Perceptions of Transgender Students in Social Fraternities and Sororities

Stacy Rowan

Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in College Student Affairs at Eastern Illinois University. Find out more about the program.

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.
Preserving, reproducing, and distributing thesis research is an important part of Booth Library’s responsibility to provide access to scholarship. In order to further this goal, Booth Library makes all graduate theses completed as part of a degree program at Eastern Illinois University available for personal study, research, and other not-for-profit educational purposes. Under 17 U.S.C. § 108, the library may reproduce and distribute a copy without infringing on copyright; however, professional courtesy dictates that permission be requested from the author before doing so.

Your signatures affirm the following:

- The graduate candidate is the author of this thesis.
- The graduate candidate retains the copyright and intellectual property rights associated with the original research, creative activity, and intellectual or artistic content of the thesis.
- The graduate candidate certifies her/his compliance with federal copyright law (Title 17 of the U. S. Code) and her/his right to authorize reproduction and distribution of all copyrighted materials included in this thesis.
- The graduate candidate in consultation with the faculty advisor grants Booth Library the non-exclusive, perpetual right to make copies of the thesis freely and publicly available without restriction, by means of any current or successive technology, including by not limited to photocopying, microfilm, digitization, or internet.
- The graduate candidate acknowledges that by depositing her/his thesis with Booth Library, her/his work is available for viewing by the public and may be borrowed through the library’s circulation and interlibrary loan departments, or accessed electronically.
- The graduate candidate waives the confidentiality provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U. S. C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) with respect to the contents of the thesis and with respect to information concerning authorship of the thesis, including name and status as a student at Eastern Illinois University.

I have conferred with my graduate faculty advisor. My signature below indicates that I have read and agree with the above statements, and hereby give my permission to allow Booth Library to reproduce and distribute my thesis. My adviser’s signature indicates concurrence to reproduce and distribute the thesis.

Please submit in duplicate.
Perceptions of Transgender Students in Social Fraternities

and Sororities

(TITLE)

BY

Stacy Rowan

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2017

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

12/13/16

THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR

DATE

2/20/17

DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL CHAIR
OR CHAIR'S DESIGNEE

DATE

12/13/16

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

DATE

12/13/16

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

DATE

12/13/16

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

DATE

12/13/16

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

DATE
Perceptions of Transgender Students in Social Fraternities and Sororities

Stacy Rowan

Eastern Illinois University

Committee Members:
Dr. Dena Kniess
Jody Stone
Jessica Ward
ABSTRACT

Recently, a total of ten social fraternities and sororities have published statements inclusive of transgender individuals, while others have remained silent on their inclusive policies. Currently, there is no published research on the inclusion of transgender students in social fraternities and sororities, though many institutions of higher education have started taking steps toward including transgender students. This qualitative study was designed to identify the perceptions of individual social fraternity and sorority members, the perceptions of their chapters, and how their chapters recruit and welcome transgender students into their organizations. The participants belonged to five different social fraternities and sororities at the research site. Four of the five participants interviewed believed their chapter would be open to accepting a transgender member, but none of the five knew whether or not their inter/national organization had published an inclusive statement. Additionally, none of the five interviewed were aware of any educational materials provided by their inter/national organization.

Key words: transgender, fraternity, sorority, gender identity, higher education
DEDICATION

There is one person in this world I owe all of my achievements to – my mother. I could not ask for a better mother, friend, and role model. I appreciate everything you do for me, and your support means the world. I know it breaks both of our hearts to be away from each other, but thank you for always allowing me to follow my dreams and being open-minded to all of my crazy ideas. Though I may be far away, you are always with me. I love you more than you know!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I chose my thesis topic, I never dreamed my passion and enthusiasm would carry through until the very end. I have been blessed to find a topic that has kept me guessing and is continuing to develop at this very moment.

There have been many people that have helped me on my journey, and I would like to thank them:

- Mom, for being my best friend and unwavering support. Thank you for encouraging me to follow my dreams and always being my number one fan.
- Dad, for not understanding why I do the things I do but supporting me nonetheless.
- Sis, for keeping me grounded and always making me laugh – especially at ourselves and our parents.
- Natalie, for being patient while I put our friendship on hold at times and pursued my dreams. Our friendship means so much to me.
- Ben, for being with me since day one and supporting me through everything.
- My cohort, I could not have gotten through this journey without your support. Life may take us in different directions, but you will all always hold a special place in my heart.
- My EIU supervisors: Lisa Walker, Kelsey Cripe, Jeremy Alexander, and Nathan Wehr, for holding me accountable, keeping me on track, and being great cheerleaders.
- My thesis advisor Dr. Dena Kniess, for challenging me and making sure I put my best work into this research.
- My thesis committee: Jody Stone and Jessica Ward, for dedicating your time to create this with me.
- Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority, for providing me with everything I was looking for and everything I thought I wasn’t. I have been blessed with an organization that makes me a better woman every day. I am so proud to be part of such a progressive organization that celebrates diversity and practices inclusion.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT..................................................................................................................2
DEDICATION ...............................................................................................................3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..........................................................................................4
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ...............................................................................8
  Purpose of the Study ..........................................................10
  Research Questions ........................................................................11
  Significance of the Study .......................................................11
  Limitations of the Study .........................................................12
  Definition of Terms ..............................................................12
  Summary ................................................................................16
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................17
  The Transgender Student Population in Higher Education ......................17
  Strategies for Inclusion .....................................................................22
    Education .................................................................................22
    Gender-Inclusive Housing .....................................................23
    Gender-Inclusive Restrooms ..................................................24
    Preferred Names .....................................................................25
    Preferred Pronouns ..............................................................27
    Fraternity and Sorority Involvement in the LGB Community ..............27
  Title IX ..................................................................................32
  Theoretical Framework ................................................................37
  Summary ................................................................................39
CHAPTER III: METHODS ..................................................................................41
  Design of the Study ........................................................................41
  Participants/Sample .......................................................................41
  Research Site ..............................................................................43
  Instrument ..................................................................................43
  Data Collection ............................................................................43
  Treatment of Data ........................................................................44
  Role of the Researcher ..............................................................44
Appendix A – Interview Protocol .................................................................88
Appendix B – IRB Approval and Email Template for Potential Participants........91
Appendix C – Informed Consent for Participants............................................94
CHAPTER I

Introduction

Recently, there has been a movement by a few inter/national social fraternities and sororities to make statements regarding membership of transgender students. For example, Sigma Sigma Sigma, a national sorority belonging to the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) made a formal declaration on gender inclusivity by stating: “a potential new member who self-identifies as a woman shall be treated as a woman regardless of any other circumstances” (Sigma Sigma Sigma, 2015, para. 10). National fraternity Sigma Phi Epsilon was the first organization that belongs to the North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) to make a statement on being inclusive of transgender brothers: “any individual who identifies as a man is welcome to seek membership in the fraternity” (Verdi, 2015, para. 4).

While many inter/national organizations have not yet made statements concerning specific gender inclusivity, this does not necessarily mean they are not accepting of the transgender community. In addition, inclusivity and acceptance will vary by individual chapters, even within the same inter/national organization. To add to the complexity of the situation, “not every institution uses the same standards to determine an individual’s sex and gender. These differing standards make it difficult to craft an inclusive policy” (Fraternal Law, 2014, p. 5).

Some organizations may be afraid of the backlash that will inevitably arise if they make a statement on inclusivity of transgender members, it can also be assumed that they do not wish to alienate potential and current members. The hope is that all members will
be accepting of the organization’s decision, but it may take some time to reach full approval. Kat Callahan writes about one fraternity member’s opinion on the subject:

The secretary…said he was specifically one of the executives in favor of allowing transgender men…But he is having some difficulty convincing other members of the council. He believes it will only be a matter of time, the same way the organization had to catch up with racial integration and expunging homophobia (2014, para. 4).

This is not an easy decision for organization leaders to make, but one that will eventually be unavoidable.

Though there are a few national fraternities and sororities that were created to be Gender and Sexual Diversities (GSD)-friendly, this study will focus on the organizations that generally identify as social fraternities and sororities, specifically those belonging to the North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) and the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC). This study does not include the four fraternities that have dual membership in both the NIC and the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC). Currently, there are only ten organizations (Alpha Chi Omega women’s fraternity, Alpha Sigma Alpha sorority, Alpha Sigma Tau sorority, Delta Gamma women’s fraternity, Gamma Phi Beta sorority, Kappa Kappa Gamma women’s fraternity, Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority, Chi Phi fraternity, Delta Tau Delta fraternity, and Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity) that have made transgender-inclusive statements regarding potential and current members. The first of the organizations to take a stance on transgender membership was Delta Gamma sorority, whose Positional Statement on Non-Discrimination reads: “Membership is open to women and transgendered persons who identify themselves as women” (Delta Gamma,
A point of interest is that while Chi Phi fraternity is inclusive of transgender members, they require legal documentation. According to their press release, “membership eligibility…includes any male as defined by valid legal documentation” (Chi Phi Fraternity 2016, para. 1). Many organizations have recently adopted position statements regarding sexual orientation, but few have tackled the topic of gender identity. With more and more focus on the transgender community, especially in the media, this will surely be a hot topic for years to come, as people become more accepting of the transgender population. “Much needs to be done if transgender students are to feel welcomed and included on college campuses. While the task seems daunting, student affairs administrators can begin by educating themselves about the diverse range of issues and problems faced daily by transgender students” (McKinney, 2005, p. 74).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine what perceptions social fraternities and sororities have of transgender students, and whether or not they are welcoming them into their communities. Currently, gender and gender fluidity is a hot topic, and organizations are beginning to recognize that their membership extends past the traditional gender norms. “The best men aren’t always rich, straight, white guys. ‘Best’ comes in many different forms. With this new bylaw, SigEp [Sigma Phi Epsilon] is saying that it knows the best of men weren’t always born male” (Verdi, 2015, para. 6). Another purpose of this study is to determine if the actions of individual chapters of inter/national organizations that have made statements concerning transgender membership match the inclusive position of their organization. Additionally, this study also aims to determine if inter/national organizations have provided their individual chapters with the resources
and training necessary to demonstrate their inclusivity and acceptance. While a few inter/national organizations have made statements regarding the membership of transgender students, it remains to be seen that individual chapters are following the standards set by their organization.

**Research Questions**

By completing this research, I sought to identify the acceptance level of potential transgender members by students belonging to social fraternities and sororities. Additionally, I also hoped to determine if social fraternities and sororities were receiving adequate educational materials, programming, and support from their inter/national headquarters.

1. What are the perceptions of transgender students belonging to social fraternities and sororities by cisgender students?
2. How do cisgender students that belong to social fraternities and sororities recruit and welcome transgender students into their organization?
3. What types of support, programming, educational, and/or training resources on transgender inclusivity are provided to social fraternities and sororities by their national headquarters?
4. What are the nature of conversations surrounding transgender membership and inclusivity being had within individual chapters of social fraternities and sororities and the councils they belong to?

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because transgender inclusivity is a current topic. Most, if not all, organizations belonging to the North-American Interfraternity Conference
(NIC) and the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) have statements that are inclusive of potential members regardless of sexual preference, but only a few have statements on the inclusivity of transgender members.

**Limitations of the Study**

The biggest limitation of this study was finding a member of a social fraternity or sorority on campus who identifies as transgender. There are, of course, transgender members of fraternities and sororities, but they are not necessarily located at the research site. Because of this, the main focus of the research was perceptions of the transgender community by cisgender students.

Another limitation was finding members of social fraternities and sororities who were willing to talk openly about this topic. Since this is a controversial and sensitive topic, people may have been reluctant to have open and truthful conversations.

The final limitation was that because most organizations do not take a positive nor negative stance on transgender inclusivity, there were not a large number of inclusive statements. Because of this, it was more difficult to determine if individual chapters are living out their organization’s mission by being inclusive of transgender members.

**Definition of Terms**

- **Affiliation.** The fraternity or sorority a student has membership in.

- **Agender.** An identification of an individual who does not feel comfortable identifying as any gender (Green & Peterson, 2006).

