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**How Power Creates Alteration Among Communication for Members Within
a Greek Letter Sorority**

By


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RUNNING HEAD: HOW POWER CREATES ALTERATION AMONG COMMUNICATION FOR
MEMBERS WITHIN A GREEK LETTER SORORITY

How Power Creates Alteration Among Communication
for Members Within a Greek Letter Sorority

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Abstract

This study aims to address whether or not communication is altered due to hierarchical or seniority status within an all-female base organization such as a sorority. Prior to doing this research, I predicted that the outcome would result in negative alterations within communication. Using a survey method, I was able to obtain 90 participants within female based, National Panhellenic sororities nationwide. Overall, I found that there was more of a positive shift in communication between members who are in power positions, to those that are not.

How Power Alters Communication Among Members within a Greek Letter Sorority

Organizational communication is a widely researched area that explores how, among other things, managerial authority, social hierarchy, power dynamics, and gender differences are communicated within various types of organizations. Although Greek Life organizations demonstrate all of these factors within their national and local chapters, these are primarily gender-based institutions. Thus, when it comes to research related to these areas in organizational communication, this begs the question: do members within a primarily female based sorority find that there is altered communication based around the hierarchical and seniority status within the group? In this study, I will build upon prior research in relations to these key concepts to explore this research question. They have been informed by the design of a randomized, anonymous survey among that was distributed among national and local chapters regarding their opinion on the overall communication within their chapter, as well as different underlying factors such as seniority or hierarchical status.

Literature Review

Organizational Communication

The ideal goal of Greek Life is to bring collegiate students together depending on their values and morals, to a National Philanthropic group as well as to create a bond between members within the organization. Within an organization such as a sorority, there are a number of different roles and positions each member could apply for and obtain which can require communication with members on an individual level as well as a group perspective. It is usually very common for sisters to hold a position at any age group or seniority level. Typically, older sisters have Executive positions, which is one of the highest positions within a chapter. This is followed by director position, and finally chair positions. In previous studies, the use of power

within an organization has significantly impacted the communication among members both verbal and non-verbally. An individual's ability to further develop a sense of themselves with the organization depends on a variety of outside factors such as the social, political, and current social norms of the environment in which they immerse themselves in.

The Two Step Flow Theory provides a possible outlook as to how messages from leaders are received by their audience, as well as how they react to them, and vice versa. In a sense, members with seniority or power could have a drastic impact on groups such as new members (Soffer 2019). People often join sororities due to the fact that there is a correlation between their values and the expressed value of the organization at the national and local level. In one study in which a member within a sorority analyzed the conversations and sociolinguistic language practices with other members and their correlation to membership, it was had found that members typically join an organization because they feel like they share similarities with the organization and its members (Bauman 2016). On the contrary, it has also been found that the diversity among members could shine light on potential negatives in relationship to communication. As first year members were studied against newer members, there was correlation between having negative reactions due to the seniority of the member, as well as other factors such as ethnicity, identity and sexuality (Garcia 2019).

Power

Members in sororities are likely to have influences upon each other depending on the control expectancy, as researched by Dohanos (2003). The control theory is how people behave based on other people's ability to motivate them. Focusing on outside factors, such as identity or sexuality, Greek Life Studies were examined in their verbal and non-verbal communication towards others and studies concluded that there was a level of influence on their new members

identity based on interactions among the Greek Letter Fraternity (Dohanos 2003). Woodward, Rosenfeld, and May (1996) found that communication regarding personal life was more common among females. With that being said, there is an obvious individual personal communication connection between members in a sorority which in turn could have an influence on their identity and self-awareness within the collective group.

Memorable messages are those that are most likely to have an impact on the receiver in some sort of way (Orrego Dunleavy & Yang, 2015). Throughout sororities, such memorable messages are able to persuade members in certain ways. For instance, there is a strong social influence among members that can have an overall negative impact in relations to alcohol usage (Capone, Wood, Laird, & Borsari 2007). The communication of members can ultimately create a modeling effect that can further alter the verbal and non-verbal communication around the idea of partying.

