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**EDITORIAL: NOT "GREEK" UNLESS YOU ARE FROM GREECE:
WORKING TO IDENTIFY INCLUSIVE RESEARCH TERMS**

J. Patrick Biddix
Oracle Editor

As researchers, we classify variables to make them measurable and interpretable. As educators, we understand the importance of acknowledging difference, but are empathetically sensitive to the meanings people attach to classifications. An example is the use of the terms, "Hispanic" and "Latino/a," both used as broad classifications intended to be inclusive of Chicanos, Puerto-Ricans, Spanish-Americans, and others. While we generally use to Latino/a in education, there is wide disagreement over which term is correct, owing to the size of the umbrella used to cover groups that are historically Spanish-speaking (which is still not entirely accurate).

We are similarly confronted classification issues working with fraternity/sorority research. *Oracle* board members have lost count of how many times we revise the word "Greek." To distinguish, we refer to students as "affiliates" versus "non-affiliates," "fraternity/sorority members," or "members of fraternal organizations." This issue, we faced a similar challenge.

One of the studies published in this issue had a compelling reason to differentiate between men who belonged to what the researchers referred to as culturally based (i.e., historically Black, NPHC-member) and social (i.e., historically White, NIC-member) fraternities. This designation sparked a friendly debate during final editing involving several perspectives impacted by the decision, including: AFA, NIC, NPHC, current *Oracle* editorial staff, and former *Oracle* editors.

Some felt that there was no reason to differentiate, while others believed the difference should be designated by Council. The latter was not possible as the survey asked participants only to classify themselves broadly. The culturally based designation was not limited to NPHC member organizations, but could also include other Councils (e.g., United Greek). Another group proposed a longer title designation, "originally historically minority" versus "originally historically non-minority."

After evaluating all perspectives and in consultation with the researchers, we chose to defer to how the survey instrument was worded, preserving the originally used terms. One of the researchers articulated this sentiment best in an email regarding how to proceed:

I was pondering using "historically White" and "culturally based" as solutions, but I worry that sets up a false dichotomy that White must be something other than a cultural/racial designation if it is meant to stand in opposition to the "culturally based" group. . .my instinct is to just go with the same language as the survey instrument and hopefully use this as a good platform to strive to reach some consensus on the myriad of available terms down the road.

As a general guideline, the research question/s should direct the decision of how to distinguish participants. If all participants belong to a particular Council, researchers should distinguish by Council, but only when there is a compelling reason – such as using the differences to account for an outcome. In this case, the researchers wanted to determine if group affiliation affected self awareness. In another article included in this edition, the researchers referred to NIC-affiliated groups as “social” fraternities, but this designation it did not add to the analysis and was dropped.

As researchers, how can we be sensitive to language yet still being mindful of the compelling reason to differentiate? Our solution was first to evaluate whether distinguishing was warranted. Next, we involved multiple perspectives – a critical step in building credibility. Our third step was to formulate a possible compromise, then to discuss this option with the researchers. The final step was to publish the solution, and to collaboratively work with the aforementioned stakeholders to revise our style guide, offering future researchers guidance on the issue. We advocate a roundtable discussion as next step where we visit (and revisit) topics such the language of our profession with the constituent represented in this discussion. We certainly also welcome and value your thoughts.

In closing, we realized that working to address this question was ultimately one of the most important things *Oracle* could contribute to the larger field. Articles that spark debate and controversy – whether by content or in this case, by title – are ultimately those that lead us to the really important questions we face as a scholars, practitioners, and advocates. This case was a powerful reminder that sometimes it is important to consider the journey, not the outcome, as ultimately where we find the most powerful learning lessons. Even if, as in this case, we haven’t quite reached the end.

Dr. J. Patrick Biddix serves as the Oracle Editor. He is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education and Research Methods at Valdosta State University, where he also serves as coordinator for the Higher Education Program. He previously worked as an Educational Consultant for Beta Theta Pi Fraternity, followed by Coordinator for Greek Housing Programs at Washington University in St. Louis.