably not a typical Greek, uh, maybe I am! But I, you know, I just don't. (Interview 22, lines 126-131)

Phil states that as a professional, it just is not a part of every day conversation, and that he does not feel a need to affiliate with his Greek organization. His comments about not being a typical Greek are interesting. Phil is African American. His comments about Greek affiliation being a part of his past were not similar to other African American participants, but similar to Caucasian participants, as will be discussed later on in this chapter in more depth. He is on the campus where he was a member of his organization, but he does not openly affiliate with the organization, largely because of his views that it was something that was a part of his past, and not something that he deals with often now. He has never had particularly negative experiences about being Greek, he just simply does not see his Greek affiliation as relevant to him currently. Mavis states that the academic setting is not a place that Greek affiliation comes up often:

In an academic setting, it doesn't come up. I mean it's not, the place that it comes up is when you're with people who are working with college students beyond, outside of the classroom. Very few faculty want to know that about you. They're more interested in where you got your degree. And, what it's in and that kind of thing. Um. But they don't ever say, "Gee. Were you president of the student body?" They don't care about that. Or "Were you in a sorority or a fraternity?" Um. So I can't.. Quite, but, it.. but, where I am, it's not something I volunteer, Ok? And I don't think, I don't, when you're in college, you volunteer it all of the time. But after you get out of college, it's not big de-, it doesn't, it's not part of, it becomes not part of what makes you who you are. (Interview 4, lines 461-470)

Kelly, a professor in a professional program just could not think of a time that her Greek affiliation had come up and was a necessary part of her conversation:

So, generally, I don't say anything to anybody. And so maybe they're out of my class. Um, and about, just people in general, I really don't have an occasion to tell anybody, unless. Unless you are, um, Um, I really don't have occasion to tell anybody. I I think.. they're not surprised [laugh] when they learn. It's just something that they didn't know about me. (Interview 26, lines 89-92)

In general, more of the administrators or faculty than graduate students, were more likely to state that discussing their Greek affiliation rarely comes up in conversation. The participants who fit one of the aforementioned categories stated that it just was not something that was important for them to disclose at this juncture of their career. Some participants mentioned that they did not volunteer their Greek affiliation without someone else talking about it first. Suzanne says:

I don't know how everybody feels because, you know, a lot of times you don't get the opportunity to talk to people about Greek, being Greek. I find that I don't start a conversation about it until I just kind of like randomly find out that another, that maybe another faculty member was Greek. And then we'll talk about it. But other than that, I don't. Um. I think maybe once or twice. (Interview 6, 191-195)

Mary, the only participant who mentioned any really negative feelings about her involvement with a Greek organization stated that she does not necessarily take opportunities to mention being Greek, but she will talk about it if she is asked directly.

Mary states:

No, I think though is the only thing that I can think of was this last Sunday when there was an opportunity for me to say, "Hey. You were Greek, I was Greek, and we can talk about it." Um, but I didn't. I just chose. I, I, I made a, you know, a choice not to. you know. Um. But other than that, no. If it comes up, I'll say, "Hey, I would, I mean I was in a Greek organization." (Interview 5, lines 427-431)

With this particular theme, there seemed to be a feeling of "don't ask, don't tell." If no

one mentions being in a Greek organization, many participants did not trumpet their Greek affiliation.

It's irrelevant. Along the same lines of Greek affiliation not coming up at all, several participants felt that their affiliation with a Greek organization was completely irrelevant to their academic career and the academic setting. Diane was particularly passionate about not revealing her affiliation because it was something that was completely separate from her life as an academic stating, "There's no disclosure on my part. I, I don't, there's really no reason to disclose it. It is a separate part of who I am and what I do. And um, it is, and I keep it that way, so there's, there, to this point, there's been no reason to disclose it, um, at all." (Interview 19, lines 164-166) Diane's comments reflect an active choice to conceal her Greek affiliation. While she does not feel that her affiliation is relevant to her role in academics, the reasons behind her feeling that it is not relevant to disclose in the Academic setting.

Roles were an important part of why people felt that disclosure was irrelevant or not important. For example, Jamal is a staff member, and feels revealing his affiliation when in his official capacity as part of the university community is irrelevant and inappropriate:

When I'll just be doing presentations to incoming students or prospective students, never disclose that. Consciously, never disclose. I never wear anything, I never, I wear something with [institution] on it but I won't wear anything with my colors or my organization or, um, because we, we owe that to our, I mean not to bias the, uh, the field, so to speak with, with that type of influence. And so, I I tend to just not to even acknowledge. You know, when I give presentations, I make, I might say, "Many of our staff in our department" because most of us are members of Greek letter organizations. But I don't, I don't say which ones or, um. If that conversation comes up, then I'll, then I'll say, "Yeah. Many of us are." But I won't say specifically, anything. But, but I, when I'm in my official role or capacity with the institution, I, that that's not relevant. (Interview 9, lines 359-369)

Jamal states that he does not feel that his affiliation, while it is something that he feels strongly attached to, is appropriate to discuss in an official capacity. Other participants felt similarly that being Greek was not something they should necessarily volunteer because it just was not the right thing to do in the academic setting.

Some participants felt that it was not relevant in the academic setting because they separated their Greek involvement in the community from their academic roles. Earvin, a tenured faculty member, stated that many of his colleagues likely did not even know he was affiliated with the organization until he had to perform his role in the organization publicly:

It it it, it doesn't even come up, you know. Yeah, it, that is uh, fairly irrelevant in terms of sort of normal faculty interaction. Cause I think my colleagues, you know, have a sense, cause for instance, uh on a on a on a unfortunate note, uh, [name] who was the director of uh, [academic program], you know, died unexpectedly in in in in [month]. But he was a member of [Greek org] and part of the campus, uh, memorial, you know, members of the fraternity had our own sort of special memorial, to him as a fraternity brother. And I think a lot of my colleagues probably didn't even know I was in this [chuckling] organization before this time. (Interview 25, lines 93-99)

Dana felt that it wasn't appropriate to mention her sorority affiliations and work because she felt it would be something that was more of something she did in the community, not necessarily something that was relevant to her work:

And at work, it it it's just uh, I would say, I don't know if peo-, I don't know today how how many of the people in this building are a sorority, in a sorority or not. It's just not a discussion that we have. It's it's not important in the work that we're doing. To me, that is a community service. And uh, particularly in the grad chapters. Our work is not on the campus so much. I mean and we meet on the campus and we, uh, have some aff- affairs on the campus, but we're really working in the community. And so, uh, the only time I bring it up is if we're giving a fundraiser and I want them to come. [laugh] And I try not to do that too much too, because I don't want to look like I'm, you know, spending work time, you know, doing any sorority stuff or, you know, that kind of thing. (Interview 23, lines 298-306).

Dana segments her life into her community service and her academic life. She mentioned many other organizations in the community that she works with, and emphasized that her Greek affiliation was simply one organization that she particularly enjoyed, but she felt that it was important to keep it separate from her academic role.

“It doesn’t help in academics.” Because some participants felt that Greek affiliation was viewed rather negatively, some participants felt that silence about their Greek affiliation was the best way to manage their affiliation because of the fear they would be judged negatively. Very few participants mentioned specific negative events where someone judged them negatively, but it was clear that many participants did not want to take the risk of finding someone who would view them more negatively.

Charlene stated that she just did not want to argue about her positive feelings with negative perceptions of Greek organizations.

As far as my personal success? I don’t.. think.. [chuckle] Well if I don’t disclose it, then it’s not much of a hindrance. Um. I don’t know how the majority of people would feel. Um. And at this point, I’d rather not get into an argument with, uh, faculty members about, uh, stigma? So, [chuckle] um, or try to educate people about why they’re wrong? Um. I’d just like to keep my mouth shut. Um. And maybe when I am in a better position, then I can, I can say my piece and stuff like that. As far as an individual in the academy, I think it helps a whole lot, because it, I think it’s quite possibly very negative. (Interview 1, lines 413-420)

Norm agrees with Charlene’s assessment that Greek affiliation does not work well with the image people in the academy try to portray. He states:

But it definitely, definitely doesn’t help in in in academics. Where you’re really struggling to be seen as an academic, as a free-thinker. [I: mm hmm] you know. And maybe that’s it. You know, maybe we’re trying to manage an identity in academics, that we are free-thinkers and that we’re independent and that we’re competent, um, and that um, pledging a Greek organization runs counter to that identity management. (Interview 20, lines 409-413)

Other participants felt that people would perceive their Greek affiliation as counter to

being an intelligent, serious academic. As was discussed in the first theme, if participants felt that non-Greeks saw being Greek as being a partier and someone who is not serious or academically driven, this is the idea of the reflection in the looking glass: We are who we think others think we are. Therefore, if Greek organizational alumni did not feel that others viewed them seriously, they would strategically omit the information.

The idea that disclosure does not help in academics brought out another interesting theme. No participant felt that they would be judged as less academically credible by their students in the classroom for being Greek, however, many participants mentioned that they felt that when they were in an interaction or setting with someone of higher status, participants felt less comfortable disclosing. Dana, an administrator, mentions this feeling by saying:

It's just a little different. And um, so the same thing at work. Uh, I am not trying to be known as necessarily a Greek. It influences, you know, how much I talk about it and I don't! [laugh] Very much because I am trying to be about business and uh, you know, work, and and it's just not so important, you know? I mean I think of, right now, if I were to tell my, uh, my boss, that, you know, if I were mentioning that I was Greek, I don't, I don't [chuckling] really know what he would think about it. He'd probably think, "Oh! I thought she was more serious." [laugh] I don't know! [laugh] Yeah, so I don't say a lot. (Interview 23, lines 261-267)

Rebecca, a participant who is a tenure track faculty member and a Ph. D. student expressed a great deal of comfort on the campus where she teaches in disclosing that she is Greek. In fact, as mentioned previously, she advises her chapter. However, when she was in her Graduate classes as a student and on another campus, she felt very uncomfortable disclosing her Greek affiliation:

Discomfort about revealing my Greek affiliation at [grad school]. Not a lot of comfort in telling people that I was a [organization] when I was an undergrad because the discussion that comes up at [grad school] is not positive toward the Greek system. The students' work ethic, the students' attendance in class, texting

on phones all the time, or talking in the back of the room. I mean, the behavior that happens that they affiliate with Greek students. And then they're like, "Well what are you guys?" I'm like, "Ahh. Well, you know, I was Greek." You know? "I'm a Greek advisor." And they're like, "Oh." You know? And so I, it's a completely different reaction at [grad school]. And I, and I don't go out of my way to tell people at [grad school] that I was Greek. I don't even actually, when I pass other girls on campus that are like carrying [organization] bags or [organization] whatever, I don't even let them know that, you know, "Hey, I'm, I'm your sister too." You know, I I just kinda, "OK, let's just move on." And, I don't really recognize it when I'm there. Cause it's not seen as a positive.. It's not; it's not the first thing that needs to come out of your mouth when you're introducing yourself at [grad school]. It's like the last. (Interview 7, lines 244-257)

Cliff, a Master's student who works on a college campus had not had a direct experience in being in a total academic setting, such as a conference or other situation where academic credibility and status are of high importance. But Cliff mentioned that he was very leery about disclosing his Greek affiliation in a purely academic setting.

I think you have to be careful, because, I think that sometimes there's an unfair judgment, when you disclose, that you were in a fraternity or sorority. And so, depending on the kind of environment, whether you're, if you're in an academic environment, whether I choose to disclose it or not, I'm a little more candid, because I don't want to be judged as, you know. And I think, I I hope that they wouldn't judge me as a professional because I am Greek, but, you know, I think sometimes if people had a bad experience or weren't Greek, they're going to look at me and go, "Oh, he was in a fraternity, so I have to look at him different." And, so I have to be careful. (Interview 21, lines 179-185)

Pam mentions that she does not disclose her Greek affiliation immediately, much like Rebecca. She states:

It's not something that I mention off the cuff. For, for example, I mentioned I was on the [academic] team in in my undergrad. And I think I'm more likely to mention that in casual conversation than I am to mention that I was Greek because there's more fidelity with, "All right. She was on the [academic] team and now she's a [discipline] scholar." Well that makes sense. Whereas to say, "Well, you know, I practically live in my office and I do research and I teach, but I was also in a sorority." Then that doesn't align as much for people. (Interview 10, lines 193-198)

Chris, a tenure track faculty member also discussed that he rarely mentions his

Greek affiliation because he felt that it was detrimental to his role as a teacher and a scholar. “Uh, I don’t, actually, um, very often. Because of the stereotype uh, and I mean, there is a stereotype that um, the Greek people aren’t as focused for scholarship and stuff like that. And I don’t know if there’s a stereotype against faculty members? But it, it really, I don’t come out and say it.”(Interview 13, lines 350-352) Norm clearly delineates the feelings about not disclosing around people of higher status when he says:

But I will say that there are times in which I just don’t reveal the information. You know, if I’m around a bunch of um, significant administrators or hard-hitting well-known academics? It would be one of the things that I would be strategically ambiguous about? Even even more than ambiguous. It would be one thing that I would um, I would conceal. Because, ultimately, there’s nothing for me to gain. In that situation, in that context, revealing that information would only hurt my ethos. (Interview 20, lines 277-282)

In Norm’s interview, he described many times that people, such as colleagues and friends, ask him if he was crazy for joining a Greek organization and express disbelief looking at him currently that he was ever affiliated with a Greek organization. Therefore, his decisions to conceal his affiliation are based upon specific messages he has received about the desirability of his Greek affiliation. In this theme, although many participants did not mention that they had a particularly negative experience with disclosure, they felt that it was not an attribute they wanted to highlight in the academic setting, particularly to someone of higher status.

Not directly addressing status, Melissa states that she really has not had negative experiences with people because she is Greek, but she was not sure if it was because she did not tell anyone, or if no one really cared. She states:

I have really not had anybody give me a hard time about it. Um. But perhaps it's cause I mean I don't talk about it all the time. Usually when it'll come up in conversation is when I'll see somebody with their Greek letters on, so you know for sure that they're Greek? And then you either say to them, and then it's not like

they're generally going to be mean to you because they're also affiliated with a Greek organization. It could be different if you, um, I don't know, revealed it to somebody that wasn't, you know? They, oh, the whole GDI thing. [in a real negative, scratchy imitation] "Oh, da da da," I don't, I don't want anything to do with that, you know. So, I I think that's totally different. But no, I I haven't really had any negative experiences. (Interview 8, lines 138-146)

Melissa states in this comment that she is careful about disclosing her Greek affiliation. She makes sure that there is some acceptance of her Greek affiliation before she reveals her affiliation. She does not know if that accounts for her lack of a negative experience with revealing her Greek affiliation or if it is because no one has negative feelings about her affiliation.