- **Ally.** An individual who actively works to dispel all types of violence against the Gender and Sexual Diversities (GSD) community (Green & Peterson, 2006).
**Cisgender.** The identification of an individual who is comfortable with and identifies as the gender they were born as (Green & Peterson, 2003-2004).

**Closeted.** Slang term for a member of the GSD community who has not “come out of the closet” – or admitted their gender or sexual identity to themselves, friends, or family.

**Coming out.** The process or action of an individual admitting their gender or sexual identity to themselves or others (Green & Peterson, 2003-2004).

**Gender and Sexual Diversities (GSD).** The community of individuals who do not identify as heterosexual or cisgender (Green & Peterson, 2006).

**Gender expression.** An individual’s own way of expressing their gender that is most comfortable to them (Green & Peterson, 2006).

**Gender fluid.** An individual who identifies as gender fluid does not feel bound to the stereotypical definitions of male and female, but instead identifies on a changing continuum of gender (Gender Diversity, n.d.).

**Gender identity.** An individual’s personal identification of their gender. May or may not match the gender they were born as (Green & Peterson, 2006).

**Gender-inclusive housing/Gender-neutral housing.** This type of housing allows individuals of any gender to be roommates (Beemyn, 2015).

**Gender-inclusive restrooms.** Restrooms that are available for use by any and all genders.

**Gender non-conforming.** Not conforming to society’s beliefs of what male or female means. “Behaviors and interests that fit outside of what we consider ‘normal’ for a child or adult’s assigned biological sex. We think of these people as having interests that
are more typical of the ‘opposite’ sex; in children, for example, a girl who insists on
having short hair and prefers to play football with the boys, or a boy who wears dresses
and wishes to be a princess” (Gender Diversity, n.d., para. 6).

**Gender/Sexual Minority (GSM).** A term used for individuals who do not
identify as heterosexual or cisgender (Killerman, 2016).

**Greek life.** The college or university community consisting of social fraternities
and sororities.

**Interfraternity Council (IFC).** The local council on a college or university
campus that oversees all inter/national and local social fraternities.

**LGBT/LGBTQ.** The acronym meaning lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, with
queer often being added in the abbreviation (Green & Peterson, 2006). This acronym can
be viewed as limiting/non-inclusive as there are many other gender and sexual
identifications that do not fall within the LGBT/LGBTQ acronym.

**National fraternity or sorority/National organization/Social fraternity or
sorority.** A sorority or fraternity that is a member of the National Panhellenic Conference
or the North-American Interfraternity Conference. May also have international chapters.

**North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC).** The umbrella organization
for 69 inter/national fraternities.

**National Panhellenic Conference (NPC).** The umbrella organization for 26
inter/national sororities and women’s fraternities.

**Panhellenic Council (PHC).** The local council on a college or university campus
that oversees all national and local social sororities.
**Potential new member.** Any person on a college or university campus who is not already a member of a social fraternity or sorority.

**Preferred names.** Names chosen by an individual that best represents how they view themselves. May or may not be their birth name.

**Preferred pronouns.** Pronouns chosen by an individual that best match their gender identity, and may or may not match their birth gender. Common pronouns are he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/their.

**Sexual orientation.** The identification of an individual that represents their romantic or sexual preference (Green & Peterson, 2006).

**Title IX.** The law that prohibits any discrimination by federally-funded organizations or programs, based on gender or sexual orientation (The United States Department of Justice, n.d.).

**Transfemale/Transwoman/Male-to-female (MTF).** An identification that may be used by individuals identifying as females but born as males (Green & Peterson, 2006).

**Transgender/Trans.** An identification of an individual who does not identify as their biological gender (Green & Peterson, 2006).

**Transition.** The process of changing biological sex or identification, which can happen over a period of time (Green & Peterson, 2006).

**Transmale/Transman/Female-to-male (FTM).** An identification that may be used by individuals identifying as males but born as females (Green & Peterson, 2006).

**Transphobia/Transphobic.** The act of being fearful, speaking disrespectfully or disliking individuals who identify as transgender (Green & Peterson, 2006).
Summary

When looking at a group that is known to be as exclusive as the social fraternity and sorority community, it can be difficult to imagine them as inclusive. The majority of inter/national fraternities and sororities have added inclusive statements about their members’ sexual orientation, but most do not have statements regarding transgender inclusivity. Though a few inclusive statements have started to emerge, the majority of organizations are taking a null stance on transgender membership.

Through this qualitative study, I hoped to discover if local chapters of inter/national organizations at the research site have overall inclusive practices, especially concerning the transgender community. The research also determined if local chapters need more training on the needs of the transgender community.
CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

This chapter includes topics that are relevant to the transgender community, the climate of transgender students in higher education, issues directly affecting the inclusivity of the transgender community, as well as the fraternity and sorority community. While many colleges and universities are taking steps to be more inclusive of the GSD community, many are still searching for the best ways to provide the best options for their students. “Improving campus climate for transgender students through nondiscrimination policies and gender-neutral facilities is a critical step forward” (Renn, 2010, p. 136). Institutions of higher education have been ill-prepared to provide transgender students with the essentials and are now rushing to be able to adopt inclusive policies and practices and provide them with the services they require (Garvey & Rankin, 2015). Genny Beemyn, Director of the Stonewall Center at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, conducted a study on transgender students, interviewing 111 students from 62 different institutions. It was found that while many of the institutions were considered to be very transgender-friendly, the majority of students did not feel that their college or university were providing them with enough support (2015). Unfortunately, when institutions do not make enough of an effort to be transgender-inclusive, many transgender students struggle with sense of belonging.

The Transgender Student Population in Higher Education

There are an estimated 360,000 students who identify as transgender enrolled in institutions of higher education in the United States (Nicolazzo & Marine, 2015). While there is a good amount of research on the gay and lesbian communities in higher
education, D’Augelli (1996) stated that both the bisexual and transgender populations are often combined into the data of the former two, even when they have not been specifically studied. “Thus, the number of bisexual and transgender students and their campus experiences remain ill defined” (Cawthon & Guthrie, 2011, p. 292). In 1996, the University of Iowa became the first institution of higher education to add a specific section on gender identity in their non-discrimination statement (Beemyn, 2015). Still, colleges and universities are playing catch-up with how to be inclusive of their transgender students. There are many issues facing the transgender population in higher education, including (but not limited to) gender neutral housing, gender neutral bathrooms, preferred names, and preferred pronouns (Nicozzio & Marine, 2015).

One of the biggest problems facing the transgender student population at colleges and universities across the country are the use of their given or birth name and gender binary pronouns. According to Campus Pride, a national non-profit organization working to make college and university campuses safer for transgender students, only about 150 institutions enable students to choose a preferred name in their official school records (Campus Pride, n.d.). Additionally, Campus Pride reports that only 53 institutions provide their students the opportunity to change their gender on official school records without providing medical documentation (Beemyn, n.d.). Many people in the transgender community do not feel comfortable using their birth name, or the pronouns that are typically associated with the gender they were assigned at birth. Faculty and staff should be conscious of this and be addressing students by their preferred name or pronouns, regardless of official university documents (Garvey & Rankin, 2015). Unfortunately, the majority of colleges and universities in the United States do not provide their students
with the opportunity to choose a name or gender that fits them. Unlike most higher education institutions, Ohio University created a new policy allowing their students to choose their preferred name and gender (Howard, 2015). To change gender identity, chosen pronouns, and preferred name, many institutions require official records of gender reassignment surgery to approve the changes. Ohio University’s policy specifically states that documentation is not needed in an effort to make the process easier for their students.

Being mis-gendered is an all-too-common occurrence for transgender students, and an extremely uncomfortable situation. Genny Beemyn, who also serves as the Trans Policy Clearinghouse Coordinator for Campus Pride, conducted a national survey of 111 transgender students from all over the country. To avoid making anyone feel uncomfortable, faculty members should be respectful of a student’s desired language and inclusive terms, regardless of official documents from the university (Garvey & Rankin, 2015). A faculty member may not be aware that a student has specific gender and pronoun preferences, so it would be easy for a transgender student to be mis-gendered, especially if the institution does not allow them to change their name. If the class roster shows that Sally Student is registered for a class, the professor will most likely identify Sally as a female, and refer to them as such. But what if Sally’s preferred name is Steve, identifies as a male, and prefers the pronouns he/him/his, even though it is not reflected on official university documents? That professor would have mis-gendered Steve and put him in an uncomfortable position, potentially sacrificing their safety, and would have outed him to the entire class in the process.

Another obstacle facing transgender students is finding appropriate on-campus housing: “Some features of campus life, such as residence hall rooms assigned by sex
may be unavoidable” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010, p. 334). As of 2015, just over 200 campuses provided gender-neutral housing, an increase from 50 in 2010 (Beemyn, n.d., Tilsley, 2015). If a student attends a college or university that does not provide gender-inclusive housing, finding a comfortable place to live can be difficult. Campuses that do not provide gender-inclusive housing force transgender students to pay more to live by themselves (if that option is even available, and if they can afford it), or risk being put in an uncomfortable position by living with someone who additionally does not understand or is not comfortable with their situation. Even when campuses offer gender-inclusive housing, many still have restrictions. For example, this option is often not available to first-year students, and is often only available in certain types of housing, like apartment or suite-style living arrangements (Beemyn, n.d.). Additionally, some colleges and universities only offer the option on one floor or wing in as few as one residence hall, which often forces students to “out” themselves (Nicolazzo & Marine, 2015). In the 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey of 6,450 transgender students, 19 percent of respondents indicated that they were not provided an option for gender-inclusive housing, and five percent had been denied on-campus housing completely (Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, & Keisling, 2011).

Similar to gender-inclusive housing, transgender students often have difficulty locating gender-neutral restrooms:

With every student, staff, faculty, and visitor having the inherent right to have a safe space to use the restroom, it is imperative that not only gender-neutral restrooms be available but also that these locations are advertised and visible across campus (Grewe, 2015, p. 287).
Many transgender students are uncomfortable using the restroom for their biological gender, but are also not comfortable using the restroom when their gender expression does not match the sign on the outside of the bathroom door. In the 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey, more than 25 percent reported that they were not provided adequate restroom facilities (Grant et. al., 2011). Some students feel so uncomfortable using restrooms that are not gender-inclusive that they will specifically map out their daily schedule to be able to use facilities where they feel safe (Beemyn, 2015).

Providing adequate and inclusive health care services and coverage for transgender students is also a challenge for institutions. In a 2005 study, Jeffrey S. McKinney found that both mental health and physical health services were inadequate, and transgender students must also speak with a specially-trained mental health professional, a service that is not always available. If institutions seek to provide adequate counseling for transgender students, this could prove to be costly. More and more colleges and universities are “covering most of the cost of transitioning, including surgery, under student health insurance” (Beemyn, 2015, para. 4).

Additionally, special situations arise at single-gender and religious-affiliated institutions. While the majority of these colleges and universities do not provide funding for an GSD-friendly center on campus, some do allow for the creation of a student organization (Grewe, 2015). Unfortunately, many of these institutions still utilize discriminatory policies to the detriment of the GSD community (Grewe, 2015).
Strategies for Inclusion

Some institutions have already taken steps to be more inclusive of transgender students, including being more conscious of the issues raised above. As of 2014, 731 institutions had incorporated gender-inclusive statements into their nondiscrimination policies (Grewe, 2015). Even the smallest of steps ahead show the campus transgender community that their institution is making improvements to make the atmosphere more inclusive and welcoming. Below are a few strategies that institutions of higher education can use to be more inclusive of the transgender community.

Education. One of the first things an institution should do is educate their community, including students, faculty, and staff. In a 2012 study, students and faculty took the lead on presenting to their peers, and found that faculty were inspired to integrate reading materials and discussions in their classrooms that were more inclusive of the transgender community, and that by providing these discussions in the classroom, it would create a larger movement of gender-inclusive language all over campus (Case, Kanenberge, Erich, & Tittsworth). Another way to educate the campus population is to integrate a Safe Zone Training program, designed for allies. Ballard, Bartle, and Masequesmay identified the Safe Zone training as one of the ways an ally program can benefit multiple groups, including students, faculty, and staff, with the intended outcome of creating a support network for individuals identifying as GSD (2008). There are three stages in becoming fully Safe Zone trained: stage one includes an overview of the GSD community, stage two provides information on how to be an ally, and stage three educates on the transgender community. At the completion of each training stage, participants are given stickers to attach to their office or residence hall door to indicate to others who
identify within the GSD community that they are an ally and that their office or room can be deemed as a “safe space” if they wish to confide in someone.