When hearing a message from a member who does have higher status within the organization, it could create a memorable message in a newer or lower status member's or mind. Power has a lot of influence in terms of how we are able to communicate with peers and other members. Studies of power among organizational communication have raised awareness about its effect on interpersonal communication between senders and the receivers. Through the information exchange there is a direct impact on both parties involved (Alikire, Collum, Kaswan, & Love 1968). If, for instance, a person with power relayed a message to a member without a high position, the communication may be taken differently in the sense that it is coming from an authority figure. In sororities, authority figures have the power to confront or make changes in positions due to the inability to collaborate or come to a group agreement (Koschmann 2016). To relate this to a hypothetical scenario within a sorority, if you are a new member whose position is

being revoked, consequences may be different for you in comparison to a sister who might be close with the person revoking the position and might get away on 'easier' terms.

Ethics plays a huge role in the way corporations are run in the sense that people within power must have the organizations best interest in mind. Petti and Pulley (1990) found that there is a point in time that might be decisive depending on one's conscious instead of what they know is ethically right. This could create a power struggle within the organization. The term 'boat rocking' comes into play because it allows for the power to be given to somebody else or the organization as a whole (May, 2012). This brings into ethical guidelines that ensure that people are making the best decisions for the chapter as a whole.

Gender Influences

An abundance of studies have been done on males versus females holding power positions within an organization. Females are often criticized about how they manage an organization. One stereotype referred to by Ladegaard (2011) is that females in powers can be compared to 'Pitbull Terriers' (p. 18). Women are seen as 'unfit' or are the minority within an organization (Buzzanell 2000, p. 6). Statistically, women are already typically seen as 'lower' down in the hierarchical tower in comparison to males within the workplace (Schulueter 1990). Typically women are referred to as having a more democratic style of communication as compared to men who prefer to have a more assertive style (Weaver and Kirtley 1999). These perceptions can help explain why men are seen as more as dominant leader compared to women in organizations.

For females, the stereotype that women should be 'lady-like' has historically caused challenges in power struggles. Men are primarily seen as the more dominant figure within society (Zimmerman & West 1987). Buzzanell (2000) explains that 'this dichotomy is always

inimical to women and disempowerment minority groups”(p. 16). Women are automatically doubted when they run organization or are in leadership positions.

These findings are interesting to consider in terms of sororities, which are all-female based organizations. As stated by Fishman (1978), generally speaking, women tend to have a better sense of communication in relation to their own gender in comparison to men. Uncertainty Reduction Theory offers that one’s closeness to the receiver will probably determine the level of closeness one feels to that person. For both men and women, speaking with somebody who we are not comfortable with interferes with the effectiveness of the communication (Kramer, 2004). Additionally, women tend to have more compassion for each other, which can alter affection and communication. Situations that require sensitivity are better handled by females in comparison to males (Hirokawa & Miyata 2004). Communicating among the same sex is easier because there are a number of different things that each gender can specifically relate to. This study challenges the stereotypes of women in a powerful position as being a “Pitbull Terrier” (p. 18).

These concepts tie into the Two Step Flow Communication theory because the way a person perceives the sender of a message is going to affect their response. Although the sender might not mean to elicit a negative response, the receiver could have perceived it in another way because people do interpret things differently (Christensen & Cornelissen 2013). Leonardi (2017) describes communication as being one of the most important things within an organization. Depending on different aspects such as gender and hierarchical status, we are able to see how these things are dependent on the way an organization is managerially based.

Meta Analysis

Negative Communication

One stereotype that associates itself with the negativity within college campuses is the direct divide between underclassmen, primarily new members and upperclassmen, who usually hold or have held a position within an organization. Seen firsthand by the author of *Salt on a College Campus*, Brown (1950), communication among fraternities and sororities have a disconnect. Through Brown's (1950) research, he was able to observe that many underclassmen, or new members are likely embarrassed or put down through a form of negative communication among older members. As reported, Brown (1950) saw that some 'pledges' or new members of a Fraternity were being personally offended through uses of both verbal and non-verbal communication. Brown (1950) explains how pledges are often bewildered and forced to do 'hazing' activities including but not limited to, cleaning duties and engaging in time-consuming activities that are generally non-harmful for them (p. 60). This further shows the negative forms of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, that have a direct impact on the 'pledges' within a fraternity, demonstrating that power does come into play when communicating in an organization of this size and capacity.