"I don't want to appear biased." The last major reason that participants felt that they should not reveal their Greek affiliation was that they did not want to appear biased toward Greek students in general or Greek students who were members of their particular organization. Florence, an administrator, is quite adamant that she is guarded about revealing her affiliation with a particular chapter on her campus:

I'm very careful. Uh, I mean like I say, I, I don't go around saying I'm Greek at all. Uh, I think it might, u- unless it comes up. And, if [Greek org] invites me to something, I'll go. But I try to go to other things, like when, during rush, I'll try to go to several of their parties because I want em to know that I do support all of the Greek organizations. I think they're all, I just happen to belong to one, but, um. But I do te-, I do, without sometimes even revealing that I was Greek, I do hold up for what I think the Greeks do on this campus, which is a little different than mine. And try to uh, explain to people what role I think they play in retention and why I think people join them. Uh, and um, that that's, I think I am just very careful when and where I reveal it because there are strong feelings both ways. (Interview 18, lines 143-151)

Although Florence was not a member of the chapter on the campus where she currently works, she emphasized throughout the interview that she is very guarded about revealing her connection to the chapter on campus. Ralph, also an administrator, describes a similar feeling, as he reflects on his role as a classroom teacher before becoming an

administrator:

And, you know, people on campus, the administrators, there were no negative experiences because all of the people who were Greeks knew they had a sense of community, even between and among the different organizations. What I did do is try and make sure that I did not exhibit uh, obvious favoritism towards the students who were Greek or wanted to be Greek, because when I stood in front of my class, I was the, the teacher [I: mm hmm] of all the students. And so, I did not put banners in my office. Uh, I had for a while, but then I took it down because I realized that, you know, some would assume that [Greek org]s would be treated with favoritism. (Interview 24, lines 190-197)

Kelly, an adjunct faculty member also mentions that she is very careful to not reveal that she was in a particular Greek organization because she does not want students to think that she is biased in favor of members of her organization, “Um. I, I, for my students, they’re surprised, because I make it a point not to tell anybody that I belonged to an organization, because I don’t want people to feel like um, because I’m a part of an organization, that we have a particular bond that would bias me towards them, you know, teacher-student perspective.” (Interview 26, lines 79-82) Sabrina, a tenure track faculty member, mentions that revealing that she is Greek and managing that disclosure and connection with her students has been something that she has had to learn to manage throughout her teaching career:

Well, I think because I represent, you know, whereas Greek affiliation is used most time to bind me to someone, I’m also very well aware in the academy, it can be used to separate me. Um, and if, I I try to look at opportunities to bring myself closer to my students, rather than pulling myself apart from them. And for a student that might feel alienated because of my sorority choice or or being Greek, um, I try to think about how this is going to play out. For a couple of my fraternity guys, um, I may tell them I’m Greek. Um, because I need them to understand that that you know, I understand, you know, being the pledge master, I understand that stuff. But I also know you need to do your work, and I know that’s what you were founded on. But I also, if I have uh, students in my class who don’t, who are not Greek, um, and there’s a majority of them, I don’t want to highlight a difference between me and them that might be problematic. I think very early on in my teaching career, I didn’t do such a good job of that. And I I realized it created an idea or an image of uh, favoritism. So I want to be very

careful, and cognizant about the impact that that has. I mean, that it has on my students. (Interview 28, lines 277-289)

Sabrina discusses that her experience has forced her to change her decisions about disclosing her Greek affiliation. As Greeks, particularly on her campus, are seen as elitist and powerful, she does not feel that her affiliation should be highlighted to separate herself from her students. Another factor that Sabrina discusses that many other participants mentioned is the context. Many participants mentioned being very aware of the context; which frequently influenced their decision not to disclose their Greek affiliation.

The idea of not appearing biased was presented directly to Sandy by a non-Greek student, stating that he felt her office was only for use by Greeks. She discusses how that stifles her disclosure and presentation of her Greek affiliation:

I wish I could put up my symbols in my office, but I can't. Because of the student population to that I serve. [I: yes] So, um, uh, we have to be very careful about what kind of insignia we put on our cars and things too. [I: mm hmm] And also, um, I can't walk around with my symbols on, in terms of a [organization] jacket or something like that. Although, I would consider it a part of my day wear. [I: mm hmm] I I can't do that. So it does constrict certain ki-, certain parts of me that are very important. (Interview 16, 464-470)

One thing that Sandy did that a few of the other participants did was subtly display symbols in her office. There were artifacts in her office that were in her sorority colors and she had a sorority symbol on display that was a common item that would not necessarily trumpet her affiliation. Other participants mentioned doing similar things, like having stuffed animals on their desk that were organizational symbols, carrying bags or wearing jewelry with the organizational colors or symbols. In doing that, the participants could show their pride in their organization, without verbally disclosing their affiliation because to outsiders, symbols such as teddy bears, ivy leaves, anchors, keys,

arrows, kites, moons, and other objects or animals that are organizational symbols have meanings outside of organizations that do not necessarily trumpet organizational affiliation.

Subtly displaying organizational affiliation through the use of nonverbal symbols aligns quite well with Fleming and colleagues' (1990 & 1991) work on the multiple audience problem, constructing messages for different audiences that are simultaneously present. The symbols can communicate organizational affiliation to those affiliated with Greek organizations and show the member's pride in his/her organization. However, others may not understand or notice the meaning of the symbols. By silently communicating their affiliation and identity, the participants were "talking back" to their identity. The concept of "talking back" to stigmatized identities was introduced by Juhila (2004). Juhila studied not a privileged identity, but a group of highly stigmatized identities when she studied how residents in a Finnish homeless shelter "talked back" to their cultural categorization as needy, helpless, and socially deviant by addressing the stereotypes and implications of their identities. Talking back is the stigmatized person's opportunity to address the stigma that the other with whom they are interacting has attributed to them. Talking back to these identities is an important aspect of constructing an identity in light of public perceptions. By talking back, persons with stigmatized identities address the stereotypes and implications of their identities. The participants in Juhila's study did not feel they were an embodiment of these characteristics, but their stay in this shelter was temporary. Juhila calls this act of "commenting on and resisting stigmatized identities related to culturally dominant categorizations talking back (p. 263)." The nonverbal display of their organizational symbols was a way of talking back

to their perceptions of stigma.

Silence was the most predominant tactic used by participants in managing their Greek affiliation when it seemed to run counter to their image as a free thinking, intelligent, progressive academic. Participants had many reasons for keeping their affiliation under wraps, but were not averse to talking about affiliation when the subject was mentioned.

But when it does come up...

Although participants predominately used silence to manage their Greek affiliation in an academic setting, there were occasions where their affiliation was mentioned or became more relevant, so the affiliation was discussed. This theme describes how participants verbally communicated and constructed messages when Greek affiliation did come up in conversation. As stated earlier in this chapter, most participants felt that Greek organizations were viewed very negatively. Therefore, participants had to use communicative strategies to manage their connection to these organizations. Two more of Cialdini's (1989) strategies came to light: burnishing and boosting.

Burnishing. Cialdini's (1989) tactic of burnishing is to enhance the features of a positively linked other (p. 52). Many participants used this strategy because when they disclosed their Greek affiliation, they mentioned that many people were surprised that they were affiliated with such an organization, based on the reputation that the organizations have. Suzanne, a PhD candidate who also teaches discusses in this story how people are surprised that she is Greek and how she reacts by talking about her experiences with Greek life.

Suzanne: And it blows my mind but, uh, people, yeah, people are always surprised when they find out that I was a Greek. They're like, "Really? You?" And I think that, to me, that reinforces people's stereotypical view of Greeks. Like, they can't be intelligent. [chuckle] They can't be, uh, nice people. They, they must be stuck-up. You know, I'm none of those things. You know, I don't think I'm a stuck-up person of course. I'm pretty down to earth. And, I'm intelligent and a professional and, um. I don't wear the latest fashion [both laugh]. You know, I think that, there's, there's some things that, that just naturally go against the, the stereotype. And so.. you know, when somebody doesn't fit that mold, they're, they're usually shocked. And then they're like, "Well I can't believe that!" Or "Why? Why were you Greek? What made you do that?"

Interviewer: And, uh. Since you're, When you're talking particularly about some of the why did you do that, those probably are more particularly negative. How do you respond to some of those people that, "Why did you do that?", "How could you do that?", and be who you are?

Suzanne: Well usually I, I tell them a lot of the things that I told you. I kind of told them about why I became Greek. You know, I tell them about the story. I tell them about what Greek life was like at my university. And uh, so usually I just try and, to, to explain to them, you know, using my organization as an example by like the.. the good that we did, you know. And all those other positives about it. Debunking some of the myths that they may have about what it means to be Greek. (Interview 6, lines 242-260, lines 268-271)

In this excerpt, Suzanne talks about how her Greek experience goes against the stereotypes and promotes the more positive parts of her affiliation. In other parts of the interview, she discusses her particular chapter's extensive work with philanthropy and how she is quite proud of the money that was raised for her organization's cause.

Melvin also uses the strategy of burnishing when he responds to people who are surprised to find out that he is Greek. In the following excerpt, he is discussing how he talks about being Greek when it comes up in conversation.

I disclose it proudly. I don't care. You know, they can, they can judge however they want. People who know me, know differently. So that's why I say sometimes when I tell people that I'm Greek, they go, "Huh? You are?" Because they already have these preconceived notions of what Greek is. And then when I tell them about what our fraternity does, you know, how we spend our time, that what we really do for the community and what we do for society, you know, and

we look at the bigger picture of, you know, our aims of how to do things. And they go, “Wow!” And then I go through and I talk about some, some of the famous people. And then when you tell them some of the names, they just go, “Wow. I didn’t know.” I say, “Yeah. That’s our goal. To do the things that they are doing. (Interview 27, lines 200-208)

Melvin illustrates that he is quite proud to be Greek in this excerpt and that he uses the opportunities with people being surprised as to his affiliation to talk about the work that the fraternity does in terms of mentoring young men to succeed and be leaders in the community.

Pam also talks about, in this excerpt that she emphasizes her work ethic and position in the sorority encouraging scholarship in her sorority when she talks about being Greek:

I think people equate sorority life with just kind of fluffing off those four years. And that was so not the case. And so, I almost feel when I tell people that I was Greek that you know, “I was Greek, but I worked really hard too.” Where in my mind, ideally to say, “I was Greek” means that I took on more legitimate goals and legitimate obstacles and challenges. Rather than saying, “Oh, well I’m Greek, but I still worked really hard.” And so, but the people are kind of surprised. (Interview 10, lines 143-148)

She uses strategies to emphasize what being Greek meant to her and the challenges that she took on, even though she feels like others do not necessarily share her viewpoint about the challenges of being Greek and encouraging her strong academic work ethic.

Pam also mentions in her interview that she felt that she had many valuable experiences as a Greek, and she also mentions those as a way to promote the positive features of Greek affiliation.

Boosting. According to Cialdini (1989), boosting is minimizing the unfavorable features of a positively linked other (p. 53). This tactic was used when the participants tried to talk more about the positive features of Greek organizations, particularly when

the negative features were mentioned.

Mary was the only participant who mentioned any shame at being Greek.

However, she also mentions using particular strategies to manage her connection to a Greek organization. She mentions that she does look back fondly at the connections that she made, but did not like the recruitment process or the rituals of the organization. She uses boosting tactics in the following excerpt:

Um, like here, I have had like students. There've been only, probably twice I've been asked. So it's, "You were, were you Greek when you were in college?" And I would explain, "Yeah, our college was 85% Greek. I was too." And they're like, "Oh. So that means you drank a lot." [laugh] And honestly, yes, I I don't tell my students that but yeah! That was the case. Um. But with my students I say "Now, there are a lot of other things that we did. Philanthropies and you know, a lot of other things that individuals don't know about. (Interview 5, lines 242-248)

The philanthropic work, as mentioned in previous sections was something that Greeks were quite proud of and quite frequently used as a way to improve the impressions people have of Greek organizations.

Jamal discusses some of the ways that he uses to correct some of the perceptions that he feels that students may have about Greek life. In his mind, as was shown earlier in the organizational identification theme, Jamal feels that many of the perceptions of Greek life could be changed if Greek organizations did a better job promoting their founding goals. He states:

Well, with the students who have verbalized it, you know, I I just try to correct their perceptions a little bit about, you know, what Greeks are and aren't. [I: mm hmm] Um, I'm sure there's some sort of organization that have secrets, clandestine uh, activities and that sort of thing, uh, but, but we're all here for the same things. And I don't care what organization you're in, NPHC, NIC, PHA, whatever, we're all here for basically the same three or four things: scholarship, brotherhood or sisterhood, uh, community service, and and basically uplift. Trying to, trying to raise your standard up to a certain level. And and and so, I think when when that is put on the front burner, students say, "Oh, OK. I

understand the meaning behind all of this, the symbolism and, and the and the pride that goes into that. (Interview 9, lines 246-255)

Again, Jamal is using boosting tactics to talk about the more favorable attributes of Greek organizations and to minimize the more negative links. One participant, Claire, talked about how she used boosting in her everyday life to show the best possible image of Greek life. She states:

I have never, never. Because it's, and it's, it's.. I'm probably a very unique Greek, I would call that. [both chuckle] Because, I really understand the purpose and the roles and why I joined. And I have clung to that throughout my life. So that hasn't changed for me. So for me, I don't have to wear the Greek letters on my shirt or do anything else, because I try to embody, me as a person, everything that our organization was founded on and all those founding principles, I try to live throughout my life, so I don't have to say, "Well, I'm a member of blah blah blah," because I don't have to do that. Because I just live the principles that I believe in the first place, that even allowed me to join. So I'm never one to say, "Well, you know, I'm a member of blah blah blah." I never do that. I never have to do that. (Interview 30, lines 137-145)

She attributes some positive feedback that she has gotten from being a member of a Greek organization to her choice to live by the principles of the organization. By embodying the goals of her Greek organization, she boosts the image of the organization and the perceptions of her links to it through her actions. Although she talks about not verbally disclosing her affiliation, she uses nonverbal behavior and a general persona to boost her connection to her Greek organization.