Two studies completed at Iowa State University and Duke University indicate that Safe Zone Training improved the overall knowledge of the participants, making them more educated on the oppression of the GSD community (Evans, 2002; Poynter & Lewis, 2003). Additionally, in a study by Ballard, et al., (2008), they reported that of the 38 GSD students surveyed, “78% felt more comfortable in class with faculty who had taken the training…(and) 77% expected to be treated more fairly by faculty who display a Safe Zone sticker” (p. 14). Because each campus climate is different and at different stages of inclusion, no two programs are exactly the same. “Sessions…are open to all students, staff, and faculty members, though some sessions are tailored for specific student groups or campus departments” (Grewe, 2015, p. 290). Campus Pride provides various resources on how to implement a Safe Zone program, including resources on what other campuses are doing so that individuals looking to bring Safe Zone to their own campus have examples to implement.

**Gender-Inclusive Housing.** Another step toward inclusivity of the transgender community is to provide gender-inclusive housing for students. Many institutions offer these types of housing styles for transgender students in order to provide them with a safe space and the option of living with another student they are comfortable with (Grewe, 2015). By providing gender-inclusive housing that is open to all students, institutions can make their best effort to avoid putting their students in uncomfortable and in some instances, unsafe positions. One of the options that should be made available to all transgender students is the choice of having a single room to themselves. This is
especially helpful when there is no specific gender-inclusive policy, but all efforts should be made to place the student in a community with both men and women, instead of a single-gender community. When the single room option is not financially attainable for a transgender student, it becomes imperative that the student is given an option for a facility that is otherwise inclusive, potentially through a living community specifically created for GSD-identifying students. This ensures that this community is safe and comfortable and allows them to be surrounded by individuals with similar interests and concerns (Herbst & Malaney, 1999).

Also extremely important to providing an inclusive atmosphere in on-campus housing is being intentional about hiring staff that will promote inclusivity of all underrepresented groups, including the transgender community. Garvey & Rankin (2015) identify that student affairs practitioners should be especially intentional about support GSD-identifying students, with special attention to transgender individuals. It should be noted, though, that this continued education must start from the top of the organization. Rankin (2003) noted in her study that institutions must be intentional about hiring staff and faculty that are visible GSD allies, so that transgender students feel comfortable when seeking out someone for help.

**Gender-Inclusive Restrooms.** Similar to gender-inclusive housing, colleges and universities must also be intentional about providing their transgender student population with gender-inclusive restroom facilities. “Transgender and gender-nonconforming students, staff, faculty, and visitors often experience discrimination, harassment, and even violence within gendered public restrooms on campus” (Grewe, 2015, p. 287). An easy fix for this issue would be to create signage that is welcoming to people of all genders so
that the transgender community does not have to choose between a restroom that fits the
gender they were assigned at birth, or the gender they identify with, and in some cases,
for those who do not identify within the male-female binary, a restroom that does not fit
with either of those identifications (Seelman, 2014).

**Preferred Names.** Another obstacle for transgender students to overcome at
higher education institutions is being able to choose a preferred name. When a student
decides to make a transition, they may be uncomfortable being referred to by their birth
name. They will usually choose a name that they feel better fits their identity.
Unfortunately, not all institutions of higher education allow transgender students the
opportunity to change their names on official documents, and faculty and staff often
times end up calling the student by their given name, resulting in placing that student an
uncomfortable or unsafe position.

Students and faculty members might prefer not to use their legal names for a
variety of reasons. The name might not reflect their gender identity…or
perhaps they just like a nickname better. Changing a name legally takes time
and money, however, which can be in short supply (Howard, 2015, para. 8).

But, there are some institutions that are affording their students the opportunity to choose
a preferred (or chosen) name for their official school documents. The name will even
show up on course rosters so that professors and students can both avoid the awkward
moment when the professor refers to a student by their given, but unused, name. It is
important to be sensitive to each individual and their needs, and Spade (2011) suggests
that letting students self-identify their names and pronouns by having them sign in during
the first class is an easy way to avoid the awkwardness for both student and professor.
The University of Vermont was one of the first institutions to implement a way for students to choose their preferred name and pronoun. Before making a change in the student information system, transgender students basically had no option but to out themselves to faculty members and university administrators.

The (system) puts students’ preferred names and pronouns on class rosters and identification cards but retains their legal names on financial aid and medical forms. Previously, students who wanted to be called by names different from their legal ones had to approach the registrar or their professors and explain (Tilsley, 2010, para. 8).

Just as it is costly for a student to legally change their name, it can also get very expensive for an institution to implement the change into their information software. University of Vermont registrar, Keith P. Williams indicated that over 700 students had already benefitted from the update. “It took six months and more than $80,000…though most just use it to list a nickname, Mr. Williams says he knows of at least seven cases where the system was used by a transgender student” (Tilsley, 2010, para. 10). Though the majority of students use it to change “Katherine” to “Katie”, for example, it is still a huge weight lifted off the shoulders of transgender students. Campus Pride “estimates that about 150 colleges have set up systems to record chosen names” (Howard, 2015, para. 10). In the summer of 2015, Ohio University implemented a policy allowing students to choose both their preferred name and pronouns. The policy reads:

A court-ordered name or gender change is not required, and the student need not change their official records. It is expected that faculty, staff, and students
will make every effort to call students by their preferred name and utilize students’ requested pronoun usage (Howard, 2015, para. 15).

**Preferred Pronouns.** Similar to the chosen-name option on university documents is the option of being able to indicate preferred pronouns and gender identity. When Ohio University put their change into effect, over 100 students had already taken advantage of listing a preferred pronoun within just a few months (Howard, 2015). Fortunately, for students who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth, or individuals who do not identify within the binary of male and female, the number of institutions allowing students to choose their first name and gender identity is growing (Beemyn, 2015). When students are not given the ability to choose their preferred pronouns or name, it can sometimes result in unwanted attention. Rankin (2003) found that “thirty-four percent of respondents avoided disclosing their sexual orientation/gender identity to an instructor, teaching assistant, administer, or supervisor within the past year due to fear of negative consequences, harassment, or discrimination” (p. 24).

While change is happening, it is slow moving and will take years for all institutions to be gender-inclusive. “Only after a complete transformation of institutional cultures will colleges and universities become truly welcoming to gender non-conforming individuals” (Garvey & Rankin, 2015, p. 201).

**Fraternity and Sorority Involvement in the LGB Community**

While there has not been a significant amount of research done on the transgender experience within social fraternities and sororities, there has been quite a bit done on the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) experience. Though there are many openly LGB fraternity and sorority members, still many choose not to reveal their true sexuality for
fear of discrimination. Through their research, Trump and Wallace (2006) found that most students preferred to suppress their sexual preferences rather than telling the truth and dealing with rejection from their fellow organization members. One respondent said “I knew I was gay (before coming to college) but I thought I was still not going to act on it when I went to college…I knew what I was and that I could do nothing about it, so I decided I needed to just get over it” (p. 12). Additionally, members will choose to restrict interactions with members they perceive as being especially homophobic (Trump & Wallace, 2006).

Though the actual number of LGB students within social fraternities and sororities is difficult to pinpoint, it is estimated that 5-6% of fraternity members in each chapter are gay or bisexual, and 3-4% of sorority members in each chapter are lesbian or bisexual. This was based on a survey by Case, Hesp, and Eberly (2005) on fraternity and sorority members who knew for certain that other members of their chapter did not identify as heterosexual, so the actual percentages could be much higher. Not all members choose to reveal their sexuality at all during their time in their organization for a multitude of reasons. Although, some do self-disclose while they are an active member and some are open about their sexuality before they even join. In the article by Case, et al., (2005), they discovered based on their respondents that “most men had begun to adopt a gay or bisexual identity before college, whereas most women adopted a lesbian or bisexual identity during or after college” (p. 20). On the other hand, some men who decide to join fraternities feel that they have no choice but to keep their sexuality from the other members (Dilley, 2002).
While there are a great number of LGB fraternity and sorority members who report positive experiences within their organization, homophobia is almost built into these groups, specifically fraternities. “Brothers tend to adopt a narrow conception of masculinity, which fosters oppression of both women and gay men” (Rhoads, 1995, p. 307). Further, in the study by Yeung, Stromler, & Wharton (2006), “members justified excluding women...by presenting women as essentially different from men, rejecting masculinity in women, and valorizing men over women” (p. 23). Fraternities survive on relationships between their male members, and some fear that having openly gay or bisexual members will have a negative effect on their ability to recruit new members or maintain relationships with sororities (Hall & La France, 2007). Many of the men and women in social fraternities and sororities incorrectly perceive that the main reason for homosexual or bisexual members wanting to join is to begin romantic relationships with current members. It is estimated that “only 3% of men and only 4% of women indicated that they joined ‘to meet members of the same sex’” (Case, et al., 2005, p. 22). And while some do begin romantic relationships with other members of the organization, most are done in secret. Many of the narratives in Shane Windmeyer’s book *Brotherhood: Gay Life in College Fraternities* refer to relationships within these organizations. Multiple individuals described their experiences being gay in a fraternity as very secretive – none of their fellow members knew they were gay, and they needed to keep their identity secret in their respective fraternities, essentially to keep up appearances (Shumake, 2005; Vogel, 2005).

If there is such an overwhelming amount of homophobic social fraternity and sorority members, why do LGB students join? Just like any student, the leading reason is
to find friendship. Approximately 75% percent of men and 78% of women chose friendship/camaraderie as the top reason for joining a fraternity or sorority (Case, et al., 2005). One student noted that by joining a social fraternity, his “brothers were a source of companionship and friendship” (Dilley, 2002, p. 204). Social fraternity and sorority members pride themselves on their brotherhood or sisterhood, and most students who join these groups feel that sense of camaraderie. Other students join with the intention of hiding their true sexuality, “I wanted to be part of a fraternity. It would not only be a great source of friendship, but would offer another layer to my mask…No one would ever think I was gay in a fraternity” (Zacharta, 2005, p. 126).

While most non-heterosexual students who join social fraternities and sororities do feel welcomed, unfortunately, this is not always the case. Many students who are even perceived as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, will be denied a bid based on pure speculation. Clay Cunningham was told he was not welcome to join after receiving a bid to his fraternity of choice, and quoted an already-initiated member as saying “A gay brother would ruin TKE [Tau Kappa Epsilon]. The only way is to kick you out now” (Cunningham, 2005, p. 55). Because of stories like this, many students fear that coming out before being a fully initiated member will ruin their chances of becoming a member, so they stay closeted. Some choose to forego living their true lives to be accepted as part of the group:

Just a few months earlier I had considered coming out, but now I was prepared to sacrifice honesty for the chance to live…with 33 of my best friends. I had my whole life to be gay, but you can only be in a fraternity once (Welles, 2005, p. 19).
LGB students do report additional benefits of joining a social fraternity or sorority beyond friendship and camaraderie, including the social life, a sense of belonging, leadership, and finding a “home away from home” (Case, et al., 2005, p. 22). Additionally, alumni of these organizations also express that the benefits of social fraternities and sororities extend past their college years. Some of the advantages reported were leadership skills, interpersonal skills, networking, and long-term friendships (Case, et al., 2005).

Additionally, many LGB students hold leadership positions within their chapters and around campus. In the Case, et al. (2005) survey, they found that 84% of non-heterosexual male fraternity members and 65% of non-heterosexual female sorority members held executive positions within their chapter. Though, the reasoning behind the desire for these positions differs with each member. For Chris Zacharda, it was a relief not having to think about his sexuality for the time being:

I was elected president of the fraternity. Yes, it did happen – a closeted gay fraternity president. The fraternity kept me so busy that year I did not have time to grapple with my sexuality. Instead, my entire focus was on SAE [Sigma Alpha Epsilon], and I flourished as a leader (Zacharda, 2005, p. 134).