Related to Brown's (1950) observational research, Orrego Dunleavy and Yang (2015) more recently conducted a similar study that concluded that there are negative relations between people with power versus new members in a Greek Letter Fraternity. As reported, collegiate females within a group organization showed an increase in harmful behavior such as negative body perceptions and weight reduction after perceiving messages from other members within the group. Studies showed that 62.2% of members felt that they perceived a negative message from their own sorority sisters. In comparison, they only received a negative memorable message 1.4% of the time from a non-Greek Life student (Orrego Dunleavy & Yang 2015). As a result, we can conclude that there is a sense of negativity going on in communication within a sorority

organization. To relate this concept back to *Salt on a College Campus*, there has been a sense of negative communication among members with power towards new members of an organization. Both studies concluded that, either verbally or non-verbally, there was an overall negative perception of messages being sent. Whether this is international or not, there is a clear underlying power struggle that creates questions to try to understand why and how power within a Greek-Life organization is handled in the way that it is.

Richardson, Wang, and Hall (2012) studied the effect of whistle-blowing and the ethical standpoint of members looking to report negative incidents such as hazing. Their conclusions depended on the extent of the hazing. For example, there was a split within members who would report hazing in moderate form. The majority of the party concluded that if it was not a severe form of hazing, it was likely that they would not report it (Richardson, Wang & Hall, 2012). On the contrary, more members said that they would report hazing if it was severe (Richardson, Wang & Hall, 2012). Overall, the communication through a 'whistle blowing phenomenon' demonstrated how members within an organization might not turn on their group, which can be quite harmful for new members or other members within the sorority or fraternity.

In a 2015 study, Reno and McNamee (2015) questioned whether or not a sorority organization promoted positive reliance on health for its newer members. In doing so, Reno and McNamee (2015) examined how memorable messages were transmitted through members during communication. Of the 47.1% of members that completely comprehended the [recalled] message specificity, 86.6% of members believed that it was a positive message that was being sent. In addition, 11.9% felt like there was a direct degree of impact among the memorable messages and how they were being perceived (Reno & McNamee, 2015). To relate this back to interpersonal sorority communications and the results of how memorable messages transfer,

68.6% felt that they received the correct messages referring to body image and stereotypes (Reno & McName 2015). This study was able to conclude how a message can impact members of an organization and how they react to it.

Subliminal Communication

Additionally, in another study highlighting the negative impacts on how organizations such as sorority's function. Makos (2015) describes the subliminal effect as to how messages are not only spread but received as well. There are a number of characteristics regarding context and how that is viewed by the receiver of the message (Makos 2015). Applying the 'sense-making' argument that Makos makes, shines light on how messages from younger members could potentially be received, focusing on the perception of the message.

It is also important to focus on different forms of communication regarding Greek-life organizations. The use of non-verbal communication can have an impact just as memorable as verbal communication. Boyce and Buck (1987) studies the subliminal messages regarding fraternity and sorority pictures and the subliminal messages that form from the non-verbal aspects of communication. In doing so, they found a strong correlation of fraternity members not smiling or showing quite neutral expressions within different pictures. On the contrary, sorority pictures showed a much more positive side of non-verbal communication. Boyce and Buck (1987) expressed that leaders within a sorority showed more enthusiasm through pictures in which their teeth were showing as compared to leaders within fraternities who only 40.6% showed teeth within the photos. Non-verbal communication is just as important as verbal communication because it could potentially provide underlying subliminal messages as suggested in Makos' (2015) study.

