

Queer *folklore*: Examining the Influence of Fandom on Sexual Identity Development and  
Fluidity Acceptance among Taylor Swift fans

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We would like to thank the Swifties for their support and enthusiasm for this project.

## Abstract

The present study fills a gap in the media entertainment and fan studies literatures with an exploration of media fandom in relation to fans' sexual identity acceptance. Using a sample of Taylor Swift fans who identify as women ( $N = 771$ ), we address how fans' motivations, practices, and oppositional readings of Taylor Swift's 2020 album, *folklore*, are related to their sexual identity development, as well as their acceptance of fluidity in others' sexual orientations. Results indicated that eudaimonic motivations to listen to *folklore* predicted LGBTQ+ fans' acceptance of others' sexual orientation fluidity. Further, we examined fans' "queer shipping," which occurs when fans imagine two same-sex media persons/characters to be in a romantic relationship. Queer shipping was positively related to fans' sexual orientation acceptance, mainly through their oppositional reading of the album. Overall, our results differed by sexual identity group, with fan practices being consistently more predictive of sexual orientation fluidity acceptance among heterosexual women.

*Keywords:* Fandom, eudaimonia, queer shipping, sexual identity, oppositional readings

Word count: 9133

**Public Significance Statement:**

Broadly, our findings suggest positive effects of fan engagement which highlight that non-normative fan behaviors and oppositional readings may influence fans' sexual identity development. Ultimately, we believe that our results provide further evidence for the role of fandom as a discourse of resistance.

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*“A tale that becomes folklore is one that is passed down and whispered around. Sometimes even sung about. The lines between fantasy and reality blur and the boundaries between truth and fiction become almost indiscernible. . . I’ve told these stories to the best of my ability with all the love, wonder, and whimsy they serve. Now it’s up to you to pass them down.”*

- Taylor Swift, Singer/Songwriter

Folklore is defined as a collection of stories, legends, or myths about a community that are passed between generations via word-of-mouth. These stories often include information about traditional beliefs and customs and may function as referents for younger, still-developing generations (Michalopoulos & Xue, 2019). Within today’s mediated society, folklore is revitalized online, allowing individuals across the globe to connect and share their stories. Digital folklore is less intrinsically focused on geographical communities (e.g., Native American folklore), but instead now includes self-made online communities like media fandoms (Falzone, 2005). Acting as members of the “folk,” each fan is presented with the opportunity to retell their version of the story and thus engage in the production of “lore” (Bendix, 2009, p. 8). As with traditional folklore, digital folklore is often at the mercy of the storyteller with variation between each telling of the story. In the context of media fandom, such variance is evidenced by oppositional readings and noncanonical storylines. Although digital folklore is not widely explored within media entertainment scholarship, media fandom and the effects of such engagement is a growing point of inquiry within this literature.

Media fandom, specifically fan objects (i.e., a media text, celebrity, or character) act as self-reflective vehicles, which become interwoven within fans’ self-concepts (Sandvoss, 2005).

Performances of the fan object (e.g., films, stories) are then considered as “extension(s) of the self based on processes of self-reflection” that align the fan with the object and allow individuals to construct and modify their self-concept in response to performative displays (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 97). Moreover, research demonstrates the effects of media fandom on viewers’ ideological and sociological beliefs (e.g., self-acceptance, prosocial behaviors; Click et al., 2013; Vezzalli et al., 2015) with few empirically testing the role of fandom on identity processing (Dajches, 2021; McInroy & Craig, 2018). Even though identity processing is the hallmark of adolescence, we acknowledge that the continuing development of one’s identity extends later into young adulthood (Erikson, 1968). As such, it is important to understand how media fandom may impact identity development into adulthood because one’s sexuality is particularly susceptible to later adjustments and modifications.

The present study fills a gap in the literature with an exploration of media fandom in relation to sexual identity development and sexual orientation fluidity acceptance. More specifically, we seek to understand the ways in which fan communities subvert heteronormative media narratives to process their sexual identity, as well as to accept others. The opportunity to perform such an examination came with the release of Taylor Swift’s eighth studio album, *folklore*, in which fans (i.e., “Swifties”) took to online communities (e.g., Tumblr, Instagram, TikTok) to share their experiences with and their readings of the album. We propose that such engagement, often subversive, with the lyrics or stories created by Swift, is folkloric in nature. Specifically, we propose that the individual song narratives within *folklore* are particularly adept for retelling that fits within one’s experiences and fantasies, a process that we believe is beneficial for exploring and processing one’s sexual identity. These stories are then frequently shared with other fans online where these unique retellings or readings of the lyrics are passed

down among fans, each with a slight variation to the story. With this in mind, the current project used a sample of Swifties to address how fans' motivations, practices, and oppositional readings impact their sexual identity development, as well as their acceptance of fluidity in others' sexual orientations.

### **Sexual Identity Development and Fluidity Acceptance**

For adolescents and emerging adults, identity development is associated with notions of experimentation and exploration while middle and late adulthood are strongly tied with examination and evaluation. One critical area of the self ripe for continuing exploration and modification is sexual identity.