Many LGB members also report positive experiences of friendship and belonging in social fraternities and sororities while closeted:

The respondents involved in non-heterosexual student organizations often reported alienation and isolation within those groups, while those who were members of Greek-letter fraternities found camaraderie and friendship within
those organizations (albeit while not publicly acknowledging their sexuality) (Dilley, 2002, pp. 204-205).

Though many members of social fraternities and sororities feel the need to keep their sexuality hidden, not all feel the same way. Additionally, the ones who do choose to come out, regularly receive positive responses. “The majority of those who ‘came out’ received accepting responses from their fellow members” (Case, et al., 2005, p. 23). This sentiment was echoed through many personal accounts: “Many of my brothers were incredibly positive and showed their support in every facet of my life” (Scaggs, 2005, pp. 31-32). And though not every member of the organization will agree with being a gender or sexual minority that often does not deter from the concept of brotherhood or sisterhood. “While not everyone ‘understood,’ they did accept me as a brother. This acceptance gave me the strength to form a campus support group for closeted gay fraternity and sorority members” (Ducoing, 2005, pp. 45-46).

**Title IX**

Though transgender students are facing difficult times at colleges and universities, Title IX is beginning to help pave the way for inclusivity in public institutions.

Some students find that they have unique challenges because of how they are perceived and treated as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Such challenges can prevent gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students from achieving their full academic potential or participating fully in the campus community (Rankin, 2003, p. 2).

Title IX is a law that prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational establishment receiving federal funding. The Education Amendments of 1972 were
created to give women the same rights as their male counterparts, but now Title IX is being interpreted to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity, which helps keep transgender students safe.

Title IX specifically states “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Justia, n.d., para. 2). Though most court cases that refer to Title IX assist with fair treatment for women, Title IX also benefits men.

Additionally, while Title IX is most often used to ensure fairness within athletics, there are many more areas of public institutions where Title IX is applicable: academic programs, recruitment, admissions, financial aid and scholarships, employment, health and insurance benefits (including counseling), marital and parental status, and housing (The Myra Sadker Foundation, n.d., para. 1).

Title IX is important in a time where transgender people in general are facing major discrimination. In a 2013 survey, 35% of transgender respondents indicated that they had been harassed or discriminated against at their institution of higher education (Grant et. al., 2011). And, despite reported harassment, respondents held multiple degrees: 27% held a college degree of some sort, and 20% had received a Master’s degree (Grant et. al., 2011).

Another important side of Title IX is that though it bans single-sex organizations, fraternities and sororities are exempt because of their non-profit status. “Fraternities have the right to exclude members of the opposite sex as long as the fraternities preserve their status as private organizations” (Harmon, 1985, p. 1). This does not give social
fraternities and sororities the right to discriminate based on gender identity, though. In fact, though these groups remain single-sex, discrimination of a transgender student based solely on their gender identity is still illegal. Inter/National organizations have believed – incorrectly – that by admitting transgender members, they were violating Title IX, “Unfortunately, many organizations have interpreted Title IX’s protection as a requirement that they remain single-sex and that they take a strong stance against inclusion of anyone who may potentially violate their single-sex status, especially transgender members” (Arrowsmith & Tran, 2013, p. 1). Therefore, organizations have been reluctant to adopt policies that are inclusive of members identifying as transgender.

As stated previously, there are only a handful of social fraternities and sororities that have made public statements on transgender inclusivity. Most have stayed quiet on the subject, but one has a policy in place that encourages discrimination of transgender members. Sigma Pi, a fraternity belonging to the North-American Interfraternity Conference, states that “an individual is eligible for membership only if he is both legally and physically a male at the time of pledging and initiation” (Sigma Pi, n.d., para. 15). A positive of this statement, though, is that because it says the member must be male at the time of pledging and initiation, theoretically, the organization will not discriminate if a member decides to transition after having been fully initiated.

Unfortunately, Title IX only protects transgender students in social fraternities and sororities when they are on a college campus. When a member graduates or leaves a university, they are no longer covered under Title IX, and can therefore be susceptible to losing their membership rights. Social fraternities and sororities should clarify that their
alumni members identifying as transgender will not lose their membership privileges (Tran, 2013).

The most recent organization to come forward was Alpha Chi Omega women’s fraternity, who released an inclusive statement in February of 2017 via video featuring their national president, who stated “Alpha Chi [Omega] must be inclusive of all women who live and identify as women, regardless of their gender assigned at birth” [Alpha Chi Omega, 2017]. Though the change is slow, the number of social fraternities and sororities belonging to the NIC and NPC that have incorporated inclusive policies on transgender members continues to increase. Fortunately, the Association of Fraternity and Sorority Advisors encourages organizations to be inclusive of transgender members: “decisions about membership should be based on a member’s character, values, and ability to form familial bonds with other members” (Arrowsmith & Tran, 2013, p. 4).

On May 13, 2016, the United States Department of Justice and the Department of Education released a statement together defining the rights of transgender students in public education institutions and the responsibilities of those institutions. In this statement, it explicitly says that “a school agrees that it will not exclude, separate, deny benefits to, or otherwise treat differently on the basis of sex any person in its educational programs or activities unless expressly authorized to do so under Title IX or its implementing regulations” (U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 2). This movement from the Department of Justice and Department of Education is in response to discriminatory bills coming from state legislature, including North Carolina’s House Bill 2 (HB2) which provides no legal protection for transgender individuals. “Transgender people who have not taken surgical and legal
steps to change the gender noted on their birth certificates have no legal right under state law to use public restrooms of the gender with which they identify” (Gordon, Price, & Peralta, 2016, para. 5).

The statement also includes information on specific categories like names and pronouns, restrooms, and housing. It is stated that institutions cannot require transgender students to disclose information that is not required of other students. There is also a section dedicated to social fraternities and sororities, which does say that while Title IX does not directly apply to those organizations because of their non-profit status, they are “permitted under Title IX to set their own policies regarding the sex, including gender identity, of their members. Nothing in Title IX prohibits a fraternity from admitting transgender men or a sorority from admitting transgender women if it so chooses” (U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 4).

The one downside to this joint statement is that it generally talks about gender in terms of the typical binary roles of male and female. “A school must not treat a transgender student different from the way it treats other students of the same gender identity” (U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 2).

What does this treatment look like if a student identifies as non-binary transgender? While this is a huge step forward in equality for transgender people, some schools will still be unsure of proper and equitable treatment of those individuals. It is important for these institutions to be intentional about creating policies and procedures that ensure that every individual, no matter their gender identity, is treated equitably.
The student development theory used in this study will be Marcia Baxter Magolda’s Theory of Self-Authorship (2001). College is a time in one’s life where they often develop opinions of their own and begin to break away from following the views of others. College students begin to view the world through their own eyes and rely on their individual experiences to formulate their opinions.

**Following External Formulas.** Phase 1 of Baxter Magolda’s (2001) theory is Following Formulas. In this phase, a cisgender student views transgender students the way their parents, other authority figures, or their friends do. For example, if a cisgender student’s parents do not agree with being transgender, the cisgender student will also not agree, but will make it seem like it is their own idea. “(Students) who carry transitional knowing assumptions into their earlier twenties follow ‘formulas’ they obtain from external sources to make their own way in the world” (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 71). In this study, students could be in this phase if they do not have any original ideas of how they feel about transgender students, and instead follow what others believe. Students in this phase are likely to be conflicted if the ideas of their parents, other authority figures, or friends do not match.

**Crossroads.** Phase 2 of Self-Authorship is titled Crossroads (Baxter Magolda, 2001). In this phase, a cisgender student would begin to realize that there is a benefit to deciding for themselves how they feel about the transgender community. Unfortunately, students in this phase often do not voice their real opinions for fear of being ostracized. For example, if a cisgender student meets someone who is transgender or an advocate for transgender rights, they may begin to rethink their stance on the subject. “The realization
that external sources of belief and definition are insufficient for happiness bring acute awareness that internal sources of belief and definition are necessary” (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 93). In this study, the students surveyed could be in this position if they have begun to reevaluate their position but have not yet made it public knowledge that they are rethinking their views. Students in this phase are likely to remain quiet on their true opinions.

**Becoming the Author of One’s Life.** Phase 3 of Baxter Magolda’s (2001) theory is Becoming the Author of One’s Life. In this phase, a cisgender student does not hold back on their views of the transgender community. They have made the decision to do what is right for them and will stand up for what they believe. For example, if a cisgender student hears someone saying hateful things about the transgender community, they would not be afraid to step in and correct them. “Intense self-reflection and interaction with others help (students) gain perspective on themselves and begin to choose their own values and identity” (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 120). In this study, the students surveyed could be in this position if they have personally encountered someone using inappropriate language toward transgender people, but they have vocalized to that person that such language is not tolerable. Students in this phase are likely to consider themselves allies for the transgender community.

**Internal Foundation.** Phase 4 of this theory is titled Internal Foundation (Baxter Magolda, 2001). In this phase, a cisgender student is content with their views of the transgender community. They are open to discussing their opinions with others who do not feel the same, but are confident in what they believe in. For example, if a cisgender student hears someone making derogatory remarks about the transgender community,
they are more likely to want to find out why the individual believes what they do and have a respectful conversation regarding the subject. “Becoming comfortable with the internal voice yields a security to explore others’ perspectives” (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 155). In this study, the students surveyed could be in this position if they are open to having conversations about the transgender community with others who may not completely understand or believe in the same things. Students in this phase are likely to be advocates for the transgender community, and be actively working toward equal rights for all.

It is very possible that throughout this study, the fraternity and sorority members surveyed will fall into all four phases of Baxter Magolda’s Theory of Self-Authorship (2001). This theory can apply to many facets of one’s life, and many students become the author of their own lives throughout their time in college. The beauty of higher education is that it exposes young adults to new ideas and people, which is a great way for them to write their own story and progress through the stages of self-authorship.

Summary

There is still much work to be done to make sure transgender students enrolled in institutions of higher education feel safe and comfortable at their institutions. There is ample research on the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community in higher education, and research on the transgender community is beginning to be more popular as the need to accommodate for these students arises. On the other hand, there is sufficient research on the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community in social fraternities and sororities, but the research on the transgender community in social fraternities and sororities is seriously lacking.
Chapter II provided an overview of the literature available for the lesbian, gay, and bisexual experience in fraternities and sororities and information about Title IX in regards to transgender students. Additionally, Chapter II also included a summary of issues facing the transgender population in higher education and what can be done by colleges and universities to increase acceptance and make their experience safer and more welcoming.

Though there are many resources available to higher education institutions on how to create safe spaces for their transgender students, still many colleges and universities are behind in their implementation of such policies and procedures. This is a battle that will continue for years, and the transgender community and their allies will continue to advocate for a better community for all.

Chapter III will be comprised of information on the proposed methods of this study and will also include an overview of the research site, information about data, and how the study will be designed.
CHAPTER III

Method

This chapter will include the methods behind the research study, including information about the design, participants, research site, and data collection materials for analyzing the perceptions of transgender members by members of social fraternities and sororities.

Design of the Study

This study utilized qualitative data that was used to determine the perceptions of transgender students in social fraternities and sororities. Interviews were conducted with five active social fraternity or sorority members from the North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) or the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC). Interview questions consisted of demographic questions, questions surrounding personal interaction and knowledge of the transgender community, and information regarding organization-specific views and inclusive or non-inclusive practices. Interview protocol is located in Appendix A.

Participants/Sample

Participants for this study were current members of social fraternities and sororities, and the sampling was purposive. Participants were chosen intentionally from both social fraternities and sororities that currently have gender-inclusive policies, as well as those that do not.

The sample consisted of five social fraternity or sorority members, with three that belong to stated gender-inclusive organizations and two that belong to organizations that do not have stated policies on gender inclusion.
Although every attempt was made to have six participants, which was the original intention of the study, the primary researcher experienced difficulties in finding a willing sixth participant. The sixth participant ideally would have been from the only organization with an exclusive statement, and although multiple active members were contacted with an interview request, none of them replied to any requests.