Neutral or Mixed Communication

Although there are many studies done to display the negativity associated with communication among Greek-life Organizations, there are also sources that have found some evidence of neutral or more positive communication. As stated in Boyce and Buck's (1987) study, female leaders showed more positive nonverbal communication among pictures as compared to male leaders within fraternities. Throughout organizations such as sororities, both verbal and non-verbal communication is needed in order to be successful. Bisel, Kavya, and Tracy (2020) describe communication as having a positive influence on how the organization is run. Using case studies, Bisel, Kavya, and Tracy (2020) describe the healthy and positive communication aspects among organizations including how a person is observed after hearing a message either with or without subliminal messaging. Using a method called historical reconstruction allowed researchers to see how a person is able to talk about a previous event and again, get their take on the content provided as well as their reaction to it. For example, if there was a negative interaction among two sisters, the receiver might recall the story differently compared to the sender. Overall the conclusions stated that there could be a 'value-neutral' form of communication within organizations. Although sometimes it is perceived as negative, and sometimes as positive, there is also a middle ground in which both can occur at the same time.

Positive Communication

To switch over to a more positive note, Fresques (2013) conducted a study aiming to inform the general public and the members of sororities or organizations about the way in which sororities primarily interact through most verbal and non-verbal communication. This study showed how there is a level of growth among interpersonal relationships and communication while joining a sorority (Fresques, 2013). Using both survey and interview methods, Fresques

(2013) found that there are positive outlooks on sororities gaining the ability to use communication to gain relationships through interpersonal means. In doing so, this positivity aspect ensures that there will be a level in growth as communication occurs within organizations such as these.

Additionally, Myers and Davis (2012) reported that positive communication in sororities continue as older members graduate and further exit being active within a chapter. Myers and Davis reported that as elder members leave, the communication alters towards younger members. For example, a participant explained that upon leaving it is important to remain positive with younger girls and communicate 'words of wisdom' for them (Myers & Davis, 2012). Similarly, communication among other members in the process of exiting the chapter was considered 'reminiscent' of the time spent within the chapter, and usually was very positive. These studies found that a majority of the respondents felt that being in a sorority helped them grow both through an interpersonal communication model, additionally showing how communication within a sorority could be positive for the members within (Meyers & Davis, 2012).

Lide (2014) compared the linguistic communication among members of a Southern sorority and to that of a sorority in the Northern region. Lide (2014) used words and phrases such as 'politeness' to find that oftentimes, when negative communication arises, Southern sorority girls found that they feel the need to remove themselves from negatively formed conversations. The researchers attended to different linguistic concepts such as interruptions, rising pitch action, and pauses lasting longer than 0.5 seconds in recordings of friends talking to friend's members talking to members, and members talking to authority figures. Lide (2014) found that there were different forms of communication used depending on who was speaking. After Lide (2014) identified the participants into different characteristics groups, such as 'Southern or Northern'

and “Preppy or Non-Preppy” she found that each group uses their own forms of linguistics which can explain the differences in culture and how the perception of the receiver depends on previous experiences.

Research Question

The goal of this study is to determine how power can alter communication among individuals within a primarily female based organizations, such as a sorority. Similar research looking at females within organizations, gender dynamics, differences in managerial styles, and power, have formed the basis providing background knowledge relative to my study. Based on a review the literature review, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1a: Will sorority members in positions of authority report greater or fewer communication problems than those who are not?

RQ1b: Will sorority members with more seniority report greater or fewer communication problems than those who have less?

RQ2a: Will sorority members in positions of authority view the relationships within the sorority more or less positively than those who are not?

RQ2b: Will sorority members with more seniority view the relationships within the sorority more or less positively than those who have less?

These research questions serve to try to help understand what alterations exist among communication for different members of a sorority chapter at both a local and national level

Method

This study explored how communication within a female based sorority can alter due to power within positions among the chapter. To address the above research question, a survey

method was chosen to try to collect a good number of responses. In addition, because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, I feel that this is a more safe and effective manner to collect data.

Population and Sampling

For my survey, I reached out to the population of females currently enrolled in active sorority chapters both locally and nationwide. These females range from ages 18-24 years old and are currently members of their sorority. The sororities are nationally known as Female Based Sororities or Fraternities. To be more specific, all participants are members of a chapter within the National Panhellenic Conference. The survey respondents represented a non-random, volunteer, convenience sample in the sense that any member of an active sorority nationwide who received the survey request could participate in the study. I reached these out to collegiate females, who are currently members of active sororities, through online platforms such as GroupMe, Zoom and other group messaging apps that sororities use to communicate. I am actively involved in my own chapter at both a local and national level, and I have connections to other sororities on my midsize university campus, as well as on a nationwide level.