While some previous research suggests that sexual identity exploration is a singular, developmental event not readdressed by the individual (e.g., McCarn & Fassinger, 1996), other research shows that this is rarely true (Diamond, 2006). Rather, it is common for people, particularly those identifying with sexual minority groups (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual), to revisit their sexual identity throughout their lives. Moreover, the construction of one's identity, including their sexuality, is a "process of human development" rather than simply a developmental task that is to be "achieved" (Hammack & Cohler, 2009, p. 4). In other words, developing one's sexual identity is a dynamic process that is best described as an ongoing series of reevaluations and modifications based on people's sexual attractions and desires rather than as a definitive developmental accomplishment (Savin-Williams, 2011).

Although research has often suggested that a rigid sexual identity label is beneficial for people's healthy development (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), some scholars note that sexual identity fluidity is an indicator of "psychological health and self-confidence rather than maladjustment and denial" (Diamond, 2006, p. 84). The more frequently a person revisits their sexual

attractions, the less they perceive the importance of their sexual identity label and, instead, accept the fluidity of sexuality (Diamond, 2006). This perspective considers sexuality a spectrum, or as we refer to it as sexual orientation fluidity; that is, people move along the continuum, exploring their sexual identity within variations of attraction to people of the same gender or genders. The fluid nature of sexuality allows people to grapple with the complex and dynamic nature of attraction, helping them to process their sexual attraction even when social norms or their previous understandings challenge it.

We propose that sexual identity is a component of the self that is likely to challenge social norms while also fostering feelings of personal and social acceptance (Diamond, 2006). Yet, it is imperative to remember that one's social identity, including their sexuality, is constructed within a larger social narrative, and as such, the construction and reconstruction of one's sexual identity is an agentic response to the broader social discourse (Hammack & Cohler, 2009). Thus, for LGBTQ+ individuals, oppositional readings of the dominant social order may be a useful tactic that aids their sexual identity processing. That is, oppositional readings allow people to process fluidity in their sexual identity while also helping them to accept such variance in others.

### **Explicating Taylor Swift**

Taylor Swift is a contemporary pop icon commonly regarded for her personal song lyrics, cunning marketing behaviors, and her unusually close relationship with her fans. Historically, as a star text, Swift has been critiqued for her surface-level, white, heteronormative lyrics and lack of political commentary (Dubrofsky, 2016; Pollock, 2014; Prins, 2020). Yet, more recently, Swift has publicly voiced her political stance on numerous topics, including her support for same-sex marriage and equality for all (Spruch, 2020), and has begun to be regarded by some as

a “gay icon” (Romano, 2020). Although many consumers perceive Swift to reflect compulsory heterosexuality, there exists a subculture of Swifties who, in fact, perceive Swift to be a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Compulsory heterosexuality presumes that women are “innately” attracted to men (Rich, 2003, p.13) and is reinforced by the patriarchal system of Western cultures that perpetuates heterosexuality as the dominant sexual orientation. More specifically, it presumes that the lesbian experience, and we argue the experiences of any individual in a same-gender relationship, are either inherently deviant to societal norms or largely invisible within society. Such a presumption ultimately suggests that women, in particular, are to devalue their relationships with other women.

Indeed, a subculture of LGBTQ+ Swifties has existed for many years of Swift’s career, and, recently, the voices of this community have become stronger with the release of Taylor Swift’s more recent studio albums: *Lover*, *folklore*, and *evermore*. In particular, *folklore* has been regarded by some in the LGBTQ+ community as featuring multiple songs that are queer canon (Kircher, 2020) including *betty*, *cardigan*, and *seven*. We suggest that *folklore* presents numerous opportunities for listeners to engage in interpretative readings of the relationships within the song narratives. In particular, we propose that the popularity of the album and the circulation of fan theories related to the queer canon (Damante, 2020; Kircher, 2020; Lewis, 2020; Romano, 2020; Tenbarge, 2020; Washington Post, 2020) render the lesbian and queer experience visible. Namely, two songs on the album (*betty* and *cardigan*) are void of gendered terminology and pronouns, and one song (*seven*) describes a close same-gender relationship, thus allowing listeners to imagine the described relationships within the lesbian experience. In doing so, LGBTQ+-identifying Swifties have utilized various social network sites (Tumblr, TikTok, Instagram) to discuss the queer canon of these songs, and these discussions suggest that among

this community there is a general understanding that the narratives are about same-gender, romantic relationships.

### **Fandom: Eudaimonic Entertainment Preferences, “Shipping,” and Perceived Realism**

Media messages are polysemic, meaning that they are interpreted in unique ways depending on the knowledge and culture of the message receiver (McQuail, 2010). According to Stuart Hall (1973; 1980), each message contains an encoded meaning (i.e., the intended reading) and a decoded meaning (i.e., the interpreted reading), and the decoded meanings frequently align with one of three positions: dominant/hegemonic (i.e., decoding the message the way it was intended), negotiated (i.e., accepting the intended meaning but modifies it to the receiver’s own experiences), or oppositional (i.e., recognizing that their interpretation is counter to the dominant code but continues to fit the message to their own experiences). Hall’s theory is frequently used to examine how race, class, and gender assist individuals to bring meaning to their world. Within non-mainstream cultures, oppositional readings are most prominent, and, for the LGBTQ+ community, they are used to disrupt the heteronormativity of mainstream media (Björklund, 2018).