**Participant 1 (Elizabeth):** Elizabeth was a 19-year-old sorority member in her third semester of membership and belongs to an organization that does not have an inclusive statement. Elizabeth was in Phase 2 of Baxter Magolda’s Theory of Self-Authorship (2001).

**Participant 2 (Connor):** Connor was a 22-year-old fraternity member in his eighth semester of membership and is affiliated with an organization that has an inclusive statement. Connor was in Phase 2 of Baxter Magolda’s (2001) theory.

**Participant 3 (Dakota):** Dakota was a 20-year-old fraternity member in his sixth semester of membership and belongs to an organization that does not have an inclusive statement. Dakota was in Phase 4 of Baxter Magolda’s (2001) theory.

**Participant 4 (Thomas):** Thomas was a 19-year-old fraternity member in his third semester of membership and is affiliated with an organization that has an inclusive statement. Thomas was in Phase 2 of Baxter Magolda’s (2001) theory.

**Participant 5 (Elaine):** Elaine was a 19-year-old sorority member in her third semester of membership and belongs to an organization that has an inclusive statement. Elaine was in Phase 1 of Baxter Magolda’s Theory of Self-Authorship (2001).
Research Site

The research site was a mid-sized, public institution of higher education located in the rural Midwest. The institution has a student population of just below 8,000 and provides 49 undergraduate programs, 29 graduate programs, and nine post-baccalaureate certificate programs.

At the research site, there are a total of 26 social fraternities and sororities, including those that belong to the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) and the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO). There are 10 social fraternities belonging to the North-American Interfraternity Conference, and nine social sororities belonging to the National Panhellenic Conference. As of the Fall 2016 semester, approximately 1000 students were active members of social fraternities or sororities.

Instrument

The instrument used to collect data was a survey of open ended questions in order to prompt the participants to formulate answers in their own words. The interview protocol is located in Appendix A. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher, then reviewed multiple times to discover recurring themes.

Data Collection

The researcher sought out members of social fraternities and sororities through campus connections. Both students affiliated with organizations having gender-inclusive statements and those affiliated with organizations that do not were interviewed. All interviews were conducted in person so that follow-up questions may be asked if necessary and lasted approximately 60 minutes.
Interviews were conducted at the conclusion of the fall recruitment period, so that the activities of this time period were still be fresh in participants’ memories.

The interview protocol is located in Appendix A.

**Treatment of Data**

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. All responses and transcribed data will be stored on the researcher’s personal password-protected laptop and destroyed after three years per the institution’s IRB policy.

All participants’ names and social fraternity and sorority affiliations were replaced with pseudonyms in order to maintain anonymity. Participants were given the option to choose their own pseudonym, or were assigned one by the researcher if they chose not to designate one for themselves.

**Role of the Researcher**

As a researcher invested in this project, it is important to disclose certain aspects of my identity that may potentially impact this study. In order to be transparent with the motivations behind this study, I revealed the following characteristics to the participants of the study.

My interest in the LGB community began during my undergraduate career, but my awareness of and interest in the transgender community has developed further within the last few years. It became even more fascinating to me when the NPC organization I am a member of created a gender-inclusive policy. I am a white, middle-class, heterosexual, cisgender female, and a proud sorority woman, who is very interested in many aspects of social fraternities and sororities.
When conducting this study, I was conscious of my bias toward the acceptance of transgender students in social fraternities and sororities, and did not make assumptions of any information stated by the participants. In order to remain impartial, I was intentional about asking for clarification or asking follow-up questions when an answer could be interpreted as vague or unclear.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using qualitative coding methods in order to determine common themes. According to Saldaña (2013), qualitative coding is a process in which a characteristic is assigned to a section of transcribed or written data. Each of the five interviews from this study were transcribed and then coded to find recurring trends which were related back to the original research questions guiding this study. The researcher then used a process called pattern coding for all interviews, which organizes the coded data into similar topics and phrases (Saldaña, 2013). In this study, common themes found were organized by research question. A member of the researcher’s thesis committee also reviewed the transcripts to verify the themes developed from the interviews.

Summary

Chapter III included information on the methodology and design of the research. This study took a qualitative approach to determining the perceptions of transgender members within social fraternities and sororities at a mid-sized, Midwestern institution. The instrument used was a series of open-ended questions written by the researcher and included in Appendix A. By conducting this research, the data can be used to assess the educational needs of the social fraternity and sorority population. Chapter IV will reveal the results of the study.
CHAPTER IV

Results

This chapter will present the results of the study. The research was intended to discover the perceptions of transgender students within social fraternities and sororities by cisgender members of those organizations. Three fraternity men and two sorority women were interviewed by the primary researcher. Interviews were transcribed, then coded to discover common themes. In this chapter, themes are categorized by research question.

Research Question #1: What are the perceptions of transgender students belonging to social fraternities and sororities?

The first research question was intended to discover the overall perceptions of transgender students who wish to join or are already a member of a social fraternity or sorority by cisgender students. Throughout the interviews, multiple questions were asked to determine what cisgender students belonging to these organizations thought of being inclusive of their transgender peers, both in their own organization, and the fraternity and sorority community as a whole. Towards the end of the interview, a question about the future of transgender membership in social fraternities and sororities was also posed to participants. The themes that emerged in the first research question were lack of conversation, situational change, and future of transgender membership.

Lack of Conversations

The most prevalent theme that emerged in this research question was that there is a lack of conversations surrounding the topic of transgender students. It was found that none of the five individuals interviewed said that their chapters had spoken about
allowing transgender individuals to join their organizations. When asked about the subject, Connor said that his chapter had never broached the subject: “I think they’re okay with it. I don’t know. It’s never really been a topic of discussion.” Additionally, Elizabeth did not think it would be a topic of conversation for any of the social fraternities or sororities at the research site: “I think a lot of people don’t even think about it. It’s never come up in our chapter, so I don’t think it would come up in others.”

Multiple participants made reference to the fact that society is much more accepting and open to different social identities, but none have taken the initiative to bring it up to their chapter. Dakota said: “Overall I think it would be okay, it’s 2016, you know what I mean? We’re not living in 1950 anymore, so I think overall people would be very inclusive of it.” Most viewed their own chapter as very open, though they also recognized that there would be certain individuals that would not agree with having a transgender member in their organization. When Thomas was asked about the perceptions of his fraternity, he replied: “I don’t think it’s something that’s [been] brought up. I think we’re very unaware, I would say. But I definitely think…we’d be more open than probably the perception would be.”

On the other hand, Elaine stated:

I think [the women] would all have different views on it. So there would be people that would not like it, and be mean and make fun of the person, and there would be people that are really really caring and would be welcoming. But I think they’d be leaning more towards no.
Although Elaine felt that her sorority would most likely not be welcoming of a transgender individual, she also felt that her organization would be the most welcoming of all of the sororities on campus:

I think that out of all the chapters on campus, I think that my sorority specifically would be the most welcoming, which sounds weird just because I said we wouldn’t be so welcoming, but I think that my chapter’s probably one of the…most diverse chapters…on campus. We don’t intentionally try to welcome [transgender individuals] because we don’t talk about it, but I think that if a transgender [individual] was to go through recruitment and saw our house they would see how diverse we are and how many different personalities [we have]…so I think that [we] generally would be welcoming to them. Even though we weren’t necessarily trying to be welcoming.

While not every member will agree with a decision of a group, four of the five interviewed participants believed that the response of their chapter would be overall accepting of a transgender individual.

Situational Change

Although the majority of the students interviewed assumed that their chapter members would be inclusive of a transgender individual, they also admitted that they had not yet had any conversations regarding the situation. Thomas said:

Since we’ve never had that situation, I mean, I can’t have anything to talk off of, but I think definitely it wouldn’t be an issue. I think it would be something to be brought up and then we’d just go in stride with it. I don’t think we’d…push anyone away or anything, I think we’d have open arms in that.
Because there are no out transgender social fraternity or sorority members at the research site, there is no way to know exactly how the chapters would react if faced with the situation. Most participants spoke about the fact that they had not been confronted with this type of situation before. Dakota stated:

At first, [the chapter] would be a little caught off guard with it, just because, like I said, it’s not the norm. We live in a heteronormative society…so anything that catches somebody off guard, they’re going to be a little like, ‘wait…’

Multiple participants also stated that they would need to discuss the situation with their chapter as a whole before making a final decision, and some also mentioned speaking with their inter/national headquarters or chapter advisor on how they should best proceed with the situation. Elaine said:

I think that we would discuss it in chapter…beforehand and see how we would handle it, and then we would probably talk to nationals and see how our [organization] nationally would handle that.

The overall feeling was that while they have no specific point of reference on the subject, most members felt that their chapter would be inclusive. Since the participants and chapters in this study have yet to have a transgender student seek membership in a social fraternity or sorority at the research site, their feelings and perceptions may change if they were actually faced with this situation.

**Future of Transgender Membership**

When prompted about the future of transgender membership within social fraternities and sororities, many of the participants paused at first, but then expressed that
it could have a positive effect on the community. Connor related inclusivity of transgender members to his chapter being increasingly more inclusive of the historically typical straight, White male:

The future? I don’t know. I can only imagine it will grow. Because, for example, I’ve noticed looking through all of our composites, we’ve rarely had any Black guys and then [after] 2010 and on, I’ve noticed it’s been progressively including more in, which isn’t a problem, so I think it will be just like that for transgender [individuals].

One subject, Elaine, did not believe there was a future at all for transgender individuals: “I don’t really see a future.” When prompted to expand on her reasoning, she came to identifying the need for education within her chapter and the fraternity and sorority community in general:

I just don’t think that a transgender person will ever get the courage to go through recruitment, so it will never be discussed. Unless I go back to my chapter…which I might, I might go back to my chapter and discuss this now. But other than that, when else would this issue ever really come about, you know? If we don’t know that…a transgender person is ever going to go through recruitment, what’s the need to talk about it? And then if we don’t talk about it…we have nothing to encourage the transgender [individual] to go through recruitment, you know what I mean?...We kind of got ourselves in like a little area where we can’t really move.

Though Elaine is not sure if she or her chapter would ever use any training she received on transgender individuals and how to be inclusive of them within the social fraternity
and sorority community, she recognizes that she does not know how to be inclusive of transgender members without having some sort of education. All four of the other participants believed membership of transgender individuals would only continue to grow and make a positive impact on the community.

**Research Question #2: How do cisgender students that belong to social fraternities and sororities recruit and welcome transgender students into their organization?**

Through multiple interview questions, the subject of recruitment of transgender students into social fraternities and sororities was presented. Additionally, other questions were posed about how to continue to make a member feel welcome within the chapter if they decided to transition after initiation. The biggest theme in this research question was that there really is no common theme. Most likely, this is because of the lack of conversation surrounding the subject within organizations in general. Though, there were a few, more generalized, themes that emerged. The themes that emerged in the second research question were lack of training and conversation, equal treatment, previous knowledge, and decision to transition after initiation.

**Lack of Training and Conversations**

Similar to the theme in the first research question, the common sentiment surrounding the recruitment and welcoming of transgender students was that it has never been talked about in any organization represented by the participants. Additionally, training has not been provided to members of these organizations on how to appropriately and successfully recruit and welcome transgender students. Although there has not been any formal training provided, all participants felt that their members created a welcoming
environment in general for anyone to join. Thomas took pride in the fact that his fraternity is welcoming to all individuals:

I mean, I think we create a welcoming environment for anyone…we welcome anyone to come through…we’re trying to talk to anyone, you know…We try to strive to have a very open [organization]…we don’t have one set kind of person. We want balanced people, we want all kinds of backgrounds to join, so…I think we’re welcoming to anyone.

Connor’s statements echoed Thomas’, stating: “I think as [far as] being friend and open, willing to talk, and stuff like that, I think they’d be down for that.”