Data Collection Instrument

The survey was completely anonymous to secure the security and safety of participants. It included a number of different questions related to rank, seniority, communication and relationships among their sorority. I was able to discuss communication overall among one-on-one as well as group settings within the chapter. My survey also asked questions regarding the hierarchical tower within the chapter. So for example, I compare how members of the executive board communicate to those who do not hold that position, as well as, underclassmen to upperclassmen and the communication regarding those groups. To further discuss this concept, I also asked questions regarding members who hold positions but aren't within the 'Executive

board'. Lastly, I asked questions about personal relationships among sisters within a general standpoint.

The variables of interest or the dependent variables are related to perception of communication and relationships, and it was measured whether or not these were dependent on the variables of power. In my efforts to explain power, statements such as 'Girls in higher positions within my sorority sometimes misuse their power (Appendix A)' were proposed in order to try to measure the variable of power. Additionally, survey questions 3-9 & 12 demonstrated the use of power within the participants chapters. In terms of measuring communication, statements such as 'I have felt negatively about myself after communication with a sister (Appendix A)' could further anticipate communication issues within specific chapters. Questions 10, 11, 13, and 14 could best describe how communication occurs within.

The independent variable, or the variable that is presumed to influence the dependent, is the aspect of power. Although power often switches after terms are ending, for this particular research question, power will remain constant throughout being that we are talking about the current hierarchical tower within the chapter. To further specify this, being an executive member is one of the highest positions followed by director position and then chair position. Because there are many positions within each chapter, it is not uncommon that most of the chapter holds a position. In order to measure the power variable, I ask questions in regard to sisters' opinions among power within their sorority. Some of these statements include, 'Positions are taken seriously and responsibly within my chapter', or "Concerns are taken seriously within my chapter (Appendix A)". These statements offer the ability for sisters with or without positions to assess the ability of their higher ups.

The first question in my study is ‘How long have you been in your chapter?’ (Appendix A). The answers for this specific question range from less than a year, a year, two years, three years, four years, and longer than four years. Depending on how long a sister has been in the chapter can help determine a number of different things including her ‘seniority’ within her chapter. Going off of this concept, I also asked the question ‘Do older sisters or upperclassmen talk down to younger sisters?’(Appendix A). By asking this question, I am able to further determine specific ‘classes’ within the hierarchical tower, in addition to positions held among sisters. Both of these questions in my survey further determine the age and the position of the sister answering the survey.

The survey that was administered is made up of fourteen different statements discussing different concepts related to the research question. All of the questions and statements on the survey reflected closed answer scaling. For example, the second question that is asked on the survey is ‘How long have you been in your chapter (Appendix A)’? The answers provided for this research question are as followed: Less than a year, a year, two years, three years, four years, and longer than four years. This question allows for participants to pick the choice option that is most applicable to them. In addition to this question, another statement that participants reflected on was ‘Overall, my chapter has good communication (Appendix A)’. This statement had answers provided that were on a scaling system. The responses from each individual participant could be any of the following, ‘Strong, pretty strong, strong but could be better, average, and below average. Again, this type of question allows for individuals to answer depending on their own feelings.

There are a number of different types of questions throughout my survey. Using open ended questions usually provides more detail into participants' answers and scales for closed

ended questions are also provided so that participants are able to choose depending on their feelings regarding the questions. Overall, I think that using a survey as a method of research allows for the greatest number of responses.

Findings

Using the quantitative survey method, I was able to target a particular subsection of females within a collegiate sorority. These females ranged from ages 18-24 and were members of active sororities nationwide. The goal of this survey was to find some data that could help address my research questions exploring whether communication altered when people were in power situations such as upholding a position within the chapter.