Overall, participants seemed to take steps to not only insure that they were perceived positively, but that their organizations were perceived positively. As mentioned earlier, all but one participant mentioned pride and enjoyment of their Greek experience. All participants mentioned there was something they did not like about the experience, but the experience was still something they looked back upon with fondness, and in many cases were still involved with on some level.

Research Question Two

The second research question for this study was “How do Greek alumni experience, if at all, stigma and privilege in the Academy?” In response to this question, the participants’ definition of privilege and stigma will be presented along with their experiences of both privilege and stigma.

“I wouldn’t call it privileged”

One of the themes that emerged from the data was how the participants believed people defined Greek organizational membership as privileged and how they defined privilege for themselves. The use of the two forms of “privileged” and “privilege” is intentional. “Privileged” is synonymous with advantaged or fortunate. “Privilege” is synonymous with opportunity and benefit. While the participants felt others viewed them as privileged, the participants saw their membership as a privilege, not connecting the two concepts. Renee states, “Um. I wouldn’t really use the word privileged. I think people assume it’s privileged, but it’s not. I really look at it as America’s best leadership training. I mean it really provides a lot of opportunities for our students, um not only in leadership, but in values and ethics.” (Interview 1, lines 601-603)

Throughout her interview, Renee talked about other opportunities she had for leadership on campus that she felt she gained from being a member of a Greek organization. Florence talks about how she formed a bond with two of her sorority sisters that has lasted several years beyond their membership because they were not privileged.

Florence says:

But I have two very good friends from college that were in my sorority that we still get together we still keep in touch. And uh, both, all three of us were, we had to really watch on Sunday nights, we didn’t have the money to go out and eat because we were trying to save money. So we would all get together and get

something and share. And so, we kind of formed a bond because we were the three of the poorest [chuckle] I guess you would say. We didn't have the money that others. There are one or two people in the sorority that I remember who were well-to-do, but the rest of us, I really don't remember any other than those couple of people being, having a lot of money to spend. Uh, and the three of us were really watching ours very closely, so. So it's not a good stereotype. (Interview 18, lines 131-139)

There was a slightly different outlook from the African American participants. The traditionally African American organizations were formed as a form of support for the small number of African American students on larger, predominately White campuses. Therefore, since matriculating through college is a requirement for even joining a Greek organization, the concept of being privileged is a bit different. Sandy explains:

Sandy: Um. At my prior uh, institution, Greek organizations were viewed very positively.. because the Greek organizations um, and I had a historically Black institution experience. And the organizations that I was a part of, was founded, OK, out of that kind of existence. And so it it represented more of a historical, um, aspects to those organizations. Uh, the Greek community was always expected to be the talented tenth. [I: oh] Because, oftentimes, when our organizations were created, like um, [Greek org] was created in [year]. So, from the African-American community, only an elite group could even afford to go to college. Does that make sense?

Interviewer: Yes.

Sandy: And then they became the pillars of the community. The Martin Luther Kings. The Alvin Pasans. Uh, you know, all of the leaders, and they were Greek. So, Greek organizations were really seen as the primers for leadership development. [I: ok] And so, all of the presidents of those schools were Greek. Their wives were Greek. And so they embodied that tradition. (Interview 16, lines 62-75)

In Sandy's explanation, the group of African Americans who could even afford to go to college was an elite group, so simply by their presence on campus, they could be considered privileged. Membership in Greek organizations therefore was even more elite. Reggie rejects this idea of the membership being solely for status. Reggie states:

A lot, a lot of Black people, and I, I'll speak specifically to Black people, but, a lot of Black people in Greek organizations, they perceive themselves to be elitist.. [I: mm hmm] because they're in an organization and beca-, and so, again that speaks to the prestige piece, you know, "because I'm Greek, you know, and you're not. You ain't shit." Excuse my French. But that's how some people perceive it sometimes. And they, they they let the organization like be their whole world because, I don't know, they might have some type of insecurity [I: yeah] or something that, that makes them not want to, not feel comfortable being, you know, by themselves, or you know, without other people? [I: mm hmm] And so that helps give them an identity. Something that they lack on their own. And because they have a certain identity, a Greek identity which is "elite", you know, they look down on those who choose not to, not to participate. Uh, that's, and that's unfortunate because that reflects poorly on those of us who joined, you know, for the ideals of the organization, you know, rather than solely for the name. (Interview 12, lines 135-147)

Even there was recognition by the African American participants that their mere presence and existence as part of the organization could be considered "privileged" because only a privileged (affluent) few could even attend college, particularly when the organizations started. However, the African American participants did not like the label of being elitist, and as Regina stated, membership in Greek organizations was much like other social organizations, "everybody can't be a member."

But we have privileges

Both African American and Caucasian participants rejected the idea that their membership in Greek organizations made them privileged. However, participants talked about privileges in connecting with other Greeks and with their students. Participants felt like being Greek was a unique experience that bonded them together, even if they were not from the same Greek organization. This theme describes the connections participants felt to other Greeks and to undergraduate students.

Connecting with students. As was mentioned earlier, participants did not have a problem disclosing their Greek organizational affiliation to undergraduate students,

overall, because, even as a Master's or Ph. D. student, the undergraduate students were of lower academic status. Undergraduate students were a group that the participants were quite comfortable to disclose affiliation to, even if other areas of academics were not viewed as appropriate places to disclose Greek affiliation. Many of the participants, such as Melissa, felt that disclosing that she was Greek humanized her more with her students.

She states:

I guess, I go back to just, I'm more um, open about it so I don't really worry about it. I don't reveal it on the first day of class. [I: mm hmm] I'll generally wait till they get to know me probably a little bit better so maybe I do, you know, not put it out there right away. But I don't ever think about that consciously, as a conscious choice. Do you know what I'm saying? [I: yes] I never thought about that. So, yeah, it's possible that um, you let them get to know you first and then you're like, "Ahh", and they're like, "Huh." But I think part of it goes back to they don't, your students don't view you as a human being. They look at you as this vessel that teaches and you don't have any thoughts or feelings or emotions or any kind of personal life, you know. (Interview 8, lines 243-251)

Katie stated that she is very open in class, and that she shares a lot about herself with her students, so disclosing Greek affiliation is not something she sees as a negative thing from her students, "My students, especially the Greek students, they really like it. They think it's cool. Uh, the other students, they just seem fine with it, because I share a lot about myself in class anyway so they're like, "Oh, she's sharing something else." So, I don't think they have a negative reaction to it." (Interview 11, lines 224-227) Charlene shared a story that having Greek affiliation was a great way that she used to connect with one of her students who she felt was emotionally struggling during a semester. She states:

I just had a student, um, come to me, she's having a rough time right now and.. I kind of could sense something was going on, so I asked her, um, after class, um, if she was all right and she was telling me about other stuff that was going on and she was like, "And I'm also rushing." And she wasn't supposed to tell me, because of some sort of special, you can't tell, you know, I don't know why. Um,

but I shared with her! I said, you know, “Well, I went through rush and I know it can be stressful, even if it’s not very involved. You know, the whole concept is kind of stressing. So, I understand that.” I’m sure I’ve shared it to a student every now and then. You know, especially if they want to do a speech on it or something like that, but I’ve never announced it to the class. (Interview 1, lines 176-184).

A difference emerged between the traditionally African American organizations and the traditionally White organizations. In some cases, much like the traditionally White organizations, the Greek affiliation can be used to connect themselves to students. Ralph discusses the good-natured teasing he does with students from other organizations in a way, he believes, connects him to the students. He says:

Um, they, they they uh, I think enjoy knowing that administrators understand Greek life. And, [Greek org], my fraternity, is smaller on campus, than say [another Greek org] and [another Greek org] has a larger number of adult men in this community and in [nearby city] than [my Greek org]. And so whenever I encounter them on campus, I say, “Well, you know, it takes 40 [another Greek org]s to equal one [my Greek org]. [I laughs] No wonder there are so many here.” And we get into it. We, it’s a way of breaking the ice. [I: yes] And then, if I see, uh, a group of young, uh students with say [another Greek org] jackets on, and I’m passing by, I’ll say, “Ooh. Well, you couldn’t earn the [colors], so I guess that’s OK.” [I chuckles] And they get a chuckle, they understand. So you harass back and forth. (Interview 24, lines 251-260)

Ralph also discusses earlier in the interview that the different organizations get excited if there is an administrator or a faculty member that is a member of their organization.

However, Earvin discusses that, as a faculty member, he has had to discuss with an undergraduate member that their shared Greek affiliation did not give them the privilege of not doing the work in his class. He articulates the situation in this story:

Well, there was one case. and I, where in fact uh, you know, and and that that brings up a a a a great issue because sometimes, with undergraduate brothers especially, you know, who know that I’m a member of the fraternity, uh. There was this one guy, most of them know that just because Professor [name] is a brother, that you know, he’s not going to give you or give me a grade. Because one thing about, and I always bring this up to the younger brothers, you know, attention, that you know, we place emphasis on, you know, academic uh uh

achievement. And they're certain standards that are expected. You know, so I sort of use that to deflect, "Hey brother," you know, that type of stuff. But there was this one young man in particular who really tried [chuckling] to play that card at one point. And I had to, you know, call him out on on it. You know, because it was, it was embarrassing on on on [organization]. But I think most, and and and I, and I appreciate the undergraduate, you know, members who I've come in contact with in the class that there's not this expectation that "Yeah, I don't have to do anything and Brother [name] is gonna [laughing] take care [I: hook, yeah] , yeah take care of me. (Interview 25, lines 364-376)

Sabrina states that her Greek affiliation gives her credibility and status as a faculty member, particularly with her students. She feels that students feel connected to her as an African American Greek on a predominately White campus. She elaborates in this excerpt:

I mean, I think sometimes I've had students get real excited um, particularly African-American students, which I don't have a lot of, but when they sit in my class and find out that I'm am [organization], they get excited. Um, it gives them something to talk to me about on campus. Um, I can think of an example, when one of my students um, I was walking through the halls last week and, and he said, and the [orgs] have every Wednesday, have a stepping contest where they invite all the Greeks. And he said, "Dr. [name]! We didn't see you, man. We really miss you. We we want you to be there. It means a lot to us." And I, you know, I recognized for them, having an out Greek member as a part of the faculty gives them some credibility, uh, on a predominantly White campus. So I think that's been important to them. (Interview 28, lines 171-179)

So overall, the participants saw a great deal of privilege, referring to opportunities, in connecting with students because of their Greek affiliation. The participants rejected the idea that they were privileged, or receiving special treatment due to their Greek affiliation. The affiliation tended to humanize them in their students' eyes and give a sense of commonality that made connection with their students a little bit easier. Even if the affiliation was not necessarily used to create a common bond, it was a way for the Greek affiliated academic to create personal relationships with students to inquire about philanthropic work or to reminisce about events in their own undergraduate experience.

Connecting with other Greeks. The other privilege that the participants defined was the privilege of connecting with other Greeks based on a common experience. By being able to discuss a similar experience with others, even if the experience was not exactly the same because of the differences in organizations or institution, the bond of the Greek experience allowed them to connect with each other. Katie explains:

Well I guess when I, when I first came here. Meeting new people, I was talking to [colleague]. Her and I were chatting. She mentioned she was in a sorority and like, “Ahh!! I was in a sorority too!” And so it’s kind of nice cause you have that general understanding. Same thing with [another colleague]. [Other colleague] is in a sorority too and so we have that--it’s just this weird bond, you know? [I: yeah] Even if it’s not the same sorority, you still get it. To be able to have that, that understanding of what it is. So I think it can help you really get to know someone, cause it gives you something extra to talk about when you first meet. So I think that was a positive experience and that it kind of gave me something else to talk to them about? And like still even like, it was last week, [colleague] and I were talking about something sorority-related that was funny. And then another time. [Colleague], [another colleague], and I had all gone out to dinner and we were talking about sorority life. Just three of us sitting around because we can! you know, a lot of other people, we can’t talk about it with. So I would say that was a really positive experience. (Interview 11, lines 247-258)

Having Greek affiliation was a great point of connection for Katie and these colleagues.

She talked about having the privilege of being able to talk about the shared experience.

Pam agrees, stating:

Only that I was.. just just a a story that happened earlier this semester. I was really surprised by how good it felt to talk about my Greek affiliation. I’d gone a long time in my Master’s program not talking about it at all. Only a few people even knew. And then when I got here, and learned that a few other people are Greek, I went to dinner a few weeks ago with someone else in my cohort who’s also Greek. And, we started just exchanging stories of Greek life, of Greek life, of Greek... [both laugh]. That too. But um, but but it was so nice to sort of recapture that experience again and and to be able to relate. And I just had no idea how good it would feel to to exchange those stories and things like that. (Interview 10, lines 296-303)

Pam’s feeling of relief with disclosure is interesting. She discusses earlier in her interview that her previous institution had been very hostile toward Greek affiliation and

that she was the only student affiliated with a Greek organization. She was able to disclose and positively connect with others who were affiliated with Greek organizations. Whitley discussed a similar experience that she felt comfortable networking because of her Greek affiliation. She states:

I think the only diff-, I think there are benefits to networking if you're in a academic position. And I certainly noticed that there are people in my organization that are at certain jobs that have certain, that I feel comfortable calling them or e-mailing them and saying, "Hey. This is my background, I'm interested in XYZ." But that's in a university or a non-university setting. I don't, I don't see anything negative. (Interview 17, lines 266-271)

Sabrina agrees with Whitley's ideas. She states that on her campus, her Greek affiliation allows her to connect with other Greek faculty and network in a way that she would be unable to do if she were not Greek. Sabrina states:

I can, I can speak from an NPHC member, and and say that, uh, to me it's a, it's one of those things that's kind of cool, because people talk about it, um, it's one of the ways, you know, "Oh, she's just acting like a [organization] today." Or, "You know, girl, you know, remember when we were online?" That kind of stuff. So, um, it's more accepted. I mean, it's a way of bridging the gap. It's a way of providing a social network and something to talk about. So, um, I'm kind of, I think it's kind of cool, actually. Um, but I I can't say the same for my colleagues in uh, my colleagues in in White fraternities and sororities. I have no idea. (Interview 28, lines 337-344)

Overall, the participants distinguished between being seen as *privileged* and having *privileges* as members of Greek organizations. Through their own experiences, they have created meaning and defined what being Greek can do for them in the Academy. However, the participants were also well aware that membership does not always have its privileges.