Indeed, we suggest that Swifties may engage in oppositional readings of multiple songs from *folklore*. Specifically, we propose that LGBTQ+ Swifties perform oppositional readings of the lyrics on the album with the intention to create narratives that fit within LGBTQ+ experiences and ultimately counter the dominant social order that promotes compulsory heterosexuality. Swift has publicly addressed the speculation surrounding the gender of the characters in *betty* and *cardigan* – clarifying that the characters in the relationships in the songs are two different genders – but, LGBTQ+ Swifties continue to perceive queer or same-gender relationships in the song lyrics. Conversely, we propose that heterosexual Swifties are less likely to perform



oppositional readings of the lyrics but, if they do, these readings might be especially powerful. Nonetheless, we believe that either process holds the potential to influence fans' sexual identity development and fluidity acceptance.

Research on the topic of fandom has steadily increased within the media effects literature with scholars frequently noting the malleable nature of the term "fandom" (Click & Scott, 2018). Such malleability can make it difficult to settle on a definitive conceptualization of this phenomenon. Thus, we acknowledge a few noteworthy characteristics of media fandom that guide our project. First, fandom refers to one's "regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text," (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 8) which includes media objects such as books, television shows, popular icons, and sports teams. Second, fandom is considered a participatory culture in which fans selectively engage with their chosen media object and others within the community (Tsay-Vogel & Sanders, 2015). Third, fandom is often regarded as a "discourse of resistance" (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 11), or a space for marginalized voices to engage with popular media texts in subversive ways to disrupt the hegemonic social order. Such disruption holds a long-standing tradition within the fan studies literature (e.g., Henry Jenkins' *Textual Poachers* and Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance*) and highlights the ways in which these subcultures re-script mainstream media to include marginalized experiences. Although fan subcultures are a frequent point of inquiry for critical-cultural scholars, less research has empirically explored the effects of oppositional readings on fans' self-concept, particularly regarding their own and others' sexual identity. With this in mind, we propose three correlates (eudaimonia, queer shipping, and perceived realism) that may influence fans' message perceptions of a media text.

### **Eudaimonia as Media Appreciation**

Historically, media effects research has examined hedonistic motivations (i.e., pleasure-seeking) as antecedents to viewers' media enjoyment (Raney et al., 2020). Yet, this perspective fails to acknowledge viewers' consumption of media content that falls beyond the scope of enjoyment. In response, Oliver and Raney (2011) conceptualized eudaimonic motivations (i.e., meaningfulness-seeking), which center around viewers' search for appreciation, connectedness, and well-being. Eudaimonic media preferences stem from a desire to seek meaning in life, while hedonistic preferences rise from an interest in escapist and fun experiences. Specifically, eudaimonia requires a "reflective" response (Raney et al., 2020, p. 260) in which viewers may choose to attend and engage with the meaningful content within a narrative, and thus *reflect* on the presented insight. Therefore, eudaimonic motivations are inherently linked with exposure to moving or dramatic content (e.g., documentaries, dramas), and hedonistic media is associated with light-hearted or carefree content (e.g., comedies; Tsay-Vogel & Sanders, 2015).

Research shows that viewers' eudaimonic media preferences result in numerous positive outcomes (e.g., personal growth, prosocial behaviors, meaning-making; Oliver et al., 2016; Stellar et al., 2017). In relation to fandom, being a fan is generally associated with a desire for "intellectual and cognitive enrichment" (Delmar et al., 2016, p. 271). These eudaimonic experiences then result in increased engagement within the fan community (Taylor, 2019), increased communication with other fans (Tsay-Vogel & Sanders, 2015), and the development of one's strengths in relation to wisdom (e.g., love of knowledge and learning, critical thinking) and courage (e.g., bravery; Delmar et al., 2016). Accordingly, it follows that eudaimonic motivations will lead listeners to evoke elaborative thoughts of the messages, which may assist them in further understanding themselves in terms of their sexual identity and others' fluidity.

### **Conceptualizing "Shipping" in Fan Communities**

Shipping occurs when fans imagine two people, either real-life media persons or fictional media characters, to be in a romantic relationship (Gonzalez, 2016). These relationships are often non-canonical (i.e., outside the narrative world) and include the creation of a fan name; for instance, in the Harry Potter fandom a prominent ship is between Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy with the resulting ship name, Drarry. Fans who engage in this activity are called shippers, and these imagined romantic relationships are referred to as ships. Shipping is also frequently accompanied by fan production, including fanfiction (i.e., the act of writing fiction based on previous media narratives) and fan art (i.e., creating art based on a media text or narrative). These activities assist in visually or narratively depicting the created ship and help to construct a tangible product that can be shared with others in the fan community.

Although empirical research on shipping is limited, few scholars note mixed results regarding such behaviors (Gonzalez, 2016; Hadas, 2013). For instance, fan identification with a non-dominant ship likely results in feelings of exclusion and discrimination within the community (Bothe, 2014). This suggests that while shipping is a product of individual fan labor and imagination, such production is also constrained by the group norms of online communities. Yet, others note that shipping encourages individuality and interactivity among communities (Donlan, 2017; Hillman-McCord, 2017), which ultimately highlights the agentic-side of fandom. In line with these findings, we posit that shipping assists individuals to explore and accept their own, and others', sexual orientations. For example, shipping allows fans to imagine a romantic relationship of their choosing (e.g., same- or different-gender). By doing so, they may then explore their individual fantasies and sexual curiosities through this creative enterprise. If we believe that fan objects act as self-reflective vehicles (Sandvoss, 2005), we might then presume that fans' shipping behaviors allow them to better understand themselves in relation to the fan-

world. For instance, fans who are questioning their sexual identity may decode heteronormative stories as queer narratives. If one imagines their fan object to engage in similar romantic behaviors to that of their fantasy, then the individual may become more accepting of themselves and others who do as well. Thus, in the present study, we examined the consequences of queer shipping, which is defined as imagining a non-heterosexual relationship between two individuals who are not known to be in a romantic or sexual relationship. In this way, non-heterosexual fans oppose heteronormativity of the story world by shipping a non-canonical, same-sex relationship. We suggest that queer shipping may bring to life fans' sexual fantasies, which, in turn, assists them to explore their own sexual identity, as well as to accept others' sexual identities.