The survey had 14 questions indicating the different aspects of communication within their own sorority. Among these questions, there were mixed answers, usually ranging from Strongly agree to strongly disagree. The participants were asked how long they have been a member within their chapter. The majority of responses came from sisters being within their chapter for two years (30.3%). The remainder of the participants were members within their chapter for three years (25.8%), 21.3% have been in their chapter for less than a year, and 10.1% reported that they have been in their chapter for four years. Among the participants, 43.8% reported that they held a position on their executive board, followed by 11.2% who uphold director positions, and 13% who hold chair positions. Usually, executive positions are the highest form of power within the position, followed by the director position, and lastly a chair position. Additionally, 28.1% reported not having a position within their sorority but instead were just members within the organization. The majority of the responses did come from members on the executive board, meaning they most likely uphold a highly powered position within their organization. It is very common for members of all age groups and seniority status to hold

positions within chapters. It is quite common that girls who have been in the chapter longer or have previously held positions will go on to uphold an executive board position. This is the highest level of position within a sorority. Positions such as President, Vice President, Finance and Operations Vice President, Philanthropy Vice President are all on the executive board. Director positions follow after the executive board and are just below them in the hierarchy. These are positions located directly under the executive board so there is still a large sense of power here. Lastly, there are chair positions which are under director's positions. These are the lowest in the hierarchical tower and usually are for entry level members. When given the statement 'Girls in higher positions within my sorority sometimes misuse their power', 34.8% of participants said that they disagree with that statement.

RQ1a poses the question if members within a position of authority will report greater or fewer communication problems than those who are not. Of the 65% of participants who held a position, 49% participants strongly disagree with survey question 3 (Appendix A) whereas, 18% remained neutral and 32% said that they agreed that people within positions sometime misuse their power. As for the people who don't hold a position within their sorority, 32% participants disagreed with people misusing power, 24% remained neutral, and 44% agreed with this statement. More participants within both subsections reported that they disagreed with this statement, further stating that many participants believe that power is handled correctly and oftentimes not misused. To talk a bit more about comfort within the chapter, almost half of the participants said that they were able to talk to an executive board member about a specific situation. Following the 48.3% of participants that chose the 'strongly agree', 33.7% of the answers were that they agree with this statement showing that over 80% of the participants felt comfortable enough to talk to an executive member. To go off of this question, another statement

that participants were able to answer to was whether concerns among the chapter were taken seriously. Among the answers, 43.8% of women said that they were able to agree with this statement. When asking the question about general communication among the chapter, over 50% of the participants said that their chapter had a generally good way to communicate. RQ1b poses the question: Will sorority members with more seniority report greater or fewer communication problems than those who have less? To further analyze the data collected, I broke the results down into two different categories: how long the participant has been in the chapter and if they believe if their chapter has generally good communication or not. Of the participants who have been in the chapter for a year or less, the majority (20 participants) reported that they felt that their chapter had a generally good means of communication. Out of all of the age groups, participants who have been a member of their chapter for three years had the most amount of 'Neither agree nor disagree' responses. Additionally, more than half of the members who have been in their sorority reported that they remained neutral or disagree with the idea that their chapter generally has good communication. With this data, there is a correlation between girls who have more seniority reporting that there are potentially more communication problems within their chapter.

In order to measure the relationships between sisters within the sorority, RQ2a asks if members within power positions of authority view the relationship within the sorority more or less positive than those who don't hold a position. Within both categories of people who hold positions versus people who do not, most of the answers from both sides reflected a positive bond among the sorority. Of the 65 members who do hold a position, 89% expressed how their bond within their sorority is strong. Of the 25 members who do not hold positions, 52% of them

reported that they also felt that the bond within their sorority was strong. Overall, 71% of all of the participants reported that overall, they felt the bond between their sisterhood as strong.

Turning to seniority, RQ2b asked if members who has more seniority view relationships within the chapter as more or less positive than those who have lower seniority. In order to measure this, I cross referenced how long members were in the sorority with survey question 'I feel like I could talk to any sister in my sorority about anything'. Of these results, the majority of the participants that are underclass, 42 out of 57 (73%) reported that they felt comfortable enough going to any sister to discuss something. The results from participants who have more seniority within the chapter, still reported that they either agree or strongly agree with this statement. Overall, both underclassman and upperclassman reported that they would feel comfortable communicating with a sister which can further show correlation between relationships within sorority chapters.