Really? You?

This theme addresses the second half of the second research question about the experience of stigma in the Academy. Very few participants directly stated, "I feel

stigmatized,” or described a particular experience when they felt stigmatized. However, participants seemed to feel there was something about being Greek and being in the academy that did not seem to align for others in the Academy. Participants discuss that feeling of the inability to be open about their Greek affiliation in the Academy.

Participants felt that Greek affiliation is not always seen as a crediting attribute in the academy. In fact, many participants felt that in academia, being Greek was deeply discrediting, Goffman’s (1963) very definition of a stigma. The context of academia was a very important factor in describing the stigma. Goffman indicates, as discussed in Chapter Two, that an attribute that might be normal in one context could be perceived as stigmatized in another. In the case of the participants, if the campus where the participant received his or her Bachelor’s degree was predominately Greek, then being Greek would not be considered stigmatized. Now, in the professional academic realm as a graduate student, faculty, or administrator, where the participants perceive a negative feeling toward Greek organizations, the attribute could be stigmatized.

Few participants mentioned having a particular experience that was negative that they truly felt that they were being stigmatized for being Greek. Despite that, many participants felt that disclosing being Greek did not help their credibility in the academy. So experience was not necessarily a direct factor in the perception of a stigma. However, the perception of a stigma was very real to the participants. Rebecca was one of very few participants who had a direct experience of being stigmatized being Greek. She recalls the incident from very early in her career:

I know the previous Dean, um, well two Deans before Dean [name] when he was here. Um, he, when he found out. I was working as a staff member as the [position] when he found out that I was in, um, the [organization] house as a member. Literally called me into my, into his office and was like, “Really,

Rebecca. I expected more.” And I’m like, “I’m sorry, what? What are you talking about?” Cause I didn’t know where he was coming from. But he had just found out that I had been in a sorority. And his initial reaction was, “Really? (Interview 7, lines 167-173)

Charlene had a very specific incident early in her graduate program that made her very leery of revealing that she was Greek among her colleagues.

Charlene: It was kind of like I was immediately judged. Like, at that moment, all.. all preconceived notions, cause we didn’t know each other well at all. Um. All.. sort of took the shade of dark. [chuckle] You know. Transformed into something very different than what it was, and.. and I’m sure that those kind of disclosures always kind of shift the perspective on that. But um, all of a sudden it became... And I don’t know if I’m projecting this or not, but it felt like

Interviewer: Well that.. Whatever you perceived, that’s what matters in terms of..

Charlene: Well I felt like it was immediately like.. I’m.. [sigh] lesser than. It’s not really where I want to go, but somehow in the echelon of, you know, or in the social strata, I dropped two degrees. You know? Um. Some how I became a less important person. Or a less serious person. Is what it, it felt like and it kind of, um.. I don’t know. All of a sudden these people suddenly had, um, two foot boots on and they’re looking down on me, is what it felt like. (Interview 1, lines 235-249)

Charlene describes how uncomfortable she was in this situation, and how she felt as if she were “less” of a graduate student because of her past Greek affiliation. She discusses how this incident made it much more difficult for her to disclose her affiliation in the academic setting. However, feeling stigmatized can help participants to work toward changing perceptions of people who may have more negative perceptions of Greek organizations. Jeff recalled an incident from his undergraduate experience where he felt stigmatized as a Greek:

I had a class, it was a sociology class, taught by um, a, a professor, um, who.. was talking to our class about sex and gender. [I: ok] And there was probably a, uh, she would always pretty much bring up, whenever she had a chance, she would bring up the Greek community and the problems that the Greek community, in her mind, um, contributed to society and things like that. Um. And I really liked the

class and I really liked the teacher, um, but uh, we started striking up conversations after class, kind of in general about things.... And then uh, through our conversations with me and her casually, we started, she started, we started to have that conversation with that, the fact that I was in a fraternity and that I was a fraternity, you know, I was a fraternity man that didn't meet her stereotype of what the fraternity man was. And also that I was a chapter president. Um. And I think that she was really kind of shocked by that. Um, she ended up actually writing my letter for grad school, my letter of recommendation for grad school. Um. But it was a, it was, sometimes it was an uncomfortable position because she's very anti-Greek and um, so to have, but it was great conversation, we were all, we were able to have on that level of, you know, not every man in the Greek community meets this stereotype that you, that you're setting up right now. So I think that in general, I thought that was a very... Probably, that's probably one of the most educationally, in my, in the educational world, probably one of the most um, impactful conversations I've had with a professor about my affiliation. (Interview 14, lines 235-247)

Jeff was very proud of the fact that he was able to, in his mind, positively challenge some of the perceptions that the professor had about Greek organizations, particularly men. He worked through feeling stigmatized and attempted to expand the views of the professor. Jeff is one of few participants who challenged the status issue that seemed to make many participants more cognizant of the perceptions of Greek organizations.

Even though most participants did not have an experience with a stigma, most participants perceived that faculty generally hold a negative view of Greeks. Faculty were singled out more than administrators or students for having negative perceptions of Greek organizations. Even though very few participants had a direct negative experience with a faculty member, there were times where things were stated in general about Greeks, so participants felt uncomfortable revealing their Greek affiliation. As Pam states:

Um. In my Master's program, um, like I said, I was the only Greek person there [laugh]. It's kind of astonishing in a way. But, there was a lot of Greek bashing. Like, when we would have our TA meetings once a week, they called it [name] which is the dumbest word on earth. But [both laugh]. But we would have power hour and people would complain about their students, which is totally

natural. But all too often, the argument was, this student's Greek, therefore they will be a problem. Not, this student's Greek, they made this decision, and therefore they'll be a problem. But just, Greek- student- problem [gestures to reinforce her words]. And it it kind of made me really uncomfortable because you're you're only essentializing that Greek students are going to act this way. And they don't choose to say in the meetings, "Well I've got this really great student who's doing a really great job and they're Greek." Then, the students that are doing a great job don't get mentioned at meetings, you know? And so it kind of made me uncomfortable. And it made me kinda not want to accentuate the fact that I was Greek as well. [laugh] (Interview 10, lines 241-252)

Pam describes an environment that made her not want to reveal that she was Greek. Although she did not receive direct negative messages, she felt that it was not a good idea to reveal that she was Greek in that situation. She does not say directly that she felt stigmatized, but she definitely felt that being Greek was not going to be viewed positively in that situation.

So, they experience a sensation of stigma regardless of whether others take overt actions to that effect. As a result, many participants felt that there was nothing to be gained by being an academic and revealing Greek affiliation. Mavis states:

Uh, and that's interesting because even, even among academics, you run into people who were Greek! They just don't talk about it. They just don't talk about it because it's not socially acceptable is not the right term, but it's almost there. You know? Where it's just, um, it's sort of like revealing that you smoke any more. It's just.. "Really? People don't do that much any more. Why would you do that? It's bad for your health." Well, in a, in the, in an academic setting, to say that you're Greek is sort of the same way, among faculty it's.. "Really?" How.. could that be? Um, yeah. Because you seem to have.. you seem to have put the time and the effort into be, you know, to get a doctorate you know, you're a.. how does that happen. But, it just, for them it feels like a, um, an oxymoron almost. (Interview 4, lines 421-430)

Mavis' comment encompasses a lot of feelings that are very similar for other participants.

Although few would be willing to assert they were definitely stigmatized, they felt that there was just something about being Greek and being an academic that just did not add up in the eyes of others. Chris states:

Uh, it's uncommon, as you probably know. [I: yes] And uh, people that pursue a PhD and and pursue into academics and have been Greek? I don't know why that is. But um. Uh, it is, it is not the stereotype. Most of the, most of your traditional professors, I think I saw a statistic one time. It was 10 or 15%, um, were Greek of uh, instructors and professors, uh, at the higher level. It it's very low. (Interview 13, lines 392-396)

Chris emphasized that he had never had a directly negative experience, but echoes Mavis' idea that it just is not common for someone who was Greek as an undergraduate to also become an academic. Norm feels that there is even more difficulty for faculty at R1 universities. He states:

And I think you're dealing with the element of stigma because of of this kind of identity management, you know? That we all want to be seen as um, and and and it may be something unique to research institutions. Or it may be unique to R1 universities. Where our primary mission is to produce the research and to be seen as intellectual. If I was at a smaller teaching college? [I: mm hmm] Um, I'm not sure whether it would be used against me cause a large majority of the people I'd be interacting with, my students obviously, my main wish would be to teach and to connect with my students. But at R1 universities, you know, like [institution] and and [institution] and [institution], you know, you pick your Big 10 school or your Big 12 school, um, you are really trying to frame yourself, um, as an independent thinker, as a critical thinker. And pledging a Greek system runs counter to that management, to that identity. And so I think in a way, you know, you are kind of stigmatized. And it, and how about this? If I didn't think it was a stigmatized um uh uh uh identity, being Greek, why would I hide it?.... If we lie by omission cause we know it's it's stigmatized. Now, once I I change a context or a situation, um, you know, so obviously, I'm no longer stigmatized. But, you know, for a professor at a research one institution, uh, most of the time was not within that context or situation. And so, you know, it's [recording unclear] talks about, you know, stigma is really context-based. And I think in this specific context, um, it is. I think people look at us like, "They can't be that smart." You know? (Interview 20, lines 438-449, lines 462-465)

Norm seems to get at something that most of the participants could not really articulate.

Although no participant directly pointed the finger and said that the media images, the organizational members and the public image cause Greek affiliation to be more stigmatized in academics, most felt that the image was there, and that there was a negative feeling about Greek organizations in general. Therefore, few people felt

comfortable revealing their affiliation because the images were out there and participants knew that there were some people who were very anti-Greek, and did not want to run the risk of those people being someone of a higher academic status that could potentially hurt their academic progress and career. Most participants did state that people were surprised when they revealed they were Greek because being an academic and being intelligent does not seem to fit with being Greek. As Mary states:

Mary: I think individuals in the academy, I think they think that Greek individuals are not thinkers, are not, you know, they don't do any critical thinking skill, and, and uh. And it's all just, uh, you know it's just not serious. Um, so the people in the academy. Sorry, what was the question again?

Interviewer: Uh. The um, being in the academy changes your decisions about disclosing, compared, compared to somebody who

Mary: Yeah, yeah. So I'm, I'm less likely to say, you know, that I was Greek.. to individuals, my fellow professors, things like that. (Interview 5, lines 302-311)

But Norm's suggestion of the image of being seen as very smart might be more difficult to show at a larger research oriented university. While most participants did not describe a specific incident where they felt stigmatized or particularly negative responses to revealing their Greek affiliation, most felt it was safer not to take the risk and jeopardize their credibility by revealing their Greek affiliation. Participants felt little could be gained from revealing the information and a lot to lose. So although few participants experienced stigma, many participants felt that a stigma existed, and did not disclose their Greek affiliation to risk their academic credibility.

In response to the Research Question regarding how participants experience privilege and stigma, if at all in the Academy, the answer is complex. Caucasian participants did not feel that their membership in any way was privileged. The participants saw their membership as giving them access to various relationships and

connections. McIntosh (1988) would argue that their privilege is invisible to them. McIntosh describes several privileges that she as a white person has, but did not earn. Members of Greek organizations can have several privileges and access to several things that other students may not have accessibility to because they are not involved with the organization. The privilege they experienced as undergraduates does not really translate into academics. However, participants felt that there was something about Greek affiliation that was not crediting in Academics. While few participants had an experience with stigma, many participants felt that their Greek affiliation ran counter to the image they wished to portray as members of Greek organizations.

Organizational Identification

Before starting this project, I had very limited experience with traditionally African American organizations. When doing background research and designing this study, I had a number of questions about how race might affect the experiences of GOAs. However, due to the uncertainty of obtaining sufficient diversity in my sample, I decided not to ask any research questions on this topic. However, I was fortunate in my data collection to get a good number of African American participants, 17, over half of the participants. It turned out that this diversity of respondents offered some interesting insight into the impression management topics that this study addressed, particularly in the area of organizational identification, as related to disclosing affiliation and identity management. These results are talked about here, separated from the two research questions but still as an important aspect of the research topic. I found interesting themes about identifying with the organization and juggling the affiliation with their academic roles.

“I’ll Always be a Gamma”

In this theme, participants describe the importance of their particular Greek organizations to their lives. In this theme, participants described how choosing their organizations is quite different than their Caucasian counterparts and how important their organizations are to them.

In previous research regarding organizational identity, identification with the organization is an important factor (Russo, 1998; Pierce & Dougherty, 2002). Participants can identify with the values and mission of an organization or with their profession. Cheney (1983a) used identification with an organization to determine stay/leave behavior with an organization. Organizational identification fell more in line with Russo, and with Pierce and Dougherty in this study. Many African American participants described how important their organization was to them before they joined and continues to be in their daily lives.

As I discovered through my interviews with Black participants, African American Greek organizations have very different expectations and identities in the African American community than in the Caucasian community. In fact, many of my African American participants described having a desire before they even got to a particular campus to join a particular organization. In Chapter Two, some leaders in the Civil Rights movement were mentioned. Many African American participants referred to traditions and mentioned more positive views of Greek organizations. The process among traditionally Caucasian organizations was much more a process of seeing where one “fit in.” In fact, looking for a place to “fit,” by trying multiple organizations is considered taboo in the African American Greek community, as stated by Whitley:

See, but like at Black sororities, you don't go and check out. You need to come, you need to, like once you try out for one, that's it. If you get in, great. If you don't, you try again. You don't get to say, "Well, let me go.." No. Like, on campus people will like that's the girl who tried out for [Greek org], didn't make it, and now she wants to be [another Greek org]. Like, it's taboo, [I: that's interesting] you do not, you do not go to other places and say, "Well, I didn't make it as this so can I be on that?" No. You you know, you come on, you have, it's very. So I always think that. And these, from what I understand, like when you go to these different houses and just kind of meet and talk to people. No, you don't get to survey. You need to make up your mind and that's what you get, you know, this is it. (Interview 17, lines 436-444)

In Whitley's quote, she describes how those wishing to join an African American organization needed to know which organization they wanted to join and staying focused on joining that particular organization. Many of my African American participants mentioned having a strong tie to their Greek organization before they even set foot on a college campus. Many of the African American participants not only knew they wanted to be Greek, but they knew which organization they wanted to join. Many African American participants mentioned having family members or mentors who were members of a particular organization. Therefore, the participant wanted to join that particular organization. Some even waited to join the organization as alumni. Others were so impassioned to join their particular organization that they were founding members of the chapter on their own campus.