**Equal Treatment**

Another theme that transpired was that though the situation has never occurred at the research site, all of the participants believed their members would treat a transgender individual wishing to join their organization with the same respect as any other potential new member, even if individual members did not necessarily agree with welcoming a transgender member into their organization. Elaine said: “And if we didn’t…like somebody or even if you weren’t okay with a certain [person] internally, if you just did actually discriminate against somebody, during sorority recruitment, you don’t show that, regardless.” Connor stated: “[We have] nice guys in the house. They’re willing to give people a shot, no matter what they are, or choose to be.” Thomas believed his organization would react the same way:

I think we’d honestly probably approach it…almost – probably the exact same way as any person. I think – and I mean, obviously, you’d have more to talk about, but I don’t think it would be…made into that big of a deal. I think we
would just discuss what we like about them, what we don’t like, and I don’t think it would be made into such a big issue, after the initial announcement of that.

**Previous Knowledge**

Multiple participants mentioned that they believed it would be helpful to know beforehand if a potential new member identified as transgender. The reasoning behind these statements was so they could educate the rest of their chapter prior to meeting the individual and also to inform members so as not to create an uncomfortable situation for anyone. It appeared that the purpose for the knowledge genuinely came from a need for information and education and not for any discriminatory or negative purposes.

Elizabeth said:

Maybe it should be like, if you’re going through recruitment, it should be…like a question on a questionnaire, that way we’re aware of it before they step into our house. That way we could educate our chapter about it before just…during recruitment it comes out and you’re like…you don’t know what to say because you’ve never been around it.

Thomas replied similarly:

I think we would be open, as long as we talked about it, as a group, together. I think it would be something we’d have to talk about at chapter, and just get information, so everyone’s aware. I think that if we kind of didn’t have that, and people weren’t aware of the situation…or just, didn’t discuss it in a group, I think people would be ignorant, or not have all the information, just not know how to react.
In order for chapters and their members to know that a potential new member identifies as transgender, the individual would need to out themselves, which does not create a safe environment.

**Decision to Transition after Initiation**

Multiple questions were asked of the participants on how their chapter would respond to a member who wished to transition after they had already been initiated. It was clear that none of these individuals had ever given this possibility a thought, as many were confused as to how to answer. For example, Dakota wondered:

> I’m trying to think. Because they’re transitioning to female, so would they still be allowed to be in a fraternity? I don’t know. I don’t think…I’ve never heard of something like that before, I’m trying to think. I don’t know. Because that would be like if you had a member of a sorority that would transition to be a man.

Most participants believed that their organization would be inclusive of a brother or sister who decided to transition, such as Connor, who stated: “I think they’d be all for it. I can’t see anyone having a problem, because we all know each other, we’re all friends now. I mean, it’s his choice to do so. I don’t see why not.”

Although, not every participant felt the same way. Elaine said that she thought her sorority would eventually exclude a transitioning individual:

> They probably wouldn’t talk to them as much. They would probably avoid it, or they would ask a lot of questions, and asking like, ‘why this happened, when this happened, when did they figure out this is what they wanted to do’…that kind of thing. From that point on, however that person answered
the questions...based off of...would we act like they were not part of the chapter anymore? So, I think that most people would just stray away from really interacting with them, especially in public.

The majority of participants believed their organizations would do all they could to support their fellow member through the transition, even though their chapters and members have not experienced a situation where a current member wished to transition. Participants also believed that it would be important to take the individual’s needs into consideration on how to make them feel at home in the organization. For instance, Thomas said: “We want to make sure they’re as comfortable as they have always been.”

**Research Question #3: What types of support, programming, educational, and/or training resources on transgender inclusivity are provided to social fraternities and sororities by their national headquarters?**

Multiple questions were asked to determine the level of programming, support, and educational materials provided by not only the inter/national organization, but also the participants’ local chapters and the campus’ fraternity and sorority programs office. Participants were also asked about how chapter, campus, inter/national leadership could be more inclusive of transgender individuals. Through these questions, the theme of lack of knowledge, education, and support continued, along with inter/national policies, and steps to education and inclusion.

**Lack of Inter/National and Campus Programming and Support**

The primary response to questions about support, programming, and educational materials provided by the inter/national organizations was that there is none at all. Elizabeth recognized that her answer on this subject was not ideal, saying “Nothing. That
sounds awful...we always talk about accepting every woman for who she is...but there’s nothing on transgender [individuals].”

In addition to the inter/national organizations failing to provide any sort of programming or educational materials for their members, participants did not know of anything provided by their campus’ fraternity and sorority programs office. Dakota said he believed that this problem should be corrected:

I honestly don’t think I’ve ever heard of anything of them trying to offer any sort of educational. Everything’s always about alcohol and drug abuse, and then sexual assault awareness and then...that’s really it. I really don’t think I’ve ever heard of an educational about LGBT rights or anything about transgender individuals. So I think we should work on that.

On the same note, all of the participants also said that their local chapters have never provided any educational programming on transgender individuals. Elaine stated: “We do nothing to educate the chapter.”

There is not any support, programming, or educational materials provided to chapter member provided by any entity associated with chapters, either at the local level or the inter/national level, even by the organizations who have issued statements claiming that their organization is inclusive of transgender individuals. Many of the participants identified the need for programming and support from their own chapters, inter/national headquarters, and the campus’ fraternity and sorority programs office.

**Inter/National Policies**

Continuing with the same theme, none of the participants were clear of the stance on transgender membership from their own inter/national headquarters, whether their
organization had an inclusive statement or not. Though unaware of his own
organization’s policies, Dakota had heard about something about another organization:

I don’t know. Honestly, I’m not sure. I don’t think we’ve done anything. I
haven’t seen anything about it. The only fraternity I’ve seen I think do stuff
with transgender members is Sigma Phi Epsilon.

It is very positive, though, that this organization’s policy is known by members of other
fraternities. Connor thought his fraternity might have a policy, but his local chapter has
not taken the initiative to look into it further: “I couldn’t tell you. I mean, I’m sure they
have something out there. I’ve never looked into it. Neither has my chapter, so I
couldn’t tell you.”

**Steps to Education and Inclusion**

The most prevalent response to questions on how to be more inclusive of
transgender members was general education. Because there is no education being
provided from any entity, at the campus or inter/national level, many individuals
indicated a need for it. Connor felt that if his national organization began being inclusive,
it might start a positive movement: “I think…nationals could at least give more things
educating the chapters about it. And then the chapters from there on could spread the
word to their colleges and communities.” On a related note, Elizabeth felt that the
fraternity and sorority programs office on campus could help the community by
educating their students in a positive manner:

[Subjects are only brought up] if it’s an issue, it’s never a positive thing. It’s
always a negative…it would be cool if they put something about the
transgender community, that way…[it can be] positive…being prepared and
knowing the educational part about it, because I feel like that has a lot to do with everything.

Multiple participants, including Dakota, also pointed to social media as a form of outreach to current members and potential new members:

I would make a media message about it, like a blog about it, saying…‘hey, we’re inclusive of anyone, if you want to join this organization you’re more than welcome to.’ It’s a social organization, it’s not a private club. I mean, we’re not some secretive little thing that only allows this [specific] person.”

Multiple students also recognized that if education and inclusion starts with their inter/national organizations, local chapters might begin to be more accepting of transgender individuals. For example, Elizabeth suggested:

I feel like it would have to start at headquarters, or if a chapter brings in a sister who’s…transgender. But I feel like it should start at headquarters because…it would open their eyes, and hopefully if [my organization] made the movement, then [other organizations] would.

The participants identified multiple avenues for local chapters, campus fraternity and sorority programs offices, and inter/national headquarters to begin being more inclusive and accepting of transgender members. In addition, they believed that it was important to inform their current members and potential new members that the fraternity and sorority community and specific organizations are inclusive of everyone.

Research Question #4: What are the nature of conversations surrounding transgender membership and inclusivity being had within individual chapters of social fraternities and sororities and the councils they belong to?
This research question intended to determine what members of social fraternities and sororities have been speaking about within their organizations regarding transgender individuals in general and subsequently, the inclusion of these individuals within their own chapters and inter/national organizations. Some of the same themes that emerged in previous research questions surfaced here as well, such as lack of conversations, in addition to dependence on other members, limited reference points, and language.

*Lack of Conversations*

Similar to previous research questions, the theme of lack of conversations surrounding the subject of transgender inclusivity in organizations appeared. Connor said: “Overall, no one really talks about it.” Additionally, Thomas admitted that he felt that more conversations would be beneficial:

> I mean, it’s just something that’s never really talked about…so I think we just need to make people more aware, and just have it be something that’s actually on our minds…we’d have to have discussions and that, but if…we had these conversations now, then when the person wanted to join, it would be so much more – a smoother process.

Both of the sorority women also said that their organizations had not even spoken about the inclusion of lesbian and bisexual women in their chapters. Elizabeth stated: “We’ve never discussed it. I’m sure everyone would be open-minded about it, but I’m sure there’s some girls that would question it.” Contrastingly, both Dakota and Connor said that their organizations already include gay members in their chapters. Connor said:

> I think we’re fully accepting. We actually have a gay guy in our house right now…I know there’s gay guys in other houses too. I don’t see anyone that
has a problem with it, and I think that if people did have a problem with it, it
would get a lot of negative feedback towards their organization.

**Dependence on Other Members**

Both sorority women interviewed spoke about referring to other chapter members
for various reasons. For some, including Elizabeth, the dependence was positive: “Our
president [is very involved on campus], so I feel like she might make it a bigger thing on
campus, just not…a thing [in our sorority] to raise awareness for it.”

For others, the dependence on other chapter members contributed to them
participating in group think, or being placed into Phase 1 of Baxter Magolda’s (2001)
Self Authorship Theory, Following External Formulas, as they looked to other members
to help them determine their own opinions on whether or not they were willing to
welcome a transgender individual into their organization. Elaine said:

> I mean, I think I would pretty much kind of stay back and not really say
> anything and see what the majority of the girls in my sorority would say and
> kind of go off of that. But I would probably not have a hard, solid answer to
> whether or not she should be in or not.

None of the three fraternity men interviewed indicated that they would refer to
their chapter members to help form their own opinions.

**Limited Reference Points**

Many participants only had one reference point when speaking about transgender
individuals: Caitlyn Jenner. It is important to note that while Caitlyn Jenner has brought
transgender issues into the spotlight, she is not representative of the entire transgender
community. Three participants spoke about Caitlyn Jenner, and all of them were positive. Dakota said:

I remember when Caitlyn Jenner did her transition, people were kind of confused by it, because people don’t understand. But that’s the first time that society’s ever seen anyone in such a huge light go through a transition process. I think stuff like that has shined more of a light onto the transgender community, so I think [the public] is more open about it.

Similarly, Elizabeth said her sorority viewed Caitlyn as extremely strong for going through the process:

Nobody bashed Caitlyn, they were just like, ‘could you imagine having…’ because it was the part of the season where Caitlyn was meeting with the transgender women and…we were just like ‘that’s got to be inspiring to have that, to go and run after what you want to do’ because I don’t think I could do that.

Additionally, the only participant who made reference to actually personally knowing transgender individuals was Elaine, who had also said that she felt her sorority would not be welcoming to a transgender member.

Language

When the topic of inappropriate language was presented, many individuals needed clarification on the term “transphobic language”. Most individuals said that they have ever heard anything derogatory against transgender individuals. Dakota said: “I’ve never heard anyone say anything crazy like that.” On the other hand, Connor felt that his brothers might not be so respectful: “There’s some people, I guess, who would make
jokes about it. Some people would probably really just say nothing about it, and maybe very few would be upset about it.”

Most participants felt that if anything, there was more homophobic language being used within their chapters. For example, Connor said: “You see something on TV, people will be like, ‘that’s gay as hell.’ Stuff like that.” Dakota responded similarly: Sometimes people will say shit like, ‘oh, that’s so gay’...But I know some organizations on campus, they’re super shitty. I just see in my friend’s Snapchats, she’s in a sorority here…and she hangs out with another one of the [fraternities]...But she had a Snapchat video in her story of their composite and...the caption was ‘fag city’ – and she was just going over all the people. And it’s just like, there’s certain organizations on this campus that aren’t so inclusive, they’re just really shitty people. So if you’re a transgender individual and you’re looking to go join a fraternity or sorority, definitely pay attention to the people who you’re surrounded with. Because my organization, we’re very...like I said, inclusive people, we love everybody. We give each other shit, but it’s all out of brotherly love, you know what I mean? And nobody ever crosses the line, and if you cross that line, you’re getting called out. But some organizations on this campus, and I’m sure other campuses, I would never...I wouldn’t even want to be part of that organization...[some organizations] say, ‘man, that’s so gay’ ‘you’re such a fag’ so [potential new members] would have to be aware of people in the organization for sure.