Discussion

Overall, I found that there were more positive interactions as opposed to negative within sororities, even when dealing with power or hierarchical positions. Originally, I had thought that there would be more negative interactions when dealing with people within power positions, however my results did not convey these findings. The survey results showed that the majority of sisters were able to talk to members of their sorority more freely and openly than I had originally thought. Over 80% of participants found that they felt comfortable to discuss a specific situation or issue with an executive member. Additionally, the majority of underclassman reported that they felt that they were able to talk to a sister about anything which could further explain positive communication and relationships generally throughout chapters. These results supported Freques' (2013) study regarding interpersonal relationships when she stated that we form

friendships and personal relationships (2013, page 6). Because sororities foster the ability form these friendships, it could further explain how communication could be positive when becoming closer to sisters. This could also be described by the Uncertainty Reduction Theory in the sense that as people become closer, they are able to “make sense or reduce uncertainties in their organizational lives “(Kramer, 2011, p. 77). This bond could explain how it might be easier to approach somebody on the Executive Board about a particular situation. As one member begins to form a relationship with other members of the group, it reduces fear that might arise if somebody was not comfortable or familiar with the person. Previously made friendships and relationships could assist with knowing how a person can potentially respond to a certain issue, therefore could assist with how somebody goes about presenting the problem at hand. RQ2b conveys positive results among communication due to the fact that the majority of members with seniority status reported feeling comfortable enough to talk to anyone within the chapter. Additionally, 73% of the participants who have only been members for two years or less, also reported feeling comfortable enough to talk to any sister showing that overall, there is positive communication throughout the participants chapters.

In addition to these theories, women are also stereotypically seen as more empathetic and compassionate when it comes to managerial styles. As stated by Ladegaard, female leaders are more “indirect, and generally normatively feminine” (2011). This could potentially be the reason as to why communication is positive within primarily female based sororities. People who are approached with a more empathetic style of management, probably will respond better than if somebody used a more aggressive way of communication. To go off of this, it depends on how a message is both sent and received. Lammers (2011) states how important the “nuts and bolts of construction, delivery, and exchange” (p. 157) of communication is among people within

organizations. If the delivery of the message was more compassionate, it might elicit a better response from the receiver because the message was not sent in an aggressive form. RQ1b questions the communication problems regarding seniority. Overall, the data showed that all levels of age groups reported that their chapter has a general sense of good communication throughout. This can further demonstrate how there generally positive communication between people who are in power situations versus people who are not among sororities.

When participants were asked to agree or disagree with the statement: 'I would consider my bond with my sorority as strong.' 78% of members said that they would 'strongly agree' or 'agree' (Appendix A). The overall bond within the sorority could have an impact on the communication within each specific chapter. RQ2a questions the relationships among people within positions versus people who are not. Ultimately, the data from the survey show positive perceptions among both people who hold positions and those who do not. If there is a stronger bond within the chapter, there might be a stronger sense of communication. May (1996) explains how fraternities oftentimes receive less social support in comparison to sororities due to the fact that sororities tend to communicate more frequently and effectively. If the bond within a sorority is high, it can cause there to be more positive communication among the group than there would be if the bond within the organization was lower. This indicates that the sorority chapters oftentimes do have positive means of communication when the bond between members is strong.

Throughout my research, I was able to see that memorable messages also played a role in the way that communication could potentially be altered when dealing with somebody within a power situation. This could be either a negative or a positive form of communication. In this case, I am talking about negative communication among memorable messages. One of the statements on my survey asked participants if they have felt negatively about themselves after

communication with a particular sister. I found that about 32% of participants either ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ to this statement (Appendix A). Orrego and Yang discussed how memorable messages play a role on socialization and communication among members within an organization. Their studies showed that negative messages tend to have a lasting effect on the receiver (2015). For example, situations regarding female body image and perceptions are often experienced among females within organizations in college and they tend to have a lasting effect on the person receiving this message (Orrego & Yang 2015). This could support how organizations could be relaying negative communication toward their members.