### **Perceived Realism and Narrative Effects**

Perceived realism is a viewer's "evaluation of how accurately a narrative portrayal represents people and events as would be expected if they were to exist or occur in the actual world, or in some hypothetical world" (Busselle, 2020, p. 1). Yet, these individual judgments may be based using criteria other than that of the viewer's direct experience with the actual world. This is thought to occur because narratives are not evaluated on the same bases as scientific or logical arguments; rather, perceived realism is based on one's subjective perspective of plausibility surrounding the narrative and not necessarily a universal truth (Green, 2004).

Due to the subjectivity of realism, research on the direct effect of perceived realism on viewers' attitudes and behaviors is inconsistent (Hall, 2009). However, we suggest that the inherent entertainment aspects of media fandom (e.g., interactivity, user preferences) align our study with the influence of perceived realism on viewer experience and effects (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2011). Specifically, we suggest that perceived album realism, which we define as listeners' belief that the lyrics of the songs on the album reflect Taylor Swift's actual life, will

influence listeners' queer message perception. In this case, the album is thought to be written about Swift's experiences, which include speculated same-gender relationships. In other words, fans who believe that Swift is LGBTQ+ are likely to then perceive that the album is about Taylor Swift's life as it relates to same-gender or queer experiences. Yet, fans who believe that Swift is heterosexual are likely to perceive that the album is about Taylor Swift's life as it relates to heterosexual experiences. Thus, fans' perception of realism will likely be associated with queer message perceptions about the album, depending on their interpretation of Swift's real life, which may further be related to their sexual identity development and acceptance.

### **Mediating Role of Queer Message Perception**

Queer readings occur when message receivers decode a message in an oppositional way by applying a queer experience to the message meaning. Such oppositional readings are not typically intended by the content creators, but instead, they are established by the message receivers who see the possibility of queerness within that media text (Shaw & Persaud, 2020). Historically, many of these interpretations occur for book narratives (Ryan & Hermann-Willmarth, 2012). Yet, such readings now extend to include other medium types such as television series (Tosenberger, 2008), films (Steinhoff, 2012), and video games (Shaw & Persaud, 2020). Although queer readings may occur within different formats, these readings always occur with the intention to subvert compulsory heterosexuality (Björklund, 2018, p. 8). Through such engagement, fans can challenge norms and draw attention to social power structures.

Although theorists primarily regard queer readings as a tool for social disruption, studies also indicate that such readings are beneficial for individuals as well. For example, Ryan and Hermann-Willmarth (2012) argued that queer readings of children's literature (e.g., Sendak's

(1963) *Where the Wild Things Are* and DiCamillo's (2003) *Tale of Despereaux*) draw attention to non-normative sexual identities, which allow for discussions and vicarious experiences that assist adolescents in discovering their own identities. More specifically, adolescents' queer readings of mainstream media are useful for supporting their own sexual identity exploration and acceptance (Nylund, 2007). Through such exploration, fans may perceive an allyship with narrative characters that ultimately assist them to accept themselves and others.

A similar effect may occur within music fandoms as well; that is, fans note queer themes within a song and apply a queer reading to the message. In the current context, we refer to this as "queer message perception," which suggests that listeners interpret the *folklore* album through a queer lens. Even though multiple songs on *folklore* do not include gendered language and pronouns, Swift has identified the genders of the characters of the songs. As such, we suggest that Swifties likely recognize Swift's disclosure yet still appear to re-interpret the lyrics to portray queer or same-gender relationships. Ultimately, this demonstrates how queer message perceptions are an oppositional reading of the text, which allows listeners to subvert heteronormative narratives and is positioned similarly with that of Hall's (1973) definition of oppositional readings.

We propose that QMP will be associated with fans' perceptions of album realism, in relation to Swift's queer real life, and their engagement in other oppositional fan behaviors (i.e., queer shipping). Engaging in behaviors that subvert heteronormativity may be useful for exploring one's sexual identity and for understanding the fluidity of others' identities.

### **The Present Study**

We present a hypothesized model (see Figure 1). First, we propose that eudaimonic motivations for listening to *folklore* (H1) will predict fans' queer message perceptions (QMP) of

the songs on the album, as well as their sexual orientation fluidity acceptance (SOFA; H2a) and sexual identity development (SID; H2b). Additionally, we expect that queer shipping (H3) and the belief that *folklore* is based on Taylor Swift's life (H4) will predict fans' QMPs of the songs on the album. We also hypothesize that QMP will predict fans' SOFA (H5a) and SID (H5b).