Thomas also identified the fact that some individuals can be ignorant about the subject:
I definitely do say...I mean, I definitely say we probably do...there’s people who have...they’re unaware of how they affect people, so they do say things that would be offensive if we had someone in there. But I mean, I think that’s the case with a lot of things, whether, you know, homophobic comment, or a racial thing, I think it kind of falls in that same thing. I feel like there’s a lot of people that are unaware that that can affect people.

When asked about how transphobic comments would be addressed by chapter members, all participants felt that their brothers or sisters would address the individual making the inappropriate comments. Elaine said: “I think that if someone were to say ‘tranny’, people would look at...we would make a weird look, because that word makes me uncomfortable.” Thomas stressed the importance of representing his organization in a positive light: “There’s been times now when someone will make a racial comment or something, and it’s just like, ‘dude, come on’...your actions represent everyone.” Connor also noted the repercussions of inappropriate language: “There’s no jokes to be made. If you do make a joke, you’re kind of like an asshole.”

It remains to be seen if individuals are able to actually decipher between homophobic and transphobic language. Three of the five participants asked for clarification on the definition of transphobic language during their interviews. It is possible that participants could hear transphobic language in their chapter and consider it homophobic, especially if they have never heard the term transphobic before.

Summary

Chapter IV presented the results of the interviews with five social fraternity and sorority members on their chapter’s perceptions of transgender students and the
inclusivity of them in their organizations. Both fraternity men and sorority women were
interviewed, both from organizations with inclusive statements and those without. The
most common theme that emerged through interviews with participants was the lack of
conversations and training. Other themes that appeared most often were lack of
inter/national and campus programming and support, dependence on other members,
language, and equal treatment.

Chapter V will discuss the findings in further detail, provide recommendations for
student affairs professionals, as well as examine future research possibilities.
CHAPTER V
Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

This study was designed to examine the perceptions of transgender students in social fraternities and sororities by their cisgender peers at a mid-sized, Midwestern public higher education institution. This chapter will discuss the results of the research in relation to previous studies as well as provide recommendations for campus-level fraternity and sorority professionals, inter/national fraternity and sorority headquarters, fraternity and sorority local chapter leadership, and student affairs professionals in relation to providing education and support to chapters and students on how to effectively recruit and welcome transgender individuals into social fraternities and sororities. Additionally, this chapter will also provide recommendations for future research.

Significance of Findings

Below are the themes that emerged from the study and discussion on why the responses are significant. This section is organized by research question and themes found within the research questions.

Research Question #1: What are the perceptions of transgender students belonging to social fraternities and sororities?

Future of Transgender Members

At the end of their interviews, all participants were asked a question on what they believed to be the future of transgender membership within social fraternities and sororities. While one participant, Elaine, believed that there was no future for transgender membership, all other participants assumed the numbers would only increase, especially with more support and education from local, campus, and inter/national levels. Through
the course of this research, there have been instances of transgender individuals receiving bids from social fraternities and sororities, including those with and without inclusive policies. An example is Alpha Omicron Pi (AOII) sorority, who does not have an inclusive policy. This organization had over 40 members of their Tufts University chapter quit in response to lack of support from their international headquarters on being inclusive of a transgender individual wishing to join their chapter. A transgender woman participated in recruitment and felt at home with the organization, but headquarters staff wanted the chapter to wait on extending a bid to the woman to make sure the action would not violate their Title IX exemption. Kristin Reeves, former chapter president of the Tufts AOII chapter, and one of the women to quit the sorority said, “In not having the [inclusive] policy, the default is to not allow her to join. To me that action is transphobia…We refused to hold off. We decided to extend her a bid’” (Mckenzie, 2016, para. 7). This is important to note because the action of this AOII chapter wanting to extend this individual a bid aligns with the thoughts of four of the five participants in this research that their chapter members would be inclusive of a transgender individual and that the amount of support at both the inter/national organization level and campus level are lacking.

The thoughts of the participants on the future of transgender membership is especially significant given the fact that whether or not current members are educated on the inclusion of transgender individuals, the possibility of transgender individuals wishing to join a social fraternity or sorority will only continue to grow, as Connor predicted it would during his interview. While the membership numbers of transgender individuals grow, education and support must also grow with it. The majority of the
participants could be placed into Phase 3 of Baxter Magolda’s (2001) Theory of Self Authorship in this situation, as they have recognized the need for education surrounding the inclusion of transgender individuals, but have not yet reached the point of being advocates of this topic.

Despite...progress on conceptualizing more complex ways of knowing, they did not have the corollary progress on the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions to genuinely enact contextual knowing (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 72).

Multiple aspects of inclusion of transgender members must be taken into account, including equitable treatment, pronoun and name usage, and potential legal ramifications. It is better for inter/national organizations to be proactive about the situation so all sides are prepared when the situation does arise.

Research Question #2: How do cisgender students that belong to social fraternities and sororities recruit and welcome transgender students into their organization?

Previous Knowledge

Multiple participants acknowledged that if they had previous knowledge of a transgender individual participating in recruitment, their chapters would have time to educate their members on how to be welcoming to that individual. By letting chapters know ahead of time that a transgender individual wished to join a social fraternity or sorority, that individual would need to out themselves as transgender, which they would most likely not be comfortable doing. In a study by Rankin (2003), it was discovered that the amount of students who hide their true gender or sexual identity to avoid discrimination is close to 60 percent. Although there is no research on transgender
inclusivity in social fraternities and sororities, it can be somewhat compared to the LGB experience. Most LGB students report acceptance from their brothers or sisters when coming out (Case, Hesp, & Eberly, 2005). On the other hand, in Beemyn’s (2015) study, all but one of the 111 participants who identified as transgender indicated that they did not feel supported by their institution. The disconnect from colleges and universities may be why transgender students are exploring new support systems.

Fraternities have historically held hegemonic masculinity beliefs, which can be detrimental to females and non-heterosexual men (Rhoads, 1995; Yeung, Strombler, & Wharton, 2006). This could potentially prove to be harmful and dangerous to transgender individuals if they are not perceived as masculine enough for the members of the fraternity. It has also been found that some social fraternity members believe that having openly gay or bisexual members can create an unfavorable view of the organization and have an adverse effect on their recruitment capabilities (Hall & La France, 2007). Again, because there have been no prior studies on this subject it cannot be known with absolute certainty, but it is a possibility that fraternity members could also anticipate negative perceptions by the rest of the campus and social fraternity and sorority community if they were inclusive of a transgender individual.

**Research Question #3: What types of support, programming, educational, and/or training resources on transgender inclusivity are provided to social fraternities and sororities by their national headquarters?**

**Education and Support**

At some point in each of the five interviews, all participants indicated that they were not educated enough on transgender individuals or that they and their chapters could
use more educational materials and support. While there is no prior research in regards to transgender individuals within social fraternities and sororities, it is evident that this is an area of need in all organizations. All of the participants recognized that education and support was lacking in this area, therefore, it seems that current members of social fraternities and sororities are ready for a discussion of this topic. For instance, James said that education is the best place to start:

I mean, I would definitely say just talking about it in general. I definitely think…at first, you don’t have to make it this giant thing, but even if you just mention it here, or just bring it up, and then slowly make it a bigger…or integrate it more into the fraternity in general, I think…I think you can’t force something at the beginning, because then people are drawn back at first, but make a small step and then through time, make it…then it’s just normal, and people don’t even think about it.

Each participant, with the exception of Elaine, believed that their organization would be completely open to accepting a transgender individual, so it is practical to provide the members with training and support so that they will be ready to recruit and welcome a transgender individual when the time does come: “Knowledge of the alienated culture leads to transforming action resulting in a culture which is being freed from alienation” (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 181).

The education and support in terms of recruiting and welcoming transgender members is significant because all five of the participants believed that both education and support were missing from their chapters in multiple ways. All five recognized that
they received no educational materials or training, or support from local chapter leadership, campus fraternity and sorority life offices, and inter/national organizations.

*Inter/National Policies*

None of the five participants knew the policies of their inter/national organizations regarding the inclusion of transgender individuals. This is concerning, especially for the organizations that claim they are inclusive of any individual who identifies as the gender of their organization. One participant, Dakota, was unaware of his own organization’s policy, but did know that Sigma Phi Epsilon had recently initiated a transgender man.

The findings of the lack of knowledge of inter/national policies is significant because there is clearly a disconnect on what these inter/national organizations say, and what they ultimately do with those policies. One participant, Elizabeth, whose organization currently does not have an inclusive statement, believed it would be a positive step forward if her organization did create an inclusive policy. She stated she felt that if her organization was inclusive of transgender individuals, other organizations might follow suit.

**Research Question #4: What are the nature of conversations surrounding transgender membership and inclusivity being had within individual chapters of social fraternities and sororities and the councils they belong to?**

*Lack of Conversations*

Participants in this study discussed the fact that their campus fraternity and sorority life office and national organizations have not organized training sessions or provided educational materials for social fraternity and sorority members on the inclusion
of transgender students in their organizations. Additionally, both sorority women participants confessed that neither of their organizations had even had conversations about the inclusion of lesbian and bisexual students in their respective sororities. Members of social fraternities and sororities who do not identify as heterosexual may not discuss the topic of sexuality in order to continue the friendships found in their organization, as opposed to affiliating with an GSD-centered group, as Dilley (2002) found:

The respondents involved in non-heterosexual student organizations often reported alienation and isolation within those groups, while those who were members of Greek-letter fraternities found camaraderie and friendship within those organizations (albeit while not publicly acknowledging their sexuality) (pp. 204-205).

It is possible that because of the lack of conversations surrounding the LGB community within the sororities, any woman that identifies as LGB may not feel comfortable coming out to her sisters. In a study by Trump and Wallace, fraternity members who identified as LGB felt a strong need to hide their sexuality:

Participants felt the need to remain secretive about their personal lives for fear of rejection from the fraternity brothers. Had the brothers been perceived as more accepting, participants would have felt less stress trying to keep their personal lives concealed. Thus, the great issues were the perceptions of homophobic and heterosexism (2006, p. 17).
Though not every member who identifies as GSD would feel comfortable coming out, simple positive conversations would help the chapter be perceived as more open and accepting to GSD individuals.

**Recommendations for Chapter Leadership**

*Provide members with an inclusive space so that they can come out to other members if they wish.* It is important that chapter leadership acknowledge that current and future members of their organization will identify within the GSD community. It would be wise of chapter leadership to educate themselves and other chapter members on how to be inclusive of individuals identifying in this community so that others feel comfortable coming out to brothers or sisters. Chapter leaders should lead by example in fostering an inclusive community, by engaging in positive conversations, providing educational materials and opportunities for education outside of the chapter and on campus, and encouraging inclusion of individuals identifying in the GSD community within their chapters.

*Encourage chapter members to attend campus GSD group meetings, and invite campus GSD group members to come to chapter events.* In order to show current and future chapter members support of an GSD community identification, chapter members can attend meetings and events put on by campus GSD groups to educate themselves and be immersed in the culture. Additionally, it would be beneficial to invite GSD groups to chapter events to promote acceptance and collaboration.

*Mandate Safe Zone training for all members.* A great way to start educating the entire chapter is to mandate Safe Zone training for all members, current and incoming. While Safe Zone training is not the be-all and end-all for education on the GSD
community, it is at least a start. By mandating Safe Zone training, chapter leadership can show members that it is important to learn about this community. This training can be especially educational for chapters that have not discussed being inclusive of LGB students, or who do not have any out LGB students, like the sorority women in this study.