Three of the participants were founding members of the chapter of their fraternity on their respective campuses. Jamal recalls the struggle with demonstrating a need for the chapter. Jamal had received a scholarship from the organization he wanted to found and had extensive experience with personal mentors being members of this organization.

Jamal: Um, I knew that there was, there was a very low, uh, um, Black student population there. And I knew that they didn't have any Black, Black Greek letter organizations there. I knew that going into it. But I did know that, uh, one of the

organizations that I was interested in and who had been very supportive as, to me.. while I was growing up, I knew that's what I wanted to be. And, they even gave me a scholarship too. [chuckle]

Interviewer: yeah

Jamal: um, when I, when I was being recruited out of high school. And so, um, when I went to um, University of [state], where I graduated from, um, I I wanted to be instrumental in starting the first Black fraternity on that campus and I was!

Interviewer: Oh!

Jamal: That was uh, my impetuous for joining.

Interviewer: OK. Could you talk.. That's kind of a different.., what was that like, bringing the insti-, the [chuckle]

Jamal: Stressful. Stressful. Uh, it was uh, it was an extreme challenge because um, you know, really taking the, the lead in educating the campus to the differences between Black Greek letter organizations and, and uh, relates to going through the intake process, back in those days, this was very different to how they go through it now. And so, some of the, the cultural aspects of, of being "online" and all of that, uh, it was it was, it was challenging. (Interview 9, lines 11-33)

Jamal was not the only participant who brought a chapter of his fraternity to campus.

Other participants discussed the family tradition of the organization and others, like

Jamal, mentioned having mentors involved in the organization and having a strong desire to join the organization. Some participants were so strongly identified with the organization that they waited to become an alumni initiate, like Lena. She states:

Well, I guess I remember, going back to undergrad, I was always interested. We talked about it in high school, but didn't know much about it. So I probably just paid attention to the different groups. And there's not many people in my family are associated with Greek, so they didn't talk about it. I learned more after I chose to make my choice. But um, the group I was interested in, they didn't have a chapter at the time. So then when they came back, I was like almost a senior, and then it was just kinda too late. But um, my first preference would have been to do it in undergrad, so, um. I moved to [state] for grad school and I was there for about two or three years, and just kinda um, I dated a guy that was Greek, so, just kinda did volunteer community service, and just did things on my own that was just kind of more fulfilling to me. And I got um research and the more I was like, "I really want to do this." And um, I think the things that attracted me would

be like the sisterhood, um, the purpose of why it started. It, it it started um, mine started in [year]. And basically, a group of women came together, and they was just trying to make an impact on Black civil society at the time. So, I like the fact what they stood for and what it represents. I like the way we're the first and the finest, so [chuckle], I think that's kind of what attracted me to it and to the opportunities that came available. (Interviewer 15, lines 10-24)

I found these and other stories like them interesting because the participants from traditionally White organizations did not have similar ties to the organization prior to going to their particular college campus. The participants from traditionally White organizations discussed joining an organization based on personality fit, not on tradition or existing connection to the organization.

I also learned from the participants that most African Americans in academics are Greek and therefore considered a leader in the African American community.

Participants believed that one must be a member of a traditionally Black organization to be considered a leader and a pillar for change in the African American community.

Sabrina articulates that in this statement:

Sabrina: Well, it's, it's considered a lifetime commitment, and one is not as good as the other. You either are or you aren't. And, um, the rule is, um, and this really has worked against several of my colleagues, is they've, they try to join a Black fraternity or sorority, they didn't get in, and then they went and joined a White sorority or fraternity. And, those people are, [sound], they're dead to us. Um. Because you either, you either, you love your sorority so much that if you can't be in that sorority, you'd rather not be in anything. And I have a colleague of mine who is a dean at another university. Wanted to pledge but, due to health, was not able to in undergraduate, has an opportunity to be a graduate member of the sorority, so excited, um, you would think she was an 18-year old again. And she's waited almost 20 years for this opportunity. And has joy about it. Now she could have probably joined another one. But she chose not to because you either love it or you don't. I think that's the thing that our White colleagues don't understand. You can't interchange a [organization] for a [organization]. It's a different mindset.

Interviewer: And I know that's why Condoleeza Rice is kind of..

Sabrina: Right! She, you know, that's the, the thing that, you know, has uh, will

continue to kill her is the fact that everybody goes, “Well, what sorority did she go?” “Oh, she joined that White sorority.” “Uh huh. She ain’t real, no way.” (Interview 28, lines 402-418)

Sabrina also mentions an interesting idea that was a contrast for NPHC organizations.

Membership is considered a lifetime commitment. Four of the participants in this study joined their organizations as alumni. Many were actively involved in their community and with their alumni chapters. Some participants had difficulty making the connection with their colleagues who were in traditionally White organizations. As Whitley states:

You know, I just, from my own frame of reference, you know, I was in this institutional type, you know, you know, and so I never even thought about the differences until I saw the differences. So I never even knew that there were differences occurred, so probably no. And probably all lump them together because I didn’t, I didn’t know the difference. I just noticed that as I talked to some of my friends in White sororities, we talk about being in sororities, I notice that a lot of them don’t last as long. Like I notice they’re like, “Oh, well in college I was [organization],” and I’m like, “Well what happened afterwards?” You know, and in Black sororities, it’s very much about a lifetime commitment and, you know, so some of my White friends.. I mean some of them do, they’re still involved, but a lot of my White friends will say, “Well in college I did, but it’s kinda like that, that’s over and done with and I’m, you know. (Interview 17, lines 195-205)

This was an interesting difference between the traditionally White organizations and the traditionally African American organizations. Although there is no official exit from the organization upon Graduation, many members of traditionally White organizations do not remain involved and describe their experiences much like Whitley stated that her White friends described their experiences. Regina describes the lifetime commitment to her organization. She states:

For example, people tell you that [organization] is a lifetime commitment. That was one of the things that we were taught on line. And even when I die, there’s a ceremony that puts me in Omega Omega chapter. Which means, even when I go to heaven, I’m still a [organization]! So it’s a lifetime commitment, as opposed to un, you know, undergrad, four years, you know, and this who I am for four years and after that, you know, I don’t ever revisit it. (Interview 3, lines 364-369)

Again, the idea of a lifetime commitment was very important to members of traditionally African American organizations. Jamal sums up his commitment to his organization by saying:

I spend a lot of time, money, time, money, energy [I chuckles] and and uh, brainpower uh, with these organizations. And and mine in particular. Even to this day, and I and I viewed it as a badge, of of honor for me and and pride for me because I love it, it's a part of who I am, it's a part of my DNA almost, uh and and um, if I had an opportunity, you know, to display, to reveal closer about who I am, then that, that comes out, kind of oozes through my pores almost. (Interview 9, 306-311)

The African American participants internalized the values of their particular organizations and discussed their organizations' identity at the national level. Stereotypes of Greek organizations are quite prevalent, and in traditionally Caucasian groups, the stereotypes of particular chapters vary by campus. I found that not to be the case with African American organizations. The stereotypes were national and universal for both men and women. As Ralph states:

Now, the college organization that I joined was [organization] fraternity. And um, at [institution], "Oh. You're a [Greek org]." You know, all [Greek org]s are the brothers of [Greek org], [colors]. Now, the the reaction you get from other fraternity members and we do this all the time, that is a certain amount of razzing. So it's, "Oh! So you're a boy scout." I'll say, "Yes." And after I say yes, I say, "And you have to sing well, because you're choirboys," etc. [I laughs] And so

we do that back and forth all the time. But, there's usually, usually a certain amount of admiration. (Interview 24, lines 123-128)

Ralph also mentions that the men's and women's organizations have "brother-sister" relationships at the national level. I also heard from my African American participants that the organizations have an identity at the national level. From my own experiences and those of my Caucasian participants, traditionally White organizations' identities are situated in time and place, as organizations have different personas at

different campuses. In African American organizations, I heard continuously from the participants that the organizations have a national reputation as to what their members are like. Again, this was quite different, and with the lifetime commitment to the organization, the ideals and values of the organization become central to one's identity. This was a prevalent theme among African American participants.

Gamma or my PhD?

With the high level of personal commitment to individual organizations, African American participants mentioned difficulty in juggling their affiliation with their commitment to their organization. Therefore, I called this theme "Gamma or my PhD." The high level of lifetime commitment was a definite difference between the traditionally White and the traditionally African American participants. The level of commitment and the feeling that one should remain committed to the organization while pursuing an academic career presented a bit of a challenge for African American participants.

Juggling time commitment with financial commitment was a struggle. Whitley states:

Because what I notice as being in the academy and being a doctorate student, even though I'm an alumni, I'm a doctorate student, is that because my organization um, we have a strong tie to community service and we meet a lot and there's, you know, financial involvement, like I feel torn at this point in my life. Like I feel like, I'd like to be more involved, but I don't have the time to give cause I need to be writing, or I don't have the money to give, you know, all these different activities. So I really felt the last three years very torn. Like I felt like I've done just enough, but not enough, and I haven't really been a great member, and so, like I struggle, being in the academy, cause I'm, you know, around all the time, but I also struggle because I'm in the academy, working on a PhD, figuring out how to balance it. I have a hard time figuring out how to balance it.
(Interview 17, lines 325-335)

Jamal is a chapter advisor and sometimes has had issues with supporting the organization that he is so much a part of and doing his job for his university. He describes an incident where he felt that he might be putting his job in jeopardy by supporting the actions of his

organization:

Of course, I I I went to my guys and I said, you know, “Here’s the history behind this kind of, you know, protest. It makes sense. If you buy into this particular issue that they’re talking about, that you all should take a leadership role, because that’s what you do. As members of this organization, Um. And so, so they, they were already on it and already had signs made up with their, their, our, our letters on it and whatnot and so, so that that that that’s a part of it. However, the flip side of that was... as a staff member on a campus, we got called in to task because it was almost felt like we were inciting something on campus and it’s like, “No.. you know, as a as a true student affairs professional, you know, we have an obligation and a responsibility to educate students about the role of protest, the role of and then how to do it without violating [I: mm hmm] any laws and that sort of thing, the rules and regulations.” But but we took the, uh, we and I say it was just not myself, I was working with a lot of other advisors in the same role, to facilitate how to best go about protesting but doing it safely, doing it uh, by raising uh, uh awareness to the issues and not to the individuals necessarily? And so uh, so, you know, we did that successfully but there was some tense moments where I was, I was, you know, thinking, “I’m going to get called in and say, you know, ‘Here’s your, your two week notice. You need to vacate.’” Cause that that could have been a real possibility, cause we might, we may have been perceived as we’re inciting something. But God, you know, I’m I’m thankful that that it happened and we, because we utilized the system that we have in place [I: uh huh] to facilitate that appropriately. (Interview 9, lines 329-349)

Jamal’s situation was unique in terms of the level of risk of getting involved with the activities of the fraternity in terms of his job. Caucasian participants mentioned wanting to remain connected, but did not discuss as much connection and time conflict issues as African American participants. Particularly as an academic, the African American participants mentioned more conflicts in terms of being involved with their organizations and being an academic.

This was an interesting theme that emerged from the data that I did not expect. However, I found it a very interesting contrast that was present in my data because of the diversity of my participants. Another interesting issue was with my snowball sampling, my African American participants were able to give me more names of people to contact than my Caucasian participants, largely due to continued involvement and connection

with their respective Greek organizations.

Despite the differences in expectations and historical background with NPHC organizations being leaders and pillars of the community, I did not find major differences between how the African American participants managed their Greek affiliation and how Caucasian participants managed their Greek affiliation. However, I did find some unique themes about identifying with their specific organization and juggling that affiliation with their academic roles, which I felt was noteworthy for inclusion in the results.

Summary

This study addressed issues in how GOAs manage their Greek identity. The results of the study suggested several key points. First, GOAs have definite opinions about how those outside of Greek organizations view Greek organizations. GOAs believe that the opinions of those outside of Greek organizations are formed largely through media, through seeing the organizations, and through interaction with individual members of Greek organizations. Overall, most GOAs in the academy do not disclose their affiliation to Greek organizations openly; most wait for someone else to bring up Greek organizations to talk about their affiliation with the organizations. Using silence is a particular strategy outlined by Leary (1995) called concealment, when an attribute believed to be perceived negatively is purposely hidden.

GOAs have many reasons for their silence, but when Greek affiliation does come up, most GOAs attempt to improve the perceptions of the other person in the interaction by talking about the more positive things that Greek organizations offer to their members and to society. Participants do not feel that being in a Greek organization makes them privileged or elite, but rather the recipient of privileges that allow them to connect with

undergraduate students or other Greeks in academics. GOAs do not feel their affiliation is helpful to them to appear to be a serious academic. In the next chapter, I discuss some key implications of these results, as well as talk about how these findings can be put into practical use and steps researchers should take to further explore issues of identity management challenges, and the importance of interpersonal interactions on forming organizational identity.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this final chapter, the study will be summarized, theoretical implications for communication theory will be discussed, practical applications of the study will be described, and finally directions for future research will be discussed.

Summary of the Study

This study was a hermeneutic phenomenology of the lived experience of men and women in the academy who are members of Greek organizations. In order to more thoroughly understand the lived experience of the Greek organizational alumni, 31 people were interviewed, 10 men and 21 women, 17 African Americans and 14 Caucasians, using a semi-structured interview protocol. Using impression management theory as a theoretical lens, the interviews were analyzed to understand the lived experiences of what it means to be a Greek organizational alumnus and be employed in the academy. The results revealed that participants believed that the media information about Greek organizations was an important factor in shaping how others outside of Greek organizations viewed membership. In addition, the perceptions that Greek organizational members felt others had about their membership was an indicator of the techniques they used to manage the disclosure of their Greek organizational membership.