Finally, we propose that QMP will serve as a mediator in the model. Specifically, we posit that QMP will mediate the relationship between eudaimonic motivations on SOFA (H6a) and SID (H6b), as well as the relationship between queer shipping on SOFA (H7a) and SID (H7b). We also reason that the relationship between album realism and SOFA (H8a) and SID (H8b) will be mediated by QMP. As a research question, we also test whether the proposed model differs based on fans' sexual identities.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Fans were recruited online via social media (Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, and Tik Tok) on pages devoted to Taylor Swift. They were invited to complete an online survey via Qualtrics, and they were informed that the study would ask them questions about their opinions and experiences with Taylor Swift's album, *folklore*. Depending on their familiarity with the songs, the study took between 10 minutes to one hour to complete. To ensure participants answered the survey items truthfully, one attention check question was included.

In total, 1,055 participants completed the survey, but participants were removed because of failure to consent, failure of the attention check, or by providing an incomplete response set (i.e., as a minimum requirement participants had to provide data for at least one of the two criterion variables). Because only 23 men completed the survey, we omitted them from the study because we could not draw any meaningful conclusions about them. Similarly, we omitted 96

participants who did not identify as a woman, including 42 who identified with multiple genders but not as a woman, 29 who identified as non-binary, nine who identified with a gender not listed, six who identified as genderqueer, and two who identified as transgender (but again not as a woman). Again, we could not draw meaningful conclusions from such small subsamples.

Also, because our models were compared between sexual identity groups, we only included participants who belonged to sexual identity groups that were numerous enough from which to draw inferences. We combined participants who identified as bisexual ( $n = 252$ ), demi-sexual ( $n = 13$ ), or pan-sexual ( $n = 24$ ) into one category because all three groups could be sexually attracted to any gender. Thus, the final sample included only participants who identified as women and who identified as heterosexual ( $n = 253$ ), bi/demi-/pan-sexual ( $n = 289$ ), or lesbian ( $n = 229$ ). Participants who identified as asexual ( $n = 20$ ), sexual orientation not listed ( $n = 11$ ), queer ( $n = 36$ ), questioning/unsure ( $n = 51$ ), or who preferred not to answer ( $n = 17$ ) were omitted from the analyses.

The final sample included 771 women (18-64;  $M = 24.74$ ,  $SD = 5.97$ ). Concerning racial and ethnic identity, 78.9% ( $n = 608$ ) reported their race as White or Caucasian, 13.9% ( $n = 107$ ) as Hispanic or Latinx, 6.0% ( $n = 46$ ) as Asian or Asian American, 2.2% ( $n = 17$ ) as South Asian, 1.9% ( $n = 15$ ) as Black or African American, 1.3% ( $n = 10$ ) as Middle Eastern, 1.2% ( $n = 9$ ) as American Indian or Native American or First Nation, 0.9% ( $n = 7$ ) as Pacific Islander, 2.5% ( $n = 19$ ) selected “a racial/ethnic identity not listed here,” and 0.9% ( $n = 7$ ) preferred not to answer. Percentages do not add to 100 because participants could choose more than one category.

## Measures<sup>[1]</sup>

### *Predictor Variables*



**Eudaimonic motivations.** Participants' eudaimonic motivations for listening to *folklore* were assessed using a modified version of Oliver and Raney's (2011) Eudaimonic Motivations Scale. Before responding to each item, participants were instructed to read the following statement: "I listen to *folklore* because . . ." The measure consisted of six items (e.g., "I like music albums that challenge my view of the world"; "I like music albums that have profound meanings or messages to convey"), with which participants rated their agreement on a seven-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*). A composite score was created using the average of the six items ( $M = 5.86$ ,  $SD = .83$ ,  $\alpha = .84$ ), and higher scores indicated stronger eudaimonic motivations.

**Queer shipping.** Because a measure of shipping does not exist, a new set of items was created. Specifically, participants were asked about their shipping of three songs: *betty*, *cardigan*, and *seven*. Those who believed that the song was about a queer relationship ("How much do you think the song *betty* describes a queer experience?") were presented with the LGBTQ+ shipping scale. Included in the models is the LGBTQ+ shipping scale, which consisted of 14 identical items for each song (e.g., "I like talking to other fans about *betty* as a song about a queer relationship"; "The song *betty* makes me think that about a queer relationship"). Responses were recorded on a seven-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*). Those who did not think the songs had anything to do with queer relationships ( $n = 47$ ) were given a score of 0 to reflect no queer shipping; thus, the range of the variable was 0-7. Because of the complexity of this variable, we were not able to perform a factor analysis. The queer shipping scales for each song were combined and averaged to create a composite score for each participant ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ,  $\alpha = .97$ ).

**Perceived album realism.** Seven items were created to measure whether participants perceived that *folklore* was written about Taylor Swift's real-life experiences (e.g., "is written from Taylor Swift's perspective."; "is about Taylor Swift's life."). Before answering each item, participants were instructed to read the following statement: "I think that *folklore* is about . . ." Responses were reported using a seven-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*). A principal components analysis (PCA) was performed on the seven items. Following Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007) guidance, factorability was verified (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) = .92 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity,  $\chi^2(21) = 4514.66, p < .001$ ) and univariate MSA values were also adequate (i.e., all items greater than .80). One item ("I think that *folklore* describes imaginary events and people") had a communality below .50 and was removed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). A composite score was created using the average of the six remaining items ( $M = 5.08, SD = 1.16, \alpha = .89$ ).