*Discuss inclusive policies with inter/national headquarters.* Speak with organizational headquarters about their policies on membership of transgender individuals, and how they are educating their members on how to recruit and welcome the transgender community. Hold inter/national headquarters accountable for their inclusivity practices by ensuring they are abiding by their published policies. If an organization does not have an inclusive policy, it is perfectly acceptable to question this with inter/national officials. Discuss with inter/national headquarters how their organizations can encourage their members to advocate for the inclusion of transgender members. Ask inter/national headquarters for training and education surrounding the subject, and refer them to research and other inter/national organizations that have pre-existing policies on transgender membership for guidance. Remind them that being inclusive of transgender individuals does not jeopardize their Title IX exemption for being a single-sex organization.

**Recommendations for Campus-Level Fraternity and Sorority Professionals**

*Provide an inclusive space for transgender individuals to speak with you about joining a social fraternity or sorority.* Campus-level fraternity and sorority professionals may be the first line of contact for transgender students contemplating joining a social fraternity or sorority. Be open to discussing this topic, and be honest about the social fraternity and sorority community. If you feel that a transgender student might not be
entering into a safe and accepting space when going through recruitment, have an honest conversation. If a transgender student decides that joining a social fraternity or sorority is what they wish to do, be sure to follow up with them throughout their process to make sure they are comfortable.

*Mandate Safe Zone training for all chapters.* Campus fraternity and sorority life offices can also mandate Safe Zone training for all chapters. An easy way to educate all members would be to hold sessions as a requirement before new members are initiated into their respective chapters. By promoting and mandating Safe Zone training, campus fraternity and sorority life offices can show both GSD and non-GSD students that the office values inclusion and acceptance.

*Encourage inter/national organizations to review inclusive policies.* Whether inter/national organizations have inclusive policies on transgender membership, encourage these organizations to continually review their practices. For organizations that do not have inclusive policies, ask them why they do not. For organizations that do, request the educational materials they provide to their members.

*Provide an inclusive space for cisgender chapter members to learn and ask questions about transgender individuals.* Cisgender chapter members will no doubt have questions about the transgender community and how to be inclusive of them within their organization. Allow them to ask questions without judgment, be encouraging and educational. Provide them with resources and other outlets to learn about the transgender community.

*Encourage chapters to rethink their definition of a “typical” social fraternity or sorority member.* Challenge social fraternity and sorority members to think outside of the
box in order to encourage them to strive to include the best individuals in their organizations, regardless of whether or not they fit the “typical” fraternity man or sorority woman mold. Promote values-based recruitment and challenge members to contemplate how potential new members would live out their organization’s values instead of forming opinions based on whether or not they fit the “typical” stereotype.

*Communicate regularly with chapter advisors.* Be upfront about your campus fraternity and sorority life office’s dedication to diversity and inclusion. Encourage chapter advisors to ask questions and attend Safe Zone sessions and campus GSD group meetings. Keep an open line of communication, listen to their concerns and ideas, and follow up regularly.

**Recommendations for Inter/National Fraternity and Sorority Headquarters**

*Revisit inclusive policies and practices.* In order to continually be providing the best educational materials and support for your members, it is important to continually review policies and practices of inter/national headquarters. For the organizations that do have inclusive policies, it would be in their best interest to reevaluate how they are promoting inclusiveness of transgender individuals into their organizations, as it has been clear in this study that the students at the research site belonging to these organizations do not even know that these policies even exist. For the organizations that do not have inclusive policies, speak with organizational leadership about what the silence on the subject says to your members and potential members contemplating joining your organization.

*Provide educational materials for chapter members.* Even though there are a few inter/national organizations that have inclusive policies, educational material and training
were not provided to the participants of this study. In order to help chapter members move towards understanding and acceptance, it would be beneficial to provide some sort of educational materials so that members can understand the policy and why it is important to recruit members from outside of the “typical” fraternity man or sorority woman. Require educational components every semester or so, to continually promote the importance of creating a diverse brotherhood or sisterhood.

Create an inclusive space for chapter leadership to discuss the recruitment and welcoming of transgender individuals. As an inter/national organization, there will undoubtedly be questioning on the policies that are in place. By being open to discussing the reasoning for those policies, chapter members can feel comfortable to ask questions. Approach these discussions with the intent to educate and inform, but listen to chapter members.

Provide support for both cisgender and transgender chapter members. This will be a change for both cisgender and transgender individuals associated with your organization, and both groups will need support from the inter/national organization. It is important to create a support system at the inter/national level for cisgender students to better understand the changing landscape and why it is important to be inclusive of transgender individuals. It is equally important to provide a support system for transgender individuals who may be the first to join a social fraternity or sorority at their institution, and will undoubtedly have questions about how to navigate the process.

Discuss transgender inclusive policies and procedures with other inter/national organizations. Even if your organization does not have an inclusive policy, there are others that do, and they can provide assistance with the process of creating that policy.
Many international organizations are more than willing to assist other organizations. If your organization already does have an inclusive policy, create a discussion with other organizations that do have similar policies on the types of education and support they provide to their members. Continue to follow up with these organizations if an unfamiliar situation is encountered.

**Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals**

*Be aware of the social fraternity and sorority community in order to help guide transgender students who wish to join an organization.* Student affairs professionals, even those not affiliated with the fraternity and sorority life office on campus, may be approached by a transgender individual exploring the idea of joining a social fraternal organization. It is important to be aware of the values of the community as a whole, and individual organizations and how they live them out on a daily basis. Keep in contact with campus-level fraternity and sorority professionals so that if the situation arises, they can serve as an extra support for yourself and the student. Campus-level fraternity and sorority professionals should be able to provide resources for you and your student, should they be necessary.

*Provide an inclusive space for both transgender and cisgender students wishing to discuss the topic.* Student affairs professionals will build relationships with both transgender and cisgender students, and both will need outlets to discuss the topic at hand. Creating a space where cisgender students can feel free to express opinions and concerns can open their eyes to being inclusive of individuals that do not share the same identities. Additionally, creating a space where transgender students can discuss their
concerns about joining a social fraternity or sorority can benefit professionals at all levels, as it is important to make sure all students feel comfortable in all situations.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study focused on five social fraternity and sorority members at the research site. All three of the organizations at the research site that have inclusive policies were represented in this study. The following are recommendations for future research to expand on the present study:

*Interview members from all organizations on campus.* To gain a broader understanding of the perceptions of transgender members of social fraternities and sororities by their cisgender peers, a study consisting of all 99 North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) and National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) organizations could be conducted.

*Interview inter/national organization leadership.* In order to identify the specific educational materials and support being provided to chapter members by their inter/national organizations, an investigation at the inter/national level would be beneficial.

*Research National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations.* None of the nine organizations belonging to the National Pan-Hellenic Council have created transgender inclusive statements at this time, although there is at least one having discussions about the topic at the national level.

**Conclusion**

In this study, the perceptions of transgender students in social fraternities and sororities by their cisgender peers was assessed using a qualitative approach. Chapter V
discussed of the significance of the outcomes of five interviews with current social fraternity and sorority members, from organizations that have inclusive statements on transgender membership and also from organizations without inclusive statements. Participants in this study indicated that they are lacking education and support on the specific subject of inclusion of transgender members. The existence of an inclusive statement did not make a difference on whether or not education and support were provided to chapter members. Four out of the five participants believed that as a whole, their chapter would be inclusive and welcoming to a transgender individual wishing to join their organization. Recommendations for local chapter leadership, inter/national organization leadership, campus-level fraternity and sorority professionals, and student affairs professionals were also discussed in Chapter V.
PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

References


Arrowsmith, N. & Tran, S. V. (2013). Title IX empowers fraternities to include transgender members. AFA Essentials, B(3).


Justia. (n.d.). Overview of Title IX: Interplay with Title VI, Section 504, Title VII, and the Fourteenth Amendment. Title IX Legal Manual. Retrieved from


Spade, D. (2011). Some very basic tips for making higher education more accessible to trans students and rethinking how we talk about gendered bodies. *Radical Teacher, 92*(1), 57-62.


APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol
PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

**Demographic Questions**

1. What is your name, age, and chapter affiliation?

2. What semester and year did you join your organization?

**Background Questions**

3. What are your chapter’s overall thoughts on including gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in your organization?

**Personal Views**

4. What are your personal opinions on the transgender community?

5. What do you think is the implication of having trans students in social fraternities and sororities?

**Local Chapter/Campus Questions**

6. What do you think are the opinions of the transgender community from the social fraternity and sorority community? The campus community?

7. What do you think your chapter collectively thinks about transgender students joining your organization?

8. What does the institution’s Fraternity and Sorority Life office do to educate their students on trans members?

9. How open do you feel your local chapter is to welcoming transgender members? Why?

10. Does your chapter create a welcoming environment for transgender students to join? How so?

11. How would your chapter react if there was a transgender student wishing to join a fraternity/sorority?
12. What does your local chapter do to educate their members on transgender members?

13. How does your chapter respond to transphobic language?

14. How would your chapter respond to a brother or sister who made the decision to transition?

15. What steps or changes would your chapter have to take to make a brother or sister comfortable who decided to transition?

**Inter/National Organization Questions**

16. What does your inter/national organization have to say regarding the membership of transgender students?

17. What does your inter/national organization do to educate their members on transgender members?

**Overall Questions**

18. What could be done by your institution, local chapter, and inter/national headquarters to be more inclusive of transgender fraternity and sorority members?

19. What do you see as the future of transgender membership in social fraternities and sororities?
APPENDIX B

IRB Approval and Email Template for Potential Participants
May 9, 2016

Stacy Rowan
Counseling and Student Development

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled, “Perceptions of Transgender Students in Social Fraternities and Sororities” for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has approved this research protocol following an expedited review procedure. IRB review has determined that the protocol involves no more than minimal risk to subjects and satisfies all of the criteria for approval of research.

This protocol has been given the IRB number 16-058. You may proceed with this study from 5/9/2016 to 5/8/2017. You must submit Form E, Continuation Request, to the IRB by 4/8/2017 if you wish to continue the project beyond the approval expiration date. Upon completion of your research project, please submit Form G, Completion of Research Activities, to the IRB, c/o the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

This approval is valid only for the research activities, timeline, and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any changes to this protocol be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me, or the Compliance Coordinator at 581-8576, in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Telephone: 581-8576
Fax: 217-581-7181
Email: euiirb@www.eiu.edu

Thank you for your assistance, and the best of success with your research.

Richard Cavanaugh, Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
Telephone: 581-6205
Email: recavanaugh@eiu.edu
Dear [Potential Participant],

My name is Stacy Rowan and I am conducting research for a master’s thesis as part of the degree requirements for the College Student Affairs graduate program. My research focuses on the perceptions of transgender students in social fraternities and sororities.

You have been identified as a potential interview candidate, and I am interested in hearing what you have to say about the subject. If this something you are interested in speaking with me about, I would love to set up an interview with you. Please reply to this email if you are interested in helping with my research.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Stacy Rowan
APPENDIX C

Informed Consent for Participants
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Perceptions of Transgender Students in Social Fraternities and Sororities

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Stacy Rowan and Dr. Dena Kniess, from the College Student Affairs department at Eastern Illinois University.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are an active member of a social fraternity or sorority at the research site.

• PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to determine what perceptions cisgender students in social fraternities and sororities have of transgender students potentially joining their organizations and what educational materials are being provided by the organization’s national headquarters.

• PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

Participate in one 45-60 minute interview with the researcher, where you will be asked a series of questions to help determine the perceptions at the research site.

Each interview will be audio recorded and will be transcribed by the researcher in order to code your responses.

• POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

• POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The potential benefits for this research are that the subject may become more aware of how to recruit and welcome transgender students into their social fraternity or sorority.

• CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of storing the recorded interview on a password-protected laptop. The researcher will be the only person with access to this laptop. Each recorded interview will be kept for three years in accordance with IRB policies, then destroyed at the end of that time period. The recorded interview and its transcript will be used only for educational purposes.

• PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.
There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

*Dr. Dena Kniess*
*Faculty Sponsor*
*217-581-7240*
*drkniess@eiu.edu*

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

*Institutional Review Board*
*Eastern Illinois University*
*600 Lincoln Ave.*
*Charleston, IL 61920*
*Telephone: (217) 581-8576*
*E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu*

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant                      Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

Signature of Investigator                      Date