Having power within the organization could help with the fact that there are rules laid out that other members are required to follow. Lammers (2011) explains how organizations are able to communicate more effectively with their being guidelines because then members would know what to expect of them (2011). Power could be beneficial in this sense because it makes it clear on what members should be doing versus what they should not be doing. For example, if a member disobeys a rule that was put in place by an executive member, it allows for a previously held notion to determine the member's outcome. To further this idea, it might assist with there being less of a power struggle and more of civil communication because both parties know that it is wrong or unacceptable within the eyes of that chapter. Determining rules can influence the behavior in which a member displays an issue (Lammers, 2011). For example, having these rules can predetermine communication if a rule is broken or not followed by a member. This idea was best referenced within RQ1a which asked if members within positions of authority report greater or fewer communication problems within. The results showed that 32 out of 65 participants within power positions felt that power wasn't being misused whereas, 33 participants felt as if it was being misused. Additionally, 11 participants who did not hold a position felt as if power was

being misused. This demonstrates how communication within chapters could sometimes be considered negative.

Overall, aligning my study along with previous research studies, I was able to conclude that there usually is positive communication among women within sorority chapters. Additionally, there seems to be a correlation between positive communication among people within power and people who are not. This contradicts my original prediction that communication is altered negatively when dealing with a member within power in a female based sorority.

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitations that could have impacted the validity of my study is could be the fact that because convenience sampling was used, it was not a truly random study. The participants were collected through their membership to an active female-based sorority. The participants were all ranged in age from 18-24, which made my sample size very small compared to other studies. This could potentially cause limitations on the fact that findings within this study only pertain to this specific population and can't be used to generalize other information for people not within this society or sample. Additionally, anonymous surveys are known as being self-reported so it is impossible to know what participants could potentially not be truthful about their answers.

For further research on this topic, I suggest trying to get more participants overall. Within this study, I only was able to receive a small sample size and I believe it would be beneficial to have a larger sample size. Additionally, having open ended questions on the survey might be beneficial because it can help specify situations that pertain to a certain group and can also provide more detailed responses.

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Appendix A

1. How long have you been a member of your chapter?
 - a. Less than a year
 - b. A year
 - c. 2 years
 - d. 3 years
 - e. 4 years
 - f. Longer than 4
- 2: Do you hold any of the following positions within your sorority?
 - b. Executive position
 - b. Director position
 - c.chair position
 - d. N/A
- 3: Girls in higher positions within my sorority sometimes misuse their power
 - c. Strongly agree
 - b.agree
 - c. neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 4: I would feel comfortable going to a member of the executive board about a particular situation.
 - d. Strongly agree
 - b.agree
 - c. neither agree nor disagree
 - d.disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 5: Overall, my chapter has good communication.
 - e. Strongly agree
 - b.agree
 - c. neither agree nor disagree
 - d.disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 6: I feel like I could talk to any sister in my sorority about anything.
 - f. Strongly agree
 - b.agree
 - c. neither agree nor disagree
 - d.disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 7: Concerns are taken seriously within my chapter.
 - g. Strongly agree
 - b.agree
 - c. neither agree nor disagree
 - d.disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 8: Positions and responsibilities are taken seriously within my chapter.
 - h. Strongly agree
 - b.agree
 - c. neither agree nor disagree
 - d.disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 9: Negative situations are generally taken seriously within my chapter.
 - i. Strongly agree
 - b.agree
 - c. neither agree nor disagree
 - d.disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 10: I feel that older sisters talk down to younger sisters
 - j. Strongly agree
 - b.agree
 - c. neither agree nor disagree
 - d.disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 11: I have felt negatively about myself after communication with a sister.
 - k. Strongly agree
 - b.agree
 - c. neither agree nor disagree
 - d.disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 12: I think my executive board makes decisions that generally benefit the entirety of your chapter.
 - l. Strongly agree
 - b.agree
 - c. neither agree nor disagree
 - d.disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 13: I would consider the bond with my sorority as strong.

m. Strongly agree b. agree c. neither agree nor disagree d. disagree e. Strongly disagree

14: I have noticed favoritism in my chapter.

n. Strongly agree b. agree c. neither agree nor disagree d. disagree e. Strongly disagree