### ***Mediator Variable***

**Queer message perception (QMP).** Five items were created to measure participants' beliefs that *folklore* includes queer messages (e.g., "*folklore* includes narratives about same-sex relationships"; "*folklore* represents the gay experience."). Participants indicated their level of agreement using a seven-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*). A PCA was performed on the five items; factorability was verified (MSA = .85 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity,  $\chi^2(10) = 2998.81, p < .001$ ) and univariate MSA values were also adequate (i.e., all items greater than .80). One item ("*folklore* includes narratives about opposite sex relationships") had a communality below .50 and was removed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The remaining

four items were averaged to create a composite score for each participant ( $M = 5.27$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ,  $\alpha = .88$ ).

### ***Criterion Variables***

**Sexual orientation fluidity acceptance (SOFA).** To assess participants' acceptance of sexual orientation fluidity, seven items were created (e.g., "It's acceptable to question one's sexual orientation"; "Sexual orientation includes more than heterosexual relationships"). Participants rated their level of agreement using a seven-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*). To further test the structure of the scale, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run with the lavaan package in R (Rosseel, 2012). Schreiber et al.'s (2006) standards were used to establish adequate model fit. One item was dropped ("It's acceptable to question one's sexual orientation") to improve reliability. One item was eliminated because its loading was below 0.55. Accordingly, the CFA revealed adequate model fit for a one-dimension scale:  $\chi^2(9) = 44.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\chi^2/\text{degree of freedom ratio (CMIN/DF)} = 4.91$ , comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.981, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.068, 90% CI [ .05, .09]. See the supplementary materials for a visualization of the factor structure resulting from the CFA and a list of the final items. The remaining six items were averaged to create a composite score for each participant ( $M = 6.63$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ,  $\alpha = .78$ ).

**Sexual identity development (SID).** Participants' sexual identity development was measured using Johns and Probst's (2004) Attitudes Toward Sexual Orientation Scale. This scale consisted of 12 items that assessed participants' progression through the six stages of sexual minority identity development: (1) identity confusion, (2), identity comparison, (3) identity tolerance, (4) identity acceptance, (5) identity pride, and (6) identity synthesis. Example items included "I trust heterosexuals and sexual minorities equally" and "I am prepared to tell anyone

what my sexual orientation is.” Responses were recorded using a seven-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 7 = *Strongly Agree*). All 12 items were averaged to create a composite score for each participant ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ,  $\alpha = .88$ ), and higher scores indicated further progression along the identity continuum.

### ***Covariate***

**Folklore exposure.** To measure *folklore* exposure, participants were prompted to select a numeric response to the following question: “Since its release on July 24th, approximately how many times have you listened to the album *folklore*?” From a drop-down menu, participants could select between 1-100+ (Minimum = 1, Maximum = 100+,  $M = 30.23$ ,  $SD = 20.33$ ).

### ***Analysis Strategy***

To test our model, we ran a two-stage path model using the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) program. When constructing our model, we included all paths that were specified in Figure 1. We took an empirical approach to adding covariates to our model. After fitting our hypothesized model, we introduced two control variables: fanship level of Taylor Swift and exposure to the *folklore* album. We only retained covariates that exhibited statistically significant paths with at least one endogenous variable and exogenous variable. We trimmed non-statistically significant paths in one step. Thus, we only retained *folklore* exposure in the model.

We ran multiple-group analyses to investigate whether the estimates in the model differed for participants who identified as heterosexual, bi/demi-/pan-sexual, and lesbian. A Chi-square difference test was used to determine if the unconstrained model exhibited a better fit than a model that constrained all paths, intercepts, and residual variances to be equivalent across sexual identity groups.

Adequate fit was based on Hu and Bentler's (1999) recommendations: a normed CMIN/DF of 2.0 or less, a CFI of 0.95 or higher, and a RMSEA less than .06. For *folklore* exposure, there were six instances of missing data, and there was only one case of missing data for each of two remaining variables: eudaimonic motivations and QMP. For each, we replaced the case of missing data with the series mean.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Of interest to our study was whether there were sexual identity differences in the associations between variables. Means, standard deviations, and one-way ANOVA results for the study variables between heterosexual, bi/demi-/pan-sexual, and lesbian participants are shown in Table 1. Bi/demi-/pan-sexual and lesbian participants reported significantly higher levels of eudaimonic motivations for listening to *folklore* than did heterosexual participants. Lesbian participants engaged in the most queer shipping, followed by bi/demi-/pan-sexual participants, then heterosexual participants. Lesbian participants were the most likely to perceive the album as being about Taylor Swift's actual life and to perceive the album as queer. Lesbian and bi/demi-/pan-sexual participants reported the most SOFA, while heterosexual participants reported the highest scores on SID. Table 2 contains the zero-order correlations between the study variables by sexual identity group.

### Main Analyses

A  $\chi^2$  difference test was used to determine if the unconstrained model exhibited a better fit than a model that constrained all paths, intercepts, and residual variances to be equivalent for all three sexual identity groups. The constrained model demonstrated an inadequate fit to the data,  $\chi^2(49) = 773.02, p < .001$  (CMIN/DF = 15.78, CFI = 0.23, RMSEA = .139), while the

unconstrained model demonstrated a satisfactory fit,  $\chi^2(21) = 18.08, p = .644$  (CMIN/DF = 0.86, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA < .001). Moreover, the unconstrained model fit the data significantly better than the constrained model,  $\chi^2_{\text{difference}}(28) = 754.94, p < .001$ , suggesting that the model estimates were not equal between sexual identity groups. The unconstrained models are displayed in Figure 2 (heterosexual participants), Figure 3 (bi/demi-/pan-sexual participants) and Figure 4 (lesbian participants). Thus, in answer to the RQ, the model fits significantly differ by sexual identity.