The most common method used by participants regarding the disclosure of their Greek organizational membership was silence or an impression management technique called burying (Cialdini, 1989). In terms of stigmatized identities, Leary (1995) calls the strategy of silence concealment. Four major reasons emerged from the experiences of the participants for silence about their Greek organizational membership: it doesn't come up,

it's irrelevant, it doesn't help in academics, and finally, they don't want to appear biased. As participants discussed their lack of disclosure, particularly the idea that disclosing affiliation does not help them in academics, participants discussed elements of status. Status and power emerged as important factors for the participants in describing their personal experiences and comfort in disclosure. Participants did not express hesitation in disclosing when interacting with someone of lower academic status such as undergraduate students. In fact, many participants felt that their Greek affiliation humanized them in the eyes of undergraduates. However, most participants described a great deal of hesitation in disclosing their Greek affiliation to those of higher academic status. Participants said that if someone else mentioned Greek organizational membership, they would talk about it typically using two other of Cialdini's techniques, burnishing and boosting. Most often, Greek organizational members would talk about their personal organizational experience and try to educate others about their own organizations and, in most cases, they hoped to change the perceptions of those outside of Greek organizations.

One of the leading reasons that participants wanted to change the perceptions of others is that they considered their membership a privilege that has afforded them multiple opportunities, both in and out of the academy to connect with their students and connect with other Greeks in the academy. Participants rejected the idea that they were financially privileged. However, as stated earlier, the participants seemed oblivious to the fact that their mere ability to be in the organizations and gain the opportunities for access to the connections allowed by Greek affiliation. In terms of thinking about being stigmatized, participants had little direct experience with being actually stigmatized, but

they described a definite feeling that being Greek in academia was not an attribute to freely disclose, but an attribute to strategically communicate, or in most cases, not communicate.

Overall implications of the study

In this segment, I will discuss how the current study adds to three major areas of communication research. The present study extends the body of interpersonal communication research, communication research on the self, and organizational communication.

Interpersonal communication. Overall, the study has implications for both interpersonal and organizational communication. In terms of interpersonal communication, the study focuses at the micro level of interpersonal characteristics to explore the communication regarding particular traits. Understanding how people perceive others to view certain attributes about them and how they view attributes about themselves is important to understand the communication messages people construct. Applying this to other attributes can add to our understanding of how people view attributes such as previous marriages, illnesses, financial situations, and a variety of other attributes that people may feel have certain connotations, particularly negative connotations. For example, if a person was having financial difficulty, he or she think about how it would be best to disclose or manage the information regarding the sharing of their financial situation, depending on the context and the audience for the information. Therefore, in understanding how Greek organizational alumni who enter the academy professionally or are in graduate school with plans to enter the academy professionally choose to manage their affiliation as an aspect of their identity, we can use

the findings of this study for transferability to understand other contextually discrediting attributes. Using qualitative methods to understand the lived experiences of the participants can help us understand the depth and dimensions of their experiences.

Communication and the self. The present study also expands the current trend in sociological research on more fragmented social identities. Brekhus (2008) states that current trends in identity research are toward multi-faceted aspects of identities, not static constructions of identity where individuals have one identity. The current study does not attempt to argue that there is no core self, as Brekhus states that other current research argues. But the current study does align with another trend in identity research, the idea that “modernity embeds us in multiple thought communities simultaneously, giving us a complex ‘web of sociomental affiliations’ that shapes our own sense of self” (p. 1060). In essence, as people are affiliated with multiple groups and multiple categories, the categories interplay to create one’s sense of self. Brekhus argues that some people attempt to segment their various social connections and affiliations, while others use the connections between the affiliations to be a “multiply influenced and socially networked self” (p. 1061). By not segmenting ourselves by our various group affiliations and identity categories such as race, gender, religious affiliation, group membership, or other categories of our identities, we allow each to influence and develop various aspects of our identity and being. For example, being a woman is one aspect of the self, but in addition to being a woman, a woman may also be Catholic, Asian, and a member of a local civic group. Instead of seeing each part of one’s identity as separate and uninfluenced by the other, Brekhus argues that each part of one’s identity influences other the other areas of a person’s identity.

The participants in the study were a mix of both of the groups that Brekhus states exist in modern identity presentation. There were participants who segmented their Greek affiliation from their academic lives, while others attempted to use their Greek affiliation and experience to inform and expand their academic roles, most specifically in the classroom as a connection tool. The present study supports current identity research by bringing a communicative focus to the study of the self as a multifaceted, unique conglomeration of experiences and ideas. Brekhus' review is more focused on the sociological, qualitative study of the self as multifaceted, so the present study is a study of the self using modern perspectives of the self. The present study shows how multifaceted selves are communicatively managed and presented. By focusing on the communicative management of the self, the present study extends the idea of the multifaceted self, stating that it not only exists, but is managed and presented based on perceptions and context.

Organizational communication. Another area of research that is advanced by this study involves organizational identity. This study expands the scope of some aspects of organizational identity research while supporting key findings in several other existing areas of research on this topic. The present study supports existing areas of organizational identity research by indicating the importance of public relations and the importance of individual identification with the organization for the communication of organizational identity. However, the present study merges the two areas of interpersonal communication and organizational communication by showing the importance of the individual in creating and maintaining a public image of an organization. Participants pointed to their own attempts to communicate to others the mission of their organizations

and how their respective organizations were an integral part of their lives. In their communication about their own experiences with the organization, individuals hoped to change or at least expand the views of others about organizations.

Participants also pointed to the behavior of individuals and the reflection of the individuals' behavior on other organizational members. At a very basic level, projecting the behavior of a few onto a larger group is stereotyping, but there has been little previous communication research on how stereotyped people communicatively deal with being stereotyped. The present study can help us to understand how people deal more with being stereotyped, and how they respond to others' stereotypes.

Theoretical Implications

This study is important in contributing to theory and research in communication in accordance with three major bodies of literature, impression management, organizational identity, and the understanding privilege and stigma. I will argue in the three following sections how the present study extends existing research and is of value to communication scholars.

Impression management theory. This study extends impression management work in a different direction than previous communication research. Other communication research (Wildermuth et al., 2006, Becker & Stamp, 2005, Manusov et al., 1998) has used impression management theory in terms of how people strategically communicate to form an overall identity, or have identified communication channels for troubling information (O'Sullivan, 2000). In this study, one specific attribute was examined in depth and communication techniques for managing the attribute in interpersonal interactions and reasons for some of the communication techniques were

presented. The examination of a management of a particular attribute is a unique contribution because of the depth in looking at how a particular characteristic is handled in an interpersonal interaction. Many attributes can seem completely normal to openly disclose in one situation while seeming a bit risky to disclose in another, such as religious affiliation, occupation, political affiliation, or socioeconomic status. Understanding why people have feelings that certain attributes should not be disclosed in certain situation is important for understanding how and why they want to be viewed in a certain way, in most cases a positive way. The communication decisions individuals make regarding communicating individual characteristics is a micro level application of impression management theory, focusing on communicated messages.

The use of silence as a conscious communication decision that emerged in this study is an interesting extension of Impression Management. Cialdini (1989), in discussing the indirect strategies of impression management does not call the burying strategy silence, but in the case of this study, and overall, I would argue that the best way to disclaim a positive link to a negative other is to not discuss the link at all. If no one knows about the link between someone or something that is negative, there can be no judgment made either positively or negatively regarding the attribute. Leary (1995) describes the strategy of concealment as a way of dealing with a stigmatized attribute. Leary does not necessarily call the strategy burying, but the two ideas do align. Participants in this study seemed to believe that not talking about or disclosing their Greek affiliation was the best way to succeed in academics while being associated with a Greek organization.

Noelle-Neumann (1974) introduced a theory called the Spiral of Silence theory as a theory of public opinion. In the theory, Noelle-Neumann states that an issue that is not discussed or that public opinion seems to contradict one's own personal opinion, a person will not express their own feelings or ideas, and therefore others will not, therefore setting a spiral of silence in motion. In the case of this study, if no one talks about Greek organizational affiliation, others will not feel comfortable talking about their Greek affiliation. No one will disclose their affiliation, and there can be no conversation about the affiliation. Without communication, people cannot express and understand each other's perspectives and perceptions, therefore perpetuating the images of Greek organizations and the ideas that affiliation is not crediting in the Academy.

In the case of impression management theory, using silence more often than direct communicative techniques is an interesting impression management tool. Instead of attempting to communicate information about oneself, the participants in this study chose to keep this piece of information hidden for a number of reasons. Greek organizational membership was not relevant to some of the participants, and, as will be discussed in more detail in the section regarding organizational identification, a difference in the internalization and identification with Greek organizations might determine the impression management techniques that people use regarding the impressions others might have about their membership. If membership in the organization is not important to the individual, the individual is less likely to internalize the values of the organization, therefore having less stake in managing the impression others have of them in regards to their membership in the organization.

Participants in this study felt that revealing their Greek affiliation might be risky and discrediting in an academic setting. This is not only of importance to impression management theory, but also to Social Penetration Theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Social Penetration Theory states that three major factors determine the depth of self-disclosure in forming relationships: the personality traits of the interactants, the anticipated outcomes of the exchange and the situational context. Most participants did not discuss their own personality traits in terms of their self-disclosure. A few did mention that they were the type of person who discloses a great deal, and others stated that they were not the type of person who disclosed a lot in general, so their perceptions of how others might view their Greek affiliation were not a factor in their decisions to disclose. The outcomes and context were also major factors influencing the disclosure. In attempting to create an impression of an intellectually enlightened and engaged individual as a professional in the Academy, information that might run counter to such an image was hidden, as a risk was seen in revealing the information.

Using Social Penetration Theory in concert with Impression Management Theory offers an interesting implication for future research. The process of impression management is largely a process of strategic self-disclosure and information management because of the perceived risk of disclosing the information to another's impression of the communicator (Schlenker & Potari, 2000). If people did not care how others perceive them, they would disclose information freely and without considering the repercussions of sharing the information. However, the results of this study have shown that perceptions of appropriateness of disclosure and perceptions of threat and risk with disclosure are strong influences on the decision to disclose information. Currently, there

is not a lot of research being done using Social Penetration Theory in interpersonal interactions. Social Penetration Theory is viewed as a cornerstone theory of interpersonal communication, but it is not used much in concert with impression management. The present study provides good evidence that the two theoretical constructs complement each other in important ways, and researchers may want to consider developing new perspectives that integrate the two theories, perhaps in conjunction with theories of power as the comments in the next paragraph indicate.

Understanding issues such as risk and status in terms of connecting impression management theory and social penetration theory is an interesting intersection and extension of the two theories. Sometimes in examining Social Penetration Theory, scholars can have difficulty in understanding why certain attributes are seen as riskier than others to disclose. The perception of risk may be greater than the actual risk. However, much like Cooley's Looking Glass Self (1902), socially constructed perceptions are what drive people's reality. The actual reality of risk in disclosure is of little concern, because the reality of risk is the reality that participants see. As stated in Cooley's Looking Glass Self, people are who they think other think they are. Therefore, in choosing information to disclose about oneself, the perception of risk is more powerful than the actual risk in disclosure. Using Impression Management Theory together with Social Penetration Theory can inform each of the theories and further extend the application and development of each theory in communication, as Social Penetration Theory examines self-disclosure in relationship escalation and Impression Management Theory examines how people disclose and manage the flow of information to attempt to manage the perceptions people have of them (Schlenker & Potari, 2000).

In the natural sciences, progress is often most marked when researchers discover underlying patterns that integrate several different theories into something larger and more comprehensive (Reis, 2007). The general linear model in statistics and Einstein's theory of relativity are two good examples of theoretical perspectives that drew together a number of theories or concepts that had previously been treated as separate. The results of this study point to some general principles of face-to-face communication that may tie together disclosure, impression management, risk, power, and a number of other factors into a single model. This idea needs to be further explored, but has the possibility of making a really important advance in the study of human communication.

In managing our own personal identities, we make decisions about what kinds of information we believe is more personal than other information. The decisions that we make about the information that could be perceived as more private or more personal is largely based on how we feel others would view the information based on social norms and context. For example, if people believed that there was little risk disclosing to others that they were HIV positive, people would be more open about HIV infection. However, as many participants, such as Rebecca, stated, in the academy Greek affiliation is not viewed very positively. In Rebecca's opinion and according to other participants, Greek affiliation needed to be revealed only after credibility and some degree of trust or safety had been established.

In fact, another interesting thing that emerged from this data was the influence of power and status on the disclosure of Greek affiliation. The power and status issue coincides with the issue of risk of disclosure and the establishment of credibility or a relationship of some sort. Establishing trust or credibility of oneself seemed important to

many of the participants in order to reveal their Greek affiliation. Usually, the credibility needed to be established in order for participants to feel that revealing their Greek affiliation would not be damaging to their personal reputation with someone of higher status. The power, status, and risk triangulation is an interesting extension and application of Social Penetration Theory. In determining the risk involved with disclosing information, relational status became salient to the participants. Most participants did not see much of a threat to their credibility to reveal their affiliation to undergraduate students whom are of lower academic status. Most participants were concerned about creating separation from undergraduate students in disclosing their Greek affiliation. However, the lower the academic status of the person disclosing in the interaction, the more risk was perceived in disclosure.

However, many participants were quite concerned about revealing the information around people of higher academic status, such as high ranking faculty or as Norm stated, “hard-hitting academics.” Most of the administrators felt that revealing Greek affiliation could be viewed as a way to separate them from those not in Greek organizations, and that they would appear too biased toward members of their own organization or Greeks in general. One administrator, Dana, did mention that she would be reluctant to admit her boss that she is Greek, but overall she echoed sentiments of other administrators that she did not want to separate herself by revealing her Greek affiliation. Again, risk and impression management come together in situations where status becomes salient. When someone is of a higher status than the Greek organizational alumni, as Norm stated, in an attempt to impress someone, disclosing Greek affiliation is inappropriate.

In situations with students, even if participants felt that Greek affiliation could be used to separate participants from their students, there was no feeling that it was risky to possibly detrimental to disclose. The existing higher status of being a graduate student or faculty member seemed to relieve them of the risk and the impression management was not to be seen as credible, but to be seen as inclusive. Participants such as Melissa stated that disclosing Greek affiliation “humanized” her more with her students.