### Hypothesis Testing

To address H1, we examined the paths between eudaimonic motivations and QMP across the sexual identity groups. Eudaimonic motivations did not significantly predict QMP in any of the three models. Thus, H1 was not supported. Eudaimonic motivations exhibited direct and positive effects on SOFA for bi/demi-/pan-sexual participants (H2a), but not heterosexual or lesbian participants. However, eudaimonic motivations did not predict SID in any of the three sexual identity groups (H2b). Thus, there was limited support for H2.

H3 was tested by examining whether queer shipping had a significant effect on QMP. Indeed, queer shipping predicted QMP in all three groups, with the effect size being moderately large (standardized paths ranging from 0.65 to 0.73). Thus, H3 was supported. To test H4, we examined the path between perceived album realism and QMP. In all three groups, the perception that *folklore* was written about Taylor Swift's real-life experiences positively predicted QMP. Thus, H4 was supported.

For H5, the paths between QMP and the criterion variables were examined. QMP was positively related to SOFA among the heterosexual participants, which supports H5a only for the heterosexual participants. There was no effect of QMP on SOFA for bi/demi-/pan-sexual or for

lesbian participants. QMP was also not related to SID (H5b) for any of the sexual identity groups. Thus, H5 was partially supported for heterosexual participants.

To test H6a-b, we examined the mediating role of QMP in the relationship between eudaimonic motivations for listening to *folklore* and the criterion variables. Indirect effects were tested with 5,000 bootstrapped samples, yielding 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effects. See Table 3. None of the indirect effects in any of the sexual identity groups were statistically significant. Thus, H6 was not supported.

For H7a-b, which examined the mediating role of QMP in the relationship between queer shipping and the criterion variables, we found that H7a was supported for heterosexual participants. Queer shipping positive predicted QMP, which, in turn, predicted SOFA. The indirect effect for queer shipping  $\rightarrow$  QMP  $\rightarrow$  SID approached statistical significance ( $p = .075$ ), but it was in the opposite direction of what we hypothesized. Thus, H7b was not supported for heterosexual participants. QMP was not a mediator between queer shipping and SOFA or SID for either bi/demi-/pan-sexual or lesbian participants. Thus, H7 was not supported among bi/demi-/pan-sexual nor lesbian participants.

Similar results were found for H8a-b, which examined album realism as the predictor variable in the same mediational paths. For heterosexual participants, mediation effects were found for both SOFA and SID, but the effect for H8b, which examined SID, was opposite in direction to what was predicted. Again, no mediation effects were found for bi/demi-/pan-sexual participants or lesbian participants, providing no support for H8 for these sexual minority groups.

### **Testing an Alternative Model**

We compared the observed model with an alternative model in which the direction of influence between the variables was reversed. That is, in the alternative model, SOFA and SID

were exogenous, predicting QMP, which, in turn, predicted eudaimonic motivations, queer shipping, and perceived album realism. The fit of the model of the alternative model was satisfactory,  $\chi^2(21) = 168.76$ ,  $p < .001$  (CMIN/DF = 8.04, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .051), with the exception of the CMIN/DF being above the acceptable threshold of 2.00. Overall, though, it was not as good as the fit of the observed model. Additionally, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), which is a comparative measure of fit so that the model with the lowest value is the better fitting model, was 336.76 for the alternative model, whereas it was 239.70 for the observed model.

### Discussion

Although fandom is a growing point of inquiry within the media entertainment literature, multiple gaps in the research still exist. The results of the present study advance this area of interest by examining the ways in which eudaimonic motivations and oppositional fan activities relate to fans' understanding and acceptance of their own and others' sexual identities.

To start, the findings from the present study provide a unique contribution to the literature on fan motivations. Specifically, for bi/demi-/pan-sexual, eudaimonic motivations were positively related to SOFA. This effect was not a function of QMP. Rather, peoples' motivations to find meaning within the music were enough for them to be more accepting of sexual orientation fluidity. This finding is somewhat in line with previous research that demonstrates that eudaimonic motivations result in positive outcomes, such as prosocial behaviors (Stellar et al., 2017) and personal growth (Oliver et al., 2016). Our study demonstrates that eudaimonic motivations are related to bi/demi-/pan-sexual individuals' acceptance of others' sexual orientation fluidity, implying that meaningful experiences do appear to assist people in holding favorable perceptions of others (Raney et al., 2020). Additionally, we suggest that the bi/demi-



/pan-sexual fans are likely to have the most awareness of their own sexual orientation fluidity, and thus seeking meaning in the album may serve to reinforce or bolster their preexisting attitudes.

Queer shipping has not been quantitatively tested prior to this study, and research suggests that it is a relatively uncommon fan behavior; in fact, such engagement may actually lead to feelings of exclusion within fan communities (Bothe, 2014). The findings from our study are counter to this. First, queer shipping was rather normative within our sample (as demonstrated by the descriptive statistics in Table 1). Because our sample included a large proportion of LGBTQ+ Swifties, we acknowledge that this finding may accurately describe that queer shipping is rather normative within sexually diverse samples. Second, our findings also suggest that queer shipping may have benefits for heterosexual individuals. Although there was a direct path between queer shipping and QMP for all three groups, the relationship between queer shipping and SOFA was mediated by QMP only for heterosexual participants. Engaging in oppositional fan activities allows heterosexual individuals to subvert the heteronormative narrative of the songs on the album, which ultimately assists them in accepting others' fluid sexual orientations.