Status is indirectly discussed by Jones and Pittman (1982) in their impression management typology as discussed in Chapter 2, which includes ingratiation, intimidation, supplication, exemplification, and self-promotion. For example, ingratiation is an impression management strategy aimed at gaining the favor of someone. Status can be an important factor in a desire for someone to like another, particularly in a professional setting. If someone is of higher status in the organizational structure, we are likely to want to be perceived as credible and competent, therefore we might use more self-promotional strategies. Jones and Pittman’s strategies are more about direct communication about one’s own personal traits, not their affiliations, while Cialdini’s (1989) are indirect, aimed at affiliations. Participants did not mention using direct communication about themselves and their abilities, but focused more on managing information that could be counter to being seen as competent and intelligent, two important traits for a professional academic. But the use of status is an interesting connection between both Jones and Pittman and Cialdini. Jones and Pittman is seminal the typology for impression management and Cialdini’s is an extension of Jones and Pittman’s work. The emergence of status from the data in the current study shows a merging of the two typologies by tying them together with a common thread.

As the examples and discussion in the previous paragraphs show, situational context and interactional outcomes are important factors in the choice to disclose information about oneself, and participants in this study agree. The status of the other person and situational context were key factors in disclosing information about themselves in order to insure that they were perceived as academically competent.

Organizational Identity. Another area of communication theory that is informed by this study is the area of organizational identity. The present study further informs and enforces the importance of the existing constructs of organizational identity research of public identification and identification of the organizational member with the values and mission of the organization. An interesting extension of the existing research is the importance participants placed on the responsibility of individual organizational members in communicating organizational identity at an interpersonal level. Participants such as Renee and Jeff singled out organizational members who do not live up to the values of Greek organizations as the members people seem to use to identify Greek organizations as a whole. Melvin also felt that individuals who live up to the stereotypes of the organizations portrayed by the media solidify the perceptions of outsiders.

Organizational identity research, as stated in Chapter 2, is largely focused on how the individuals identify with an organization, not necessarily how the individuals work to communicate the organization's identity. The only study that examined how individuals continue to perpetuate an organization's identity is the Dougherty and Pierce (2002) study of the Ozark airline pilots following a merger with TWA. Organizational identity research does not focus on how organizational identity can be communicated at an

individual level. The present study can serve as a springboard to more inquiry into this phenomenon.

The study further extends the existing constructs of public organizational identity in terms of the focus that the participants placed on the media's coverage and discussion of Greek organizations in terms of socially constructing the image and identity of Greek organizations. Existing communication research (Benoit, 1995; Benson, 1988) has discussed damage control attempts by organizations following an organizational mishap or event. In this study, the importance of media constructions through movies and television played a role in the impressions they felt they had to fight against in order to be taken seriously as in the academic arena. Not only were the media constructions of characters such as John Blutarsky of *Animal House* hurdles for the participants to overcome in terms of impression management, media coverage of Greek organizational events was also mentioned as a challenge for organizational members to overcome. While participants did not deny that some of the media coverage was deserved, participants felt that media constructions and coverage were important in creating an organizational identity for those outside of Greek organizations. Overcoming a media created image that one is not even involved in creating, but simply affiliated with similar organizations is another interesting contribution and finding of this study. Examining how an individual manages and restores a personal image simply because of something they are affiliated with is an interesting take on the impact of organizational identity on the individual members in interpersonal interactions.

One of the interesting findings of this study came in the area of organizational identification; internalizing and living the values of the organization, making the

organization a salient part of one's identity. This was the only area that really indicated much of a difference between African American and Caucasians. Caucasian participants did not mention having a tie to their organizations before going to a college campus. In most cases, the Caucasian participants did not mention a desire to even join a Greek organization before getting onto campus and going through the recruitment process. There was definitely no tie to a specific organization before stepping onto campus.

In the case of African American participants, there was a definite identification with a specific Greek organization before setting foot on a campus. The values of the organization were so ingrained into the participants that they refused to join another organization, even waiting to join after their undergraduate experience as graduate members. African American participants spoke in much more detail about how much the organization was a part of their own identity and their family and mentors. Being Greek, to African American participants, was a springboard for leadership and a vessel to being a leader in the African American community. African American participants had, or expressed more of a desire to have artifacts of their specific organization in their offices to communicate their organizational identity. Commitment to the organization was viewed as a lifetime commitment, and therefore, there were more issues with African American participants separating themselves from non members via their membership in the organization. As academics, most African American participants knew the Greek affiliation of other African American academics because it was more common among African American academics to be Greek. African American participants had to balance their affiliation with their academic status more than Caucasian participants. Balancing occurred in the professional setting, making sure not to alienate students who were not

Greek by disclosing affiliation. Sandy described a specific incident with a student accusing her that her office was not inclusive of non-Greeks. She described her feelings about the incident stating it made her feel “1) attacked, 2) misunderstood and 3) befuddled.” She did not understand why the student would have such strong feelings against her Greek affiliation and she was unaware of anything she had done to make the student feel the way he/she did.

African American participants also felt a tension between managing the part of their identity that was attached to the Greek affiliation with their professional academic affiliation. Participants like Jamal felt they had to make a decision between being actively involved with their Greek organization while being active professionally. Other participants like Whitley felt a tension between involvement and her role as a graduate student. In these cases, two different aspects of an identity created a management tension that participants had to manage. Participants had to decide which part of their identity to prioritize. The intersection is an interesting and unique extension of organizational identification because of the intersection of tension of multiple pieces of one’s identity competing for the individual. The emergence of the intersection is another contribution of this study.

Usually in organizational identity research, the two aforementioned areas of organizational identity, and individual identification with the organization and public image of the organization, do not intersect. But an intersection emerged from this study. One of the most significant areas of contribution of this particular study was the intersection of individual organizational identification and the communication of a public organizational identity. Participants singled out individuals (not by name) as a source of

possible reasons for Greek organizational images. If individuals project a certain image of Greek organizations, then that image could be projected upon others who are affiliated with Greek organizations. Participants felt that those who had projected negative images through their individual actions created an organizational identity.

Participants described trying to use their own actions and communicative strategies to portray an organizational identity that was more indicative of what they believed to be the values of the organization. Suzanne stated that she tried to be a “goodwill ambassador” for Greek organizations and Claire stated that she lived the values of Greek organizations, therefore not having to directly communicate that she was affiliated with a Greek organization. Most participants had a positive experience in their respective Greek organization, and so most were positively identified with the organization and expressed a desire to communicate a positive image of the organization. Even Mary, who was not as positive about her Greek affiliation, still described how she focused on the philanthropic contributions of her organization, one aspect of her membership she described with great pride.

The interpersonal impact of communicating organizational identity is an important finding and contribution of this study. The contribution is two fold. First, the study examines the impact of the public organizational image on an individual’s impression management needs and strategies. If people are affiliated with an organization or have an attribute that has a strong public image, be it positive or negative, the individual must deal with the image in interpersonal interactions. If the image is negative and the person wishes to be seen in a positive way, then the impression management strategies would be geared toward making the affiliation appear more

positive. In contrast if the image was strongly positive, then one would be attempting to make his or her connection to the positive entity stronger. In this study, the affiliation was viewed negatively, therefore the participants used tactics to improve the image in the eyes of others in their interpersonal interactions. The impact of the organizational image on the individual's identity is a new area of communication research and another contribution of this study.

The second impact of the individual is the importance of the individual on communicating the organization's image and identity. Participants such as Renee pointed to members who did not live up to the mission and values of the organization ruining the image for everyone else. In previous communication research, the impact of the individuals in communicating organizational identity has largely been ignored. Commodified emotional expressions (emotional labor, expressing emotions that are not felt by an individual because emotional expression is necessary for their job) have been explored. However, emotional labor has not been explored in terms of the importance in communicating organizational identity. Dagg (2005) argued that individuals are key in communicating organizational identity. Most people interact with the organization through the individuals that are the organization. The present study takes a step further toward exploring the impact of the individual on communicating organizational identity, both positively and negatively. Dollar and Zimmers (1998) state that "identity is an interactional accomplishment" (p. 596). Since organizational structures cannot interact with individuals, individual organizational members must present the organizational image as part of their identity in interpersonal interactions. The present study is an

important step towards merging interpersonal communication theories with organizational identity and public relations.

Understanding Privilege and Stigma. A unique contribution of this study is to further understand the idea of privilege and stigma. In order to understand how someone experiences privilege or stigma, one of the most important aspects is to understand how someone defines those words for themselves. As discussed at other points in this study, I am one of the very people I studied. I saw my Greek organizational membership as a privilege, an honor, a way of connecting to others. My Greek affiliation afforded me many opportunities that I would not have had without it, such as learning more about leadership and representing myself and an organization, and understanding the implications of my actions for the organization.

Until I discussed this study with others, it never occurred to me that someone might view me as privileged, in any way. Brekhus (1996) and McIntosh (1988) are two of many scholars who would argue that because I am privileged, I cannot see that I am privileged. Similar logic could be applied to my participants, who also did not view themselves as privileged, but having privileges. However, those privileges are a result of being privileged. As participants talked about being able to take leadership positions on campus because of their Greek affiliation, the access to those positions through Greek organizational membership is a result of being privileged. Other participants mentioned having access to events and being able to go to social situations with their organizations whenever the mood struck them. Having access to the unique social structures is another example of being privileged. Many privileges are unearned and simply exist as a result of being in a specific social system. McIntosh lists many things, such as being able to

walk into a hair salon and knowing that someone will be able to cut her hair, simply because she is white, and white privilege, in our society, is invisible. Understanding invisible privileges and how people perceive each other can open a door for dialogue and conversation about issues that are defined differently by different people.

As stated previously, people communicate based on their perceptions of how others view them. Reis (2007) states that the fact that people communicate and base their relational satisfaction based on the perceptions they have of how others view and act toward them is an important underpinning of research on the self and the “ripening” of relationship research. Participants knew others viewed them as privileged, but the participants did not feel this was accurate, and participants seemed a bit resentful that others would view them in such a way. In response to the research question about how participants experience privilege, I would state that the results of this study would indicate that they feel they benefit from privileges but do not see themselves as privileged, nor did the participants in this study feel they were privileged as Greeks in Academia.

Based on the stories of the participants, there is no definitive conclusion that Greeks experience stigma in the Academy. Norm felt quite passionately that Greeks were stigmatized as in the Academy. Few other participants were willing to say, “I feel stigmatized,” but many participants seemed to feel that being Greek was not a helpful attribute in academics. But again, in looking at the definition of stigma and context, we can learn more about what it means to be stigmatized and understand how others feel stigmatized.

According to Goffman (1963), stigma can be contextual. For example, being a mother would not necessarily be stigmatized at a church, but being a mother may very well be stigmatized in a professional environment. Therefore, mothers would be strategic about disclosing information about their family and their ties to their family in a work setting, where they may disclose more freely in a church setting. The strategies for disclosure are entirely context based. One of the important contributions of this study is to examine the importance of context with a stigmatized or threatened identity. Most participants felt that the more serious the academic setting, the more risk there was in disclosing Greek affiliation. Again, status played an important role in describing stigma. In fact, Charlene, a doctoral candidate, stated that she was unwilling to spend the energy defending her Greek affiliation now, but felt that once she was academically established, it was something she could talk about more openly.

Some participants did not want to stigmatize those who are not Greek. The desire not to stigmatize non-Greeks came out more among African American participants. Being Greek in the African American community was seen as being elite and being part of the “talented tenth,” as participants quoted W. E. B. Du Bois. African American participants seemed to have more issues in balancing the intersection of privilege and stigma than did Caucasian participants.

Based on the results of this study, I am reluctant to state that in the academy Greek affiliation exists at the intersection of privilege and stigma, but I do think that stigma and privilege are factors in the management of Greek affiliation in the academy. According to Brekhus (2008), both stigma and privilege must be managed in interpersonal interactions. In order for an attribute to be stigmatized, an opposing

attribute must be privileged. For example, for heterosexuality to be privileged, homosexuality must be stigmatized. In terms of an attribute, for singleness to be stigmatized, marriage must be privileged. Context plays a key role in the case of Greek affiliation in terms of something being stigmatized or privileged. Participants noted context frequently when discussing their communication decisions about disclosing their Greek affiliation. Awareness is an important factor in terms of knowing if the attribute is privileged or stigmatized. People must understand how others view their attributes to determine if the attributes are perceived negatively or discrediting in a context.

Practical Applications

In addition to theoretical applications, the present study also has many practical applications that would serve both individuals and organizations. The practical applications are not only for Greek organizations, but for other organizations that would benefit from understanding and applying the importance of individuals in communicating organizational identity.

Individual impact of impression management for organizations. Prior to entering the Academy, I worked several retail jobs. In those jobs, my uniform and emotional demeanor in interacting with customers was mandated by the company for which I worked. I know that the company was trying to create an image in the eyes of the public. In order to create that image, the company understood that there must be specific guidelines for employees to follow in order to communicate the image the company desired.

Organizations should take the findings of the current study and apply the findings about impression management and individual communication about organizational

identity to their daily management of their organization. Individuals need to identify with the values and goals of the organization in order to effectively communicate the image of the organization. Organizations could communicate to their employees that the mission of the organization is worthwhile, and that the members of the organization are involved in something greater than themselves. Organizations could involve the members more in communicating the message of the organization and reward employees for actions indicative of the organizational mission. Additionally, the organizations could communicate to their employees their importance to communicating the organizational identity at an interpersonal level, stressing the importance of organizational members in creating a lasting relationship with people outside of the organization. People form relationships with other people, not with organizational structures. Understanding the key role that the organizational members play in communicating and developing a relationship with the public is an important practical application of the current study.

Even if companies do not mandate emotional expression and communication by the employees, training their employees to understand the impact they have on communicating the organizational image to others is very important for organizations. The idea of communicating an organizational image is not only important for corporations, but for any organization wishing to project an image. For example, if a graduate department wanted to communicate an image of competency and solid research, it would be important to emphasize that at academic conferences, performance by individual organizational members reflects on the organization as a whole.

Understanding contextually stigmatized identities. One of the other more important aspects of this study is to understand how stigma might be constructed and

people might perceive stigma, even if the stigma may not actually exist. Goffman's definition states that stigma is *any* attribute that is deeply discrediting. The attribute can change by context. For example, during a time of political conservatism, being liberal can be stigmatized, but during a time of political liberalism, being a conservative can become more stigmatized. Stigma are not universal; stigma are situated in context. Understanding the context and placement of a stigma is an important practical application of this study.

As Brekhus (2008) states, identities are multifaceted and fragmented, and therefore, stigma can be multifaceted and fragmented. Because the world has become more interconnected and people are not as isolated as they once were, people are not necessarily stigmatized all the time. For example, those with various forms of dwarfism, commonly called "little people," may seem stigmatized in a larger world, but they can come together and no longer feel stigmatized. Or, as a more common example, gays who are stigmatized in many contexts can find social settings where their sexual orientation is not stigmatized.

Therapists and other mental health professionals that work with people who may feel stigmatized can use this information, supported by the findings of this study to encourage people to look at the multifaceted nature of identities and stigma.

Strengths of the study

The current study has multiple implications and applications, largely due to the strengths of this study. I will now discuss the strengths of this study in terms of the diversity of the participants and the depth of the descriptions.

One of the biggest strengths of this study is the diversity of the participants. Frequently, communication research is criticized for being disproportionately about Caucasians because of their overrepresentation in the population being studied. However, the present study actually has fewer Caucasians than African Americans. The difference is not large, and having a nearly even distribution between African Americans and Caucasians allowed me to make comparisons and gave me much richer data.

In addition to the racial diversity, the sample is widely diverse in terms of age. Participants ranged in age from 24-61. Many participants did not disclose their age, but gathering from appearance, those participants fell into the age range presented above. Research is also frequently criticized for having a disproportionate sample of college students, but the present study has a wide diversity of age and academic statuses. This gave me multiple perspectives from a wide variety of experiences.

The sample diversity leads me to the next strength of the study, the depth of information. Qualitative research has an advantage in gaining a great deal of depth and description from the participants. The participants spoke at length about their experiences and perceptions; therefore giving a depth to understand their lived experiences, the goal of a hermeneutic phenomenology. The study is not simply a description of strategies, but a real understanding of what it means to participants to be Greek and be in the academy. Qualitative research methods afforded me the luxury the depth of description.

Directions for Future Research

As the implications for communication research and theory have been presented along with the practical applications and strengths of the study, possible directions for future research about Greek organizations and stigmatized identities will be presented.

Greek undergraduates. One direction for future research is to do a similar study using Greek undergraduates to understand their experience of communicating about being Greek. Since media stereotypes are constructed to a large group of people (society as a whole), many outside Greek organizations might hold stereotypes based on media constructions, public relations, or individual members.

Since undergraduates are the most active members of Greek organizations and their membership in a Greek organization is the most salient to them at the time of their undergraduate experience, I think future research should be directed toward undergraduates to see how they communicate about their Greek affiliation to others. The current study could be replicated by doing qualitative interviews with both Greek men and women to understand how others perceive their Greek affiliation and how they feel about communicating their affiliation.

Another possibility would be to explore how different events might change how Greek organizational members communicate about their affiliation. For example, if a high profile negative story came out about Greek organizations, an interesting direction would be to see how their communication about Greek affiliation changed as opposed to after a piece of positive press or around the time of an organizational event, such as a philanthropic fundraiser.

Socially constructed stigma. A major direction of future research is to examine other identities that have negative images that could possibly be contextually negatively stereotyped. At the time of this study, there was a controversial sect of fundamentalist Mormons in Texas that received a great deal of media attention. The sect still practices polygamy and girls as young as 14 are married to much older men. Studying the implications for how practicing Mormons have handled discussing their religious affiliation would be a very interesting and unique direction for future research. This situation is simply an example of a suggestion for future research.

Religion is a choice, as is Greek affiliation. Other group affiliations made by choice that are perceived negatively by the larger population should be studied. Learning more about how people communicatively manage group affiliations that are negatively perceived by others that are important to the persons affiliated. Most stigma research is focused on attributes over which a person has little to no control, such as health conditions, gender, and physical ability. Dirty work, as mentioned in previous chapters has been studied, but work does have the simple answer that performing the job is necessary to make a living and provide for one's family. Other groups such as social and religious groups are groups that someone makes a conscious choice to join. Religious and social group affiliations would be excellent candidates for qualitative interviews or for open-ended surveys to explore strategies that people use to justify their choice, despite its negative perceptions.

As Brekhus (2008) states, identities are multifaceted, and while attributes such as sex, race, and socioeconomic status are key in forming our experiences and lifestyles, the attributes are not the entirety of one's identity and being. Therefore, researchers must

begin exploring attributes over which a person has control to understand how one manages being stigmatized, even if it is temporary. Another possibility is to examine how people, in an example like the situation with the fundamentalist Mormon sect, manage their affiliation during a crisis as opposed to in daily interactions. Comparing how strategies and communication changes during such times of crisis would be an interesting contribution and extension of communication research.

Interpersonal communication of organizational identity. One of the most interesting findings of this study was the perceived impact of individuals in the communication of organizational identity. Interpersonal impact on organization identity is an area that definitely merits further exploration. The practical application section of this study describes the idea of interpersonal interaction as a key to organizational identity, an excellent direction for future research.

As discussed earlier, organizations mandate, in some cases, emotional expression, dress, and various other behaviors with the intent of communicating an organizational identity. An interesting direction for future communication research would be to explore the success of such mandates in communicating organizational identity. Perhaps a multi-method study with a textual analysis of employee handbooks and other corporate literature to examine the messages the company wants their employees to communicate followed by a survey of customers of the store to determine the effectiveness of the employees in communicating the desired message of the organization.

Another interesting direction of this idea of the impact of interpersonal communication on organizational identity would be to survey customers to see what their images of certain organizations are and to ask the customers how they formed those

images. The purpose of the study would be to identify the most effective method of communicating an organizational identity and to see how much of an impact interpersonal communication and interactions have on communicating an organizational identity. Following this direction for future research is an interesting application of the findings of this study and applying them toward an expansion of organizational identity literature.

Reasons for differences in NPC/NIC and NPHC organizations. One of the most interesting things for me that came out of this study was the difference between the traditionally African American Greek organizations and the traditionally Caucasian Greek organizations. I think there is potential for future research in this area too. One of the most interesting things that stuck out for me was the feeling that Greek organizations were a springboard for leadership in the African American community. Even though many Caucasian participants mentioned taking leadership positions in their organizations, there was no mention of membership in a Greek organization being a springboard for leadership in the Caucasian community. Exploring the communicative construction of the importance of Greek organizations in the African American community would be a very interesting avenue for future research.

Another interesting difference was the idea of selecting the organization before even getting to a college campus. Traditionally Caucasian organizational members had a very different selection criteria for joining a particular organization. Members of traditionally Caucasian organizations discussed finding a place where they “fit in,” in most cases selecting the organization once going through a recruitment process or meeting members first, then deciding to join the organization. If the African American

participants knew which organization they wanted to join before they attended college, there would have to be some existing relationship to that organization. Examining how the connections were formed through different communication messages would be an interesting direction for future research. Additionally, examining the connections from a cultural perspective would be an interesting avenue for future research. Because there were clear differences between the two racial groups, studying the differences from a social community or co-cultural perspective would be an interesting avenue for future research.

A final interesting difference I found in interviewing my participants was the language difference in discussing the different roles in the two types of organizations. Examining the language differences between the two types of organizations would be an interesting study to examine how the linguistic differences might influence organizational identification and commitment to the organization, which was another difference between African American and Caucasian organizations. African American organizational members described a lifelong commitment to their organization. Caucasian participants did not mention such a lifelong commitment. Examining the language of the organizations might be an interesting way to uncover the differences in organizational commitment. In fact, the umbrella term for the traditionally African American organizations is the “Divine Nine,” an interesting linguistic label for the organizations.

Conclusion

The present study examined Impression Management Theory and the importance of context in interpersonal interactions. Overall, people entering or in the Academy professionally are concerned with the images others have of them and creating an image

of competence and approachability. To create such an image, participants shied away from even mentioning their Greek affiliation to maintain images of competence and approachability. Participants also saw their Greek affiliation as a privilege for connection, and in some cases, but not all, a stigma to be overcome.

Overall, the study was also important for merging interpersonal communication research and organizational communication research. By developing and merging appropriate areas of communication research, the discipline can grow and name more experiences for the larger society. Although the present study is not generalizable, it is transferrable, and can work toward understanding other affiliative attributes and their management in interpersonal interactions.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol for Open-ended interviews

1. Tell me why you joined your particular Greek organization as an undergrad?
 - a. What drew you to that organization?
2. What did you like most about being Greek as an undergraduate? Least?
3. Describe how you think your current institution views Greek organizations.
 - a. Why do you think that?
 - b. How do you think views are the same and different among administrators, faculty, and students? Why?
4. Describe typical reactions you get when you reveal your Greek affiliation.
 - a. Tell me a story of a particularly positive experience. How did you feel? How did you respond? How did they respond?
 - b. Tell me a story of a particularly negative experience. How did you respond? How did you feel? How did you respond? How did they respond?
5. Describe your perceptions of how non-Greeks view Greek organizations.
 - a. How does that influence your disclosure of your Greek affiliation?
 - b. How do you think being in the Academy changes your decisions about disclosure compared to an alumni who is not in the Academy?
6. Tell me a story about a time you revealed your Greek affiliation in an academic setting.
 - a. How comfortable were you?
 - b. What made you feel you needed to or wanted to reveal your affiliation?

7. Tell me a story of a time you chose not to reveal your Greek affiliation in an academic setting?
 - a. What made you choose not to disclose your affiliation?
 - b. What made you feel that you should not/didn't want to disclose your affiliation?
8. Compare your field to others in the Academy in its acceptance or rejection of Greek affiliation.
 - a. How do you think your field is different than others? Why?
9. What else would you like to discuss about disclosure of your Greek affiliation in the Academy that we haven't already discussed?

Demographic Information:

Age:

Sex: Male_____ Female_____

Status in the Academy: Master's Student PhD student PhD candidate

Tenure-track faculty Tenured faculty Other

Type of Greek organization: NPC Sorority NIC Fraternity NPHC Organization

Multi-cultural Greek organization

APPENDIX B

Introduction to Potential Participants

Hi. My name is Joy Daggs, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri-Columbia. I am contacting you because you have mentioned to me that you were involved in a Greek organization during your undergraduate years...OR _____ suggested I contact you because you were in a Greek organization during your undergraduate years. You will be asked to participate in one open ended interview lasting between ½ hour and 1 ½ hours, depending on how much you have to say. Then, if you like, you will be given the opportunity to act as a member to check my findings. That means that you give me feedback on how well the results of the study reflect your experience. This should last between 10 minutes and ½ hour, depending on how much you have to say. Total time for the study then, will be between ½ and 2 hours, depending on how many times we meet and how much you have to say.

APPENDIX C

E-mail script to Recruit Participants.

My name is Joy Daggs, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri-Columbia. I am conducting research regarding the management of Greek organizational membership in academia. You will be asked to participate in one open ended interview lasting between ½ hour and 1 ½ hours, depending on how much you have to say. Then, if you like, you will be given the opportunity to act as a member to check my findings. That means that you give me feedback on how well the results of the study reflect your experience. This should last between 10 minutes and ½ hour, depending on how much you have to say. Total time for the study then, will be between ½ and 2 hours, depending on how many times we meet and how much you have to say. If you are interested in participating, please contact me as soon as possible at JoyDaggs@mizzou.edu.

APPENDIX D

Written Consent Form

Consent Form

- Project title:* It's just Greek to you: Impression management among Greek alumni in Academia
- Researcher:* Joy L. Daggs (doctoral candidate) in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri-Columbia.
- Purpose:* We will be conducting a study using interviews to look at how you manage the impression of your Greek organizational membership. You must be over the age of 18, pursuing a career in academia, and an alumni of a Greek organization.
- Time:* The study should take between ½ to 1½ hours, depending on how much you choose to participate and how much you have to say. Additionally, after data analysis, you will be given the opportunity to verify and comment on the investigator's findings that will take approximately 10 minutes to 30 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded.
- Voluntary:* Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question and you may quit at any time.
- Risk:* There is minimal risk involved with the study. It is possible that you might feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions, but that is the only foreseeable risk. There is no more risk than you would experience in your daily interactions.
- Benefits:* The results of this study may help bring a better understanding of the types of impression management tactics that you use in managing your Greek identity. You might also have a better understanding of the idea of privilege and stigma in your Greek organizational membership.
- Compensation:* For participation in this study you will receive a \$5 Starbuck's gift card.
- Confidentiality:* Your identity will NOT be revealed in the transcripts, written documents, or verbal presentations of the data. The following steps will be taken to protect your identity and confidentiality.
1. Consent forms will be separated from the data.
 2. Personal identifying information will be eliminated from the transcripts and any reporting of the data. Pseudonyms will be used to indicate your responses.
 3. You can refuse to answer any question asked.
 4. Audio recordings will be kept on a secure computer or in a locked cabinet.
- Contact:* If you have any questions, please feel free to contact primary investigator, Joy Daggs at 882-4431 or JoyDaggs@mizzou.edu.
- Questions:* If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you are welcome to contact Campus IRB:
Office of Research

483 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
(573) 882-9585

Thank you for your participation.

Joy L. Daggs, M.A.
Graduate Student Investigator

Signing this consent indicates that you understand and agree to the conditions mentioned above.

Printed name

Signature

Date

VITA

Joy Leigh Daggs was born and raised in Memphis, Missouri, a small town in the northeast corner of Missouri. She attended Scotland County R-I school from her elementary years until her graduation in 1994 as class valedictorian. Upon graduation, she received a full-tuition scholarship to attend William Woods University in Fulton, Missouri. While at William Woods, she was a member of an international women's fraternity, editor-in-chief of the student newspaper, a Leader-Scholar, Student Alumni Class Council representative, member of Sigma Tau Delta English honor fraternity, Alpha Chi Honorary Society, and four-year Dean's List Scholar. Additionally, in her junior and senior years of college she was voted Outstanding Student by her peers. She graduated Magna Cum Laude in May 1998 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Communications and a minor in Computer Information Science.

Upon receiving her Bachelor's degree, she moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where she worked in the private sector for three years. After three years, she moved north to Cedar Falls, Iowa to attend the University of Northern Iowa. In August 2003, she received a Master of Arts in Communication Studies. Immediately, she headed back to Missouri to attend the University of Missouri to work toward a PhD in Communication.

Joy is the youngest of three daughters born to James Robert Daggs and Beverly Stober Daggs. She has three nieces and one nephew. She is an avid sports fan, particularly of football and basketball. She has been a fan of the San Francisco 49ers since the age of six, and a fan of the Los Angeles Lakers since the age of three. She also enjoys fantasy football and fitness.