Further, and contrary to our hypothesis, we found a negative indirect association between album realism and SID through QMP. Yet, this relation only occurred through QMP and was statistically significant exclusively among heterosexual participants. This finding may suggest that reading a queer relationship into the songs influences fans' sexual identity development and processing. In other words, for heterosexual fans, in particular, engaging with the text - as explored via album realism - was associated with oppositional readings which, in turn, led to more identity processing. We provide three explanations for this finding. First, we propose that

envisioning a same-gender relationship within the songs may awaken same-gender desires for heterosexual participants, which leads them to re-process their sexual identity. Thus, these individuals may feel less secure in their current sexual identity status and seek to reevaluate their identity labels. This is demonstrated by the negative pathway between QMP and SID suggesting that QMP is related to earlier stages of the sexual identity continuum (Johns & Probst, 2004).

Second, it could also be that reading a queer relationship into the song narratives allows heterosexual fans to explore their inner desires, which may have been publicly hidden as evidenced by their heterosexual identity. In other words, QMP might be an outlet for these individuals to explore their sexual desires without social scrutiny. Yet, this tension between their inner fantasies and their outward sexual identity may complicate their understanding of their sexual identity as previously labeled. Third, we also suggest that re-interpreting the song lyrics to fit within queer experiences might assist heterosexual participants to accept non-heteronormative relationships and identities. Such acceptance may then prompt them to reassess their identity in relation to these assumptions. Moreover, SOFA was not correlated with SID, which could suggest that these variables tap into different processes of sexual identity development.

Lastly, we suggest that these findings lend empirical support to the notion that fandom is a “discourse of resistance” (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 11). Fans’ oppositional readings of the album subvert the dominant, heteronormative narratives most frequently attributed to Swift’s music. By doing so, fans re-script mainstream media to reflect marginalized experiences. This demonstrates that fans’ oppositional readings are likely to begin with their engagement in non-normative fan behaviors (i.e., queer shipping). Such activities allow them to fantasize about queer themes within popular media, and by extension, they explore and accept their own sexual identity. Moreover, not only does this suggest engaging in fan engagement behaviors and oppositional

readings are beneficial, but our results highlight a positive effect of media fandom. Engaging in such retellings and rereadings of Swift's album, *folklore*, provides a unique connection to traditional and academic understandings of folklore. In particular, we believe our study provides a theoretical connection to digital folklore as it relates to fans' identity processing; that is, the use of verbal art (i.e., folklore; Bauman, 1975) to explore one's sexual identity and acceptance of others' fluid orientation. More specifically, when viewed as a form of communication, folklore may be a useful way for fans to play within elements of popular culture that are modified to benefit their personal needs.

### **Limitations/Future Research**

There are multiple limitations within this study that need to be addressed. First, we were unable to use previously established scales for multiple variables, including one of our criterion variables (SOFA). This was due to a relative dearth in the literature, and thus, the construction of these scales was necessary to test our model. We suggest that future research should validate these scales, especially because our results show promise for queer shipping and QMP as a potential body of research for further exploration. Further, participants' scores on SOFA were relatively high and thus, a ceiling effect may have occurred. Future research should employ magnitude scales (e.g., 0-100) to better capture these constructs. Similarly, this measure was also novel to this study and consisted of a relatively few number of items. Future research should consider exploring additional items within this measure.

Second, although our sample was relatively diverse regarding sexual orientation, we only include Taylor Swift fans who identified as women. Therefore, we cannot presume that such effects would occur in all media fandoms or in fans of different gender identities (e.g., men). Future research would benefit from further exploration of the hypothesized model across

different fandoms. For instance, to test the veracity of our predictions, it would be necessary to test how fans of a male fan object differ in regards to SOFA and SID. Similarly, our sample comprised a large proportion of LGBTQ+ participants; likely due to the overwhelming LGBTQ+ presence on two of the recruitment sites (i.e., Tumblr and TikTok). We propose that future research would benefit from using a sample that is more representative of the U.S. population in a number of ways (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation). Further, the sample is largely white (71.4%), which may speak to critiques of Swift as emblematic of white heterosexuality (Prins, 2020). We acknowledge that the current sample may be reflective of a broader characteristic of her fanbase (i.e., predominantly white) and thus, we suggest that future research should explore the shipping and QMP within an ethnically/racially diverse sample using a non-white celebrity.

Third, our study employed a cross-sectional design; we cannot make causal claims. Although a reverse causality model was a significantly worse fit than the model we tested, future research should consider employing a longitudinal design to address this limitation. Further, we suggest that a longitudinal design may be better suited to capture individuals' SID in relation to their media fandom. Fourth, we suggest that future research should consider using a different measure to capture sexual identity development. The current measure (Johns & Probst, 2004) addresses sexual identity development as a series of stages, which makes it difficult to understand additional nuance related to sexual orientation fluidity.

## **Conclusion**

Although increasing scholarly attention is paid to the effects of media fandom, many areas within this sub-field remain unexplored. As such, the current study adds to this growing body of literature with an examination of fan motivations and oppositional readings on fans'

sexual identity development, as well as their acceptance of others' sexual identity fluidity. Broadly, our findings suggest positive effects of fan engagement. Specifically, eudaimonic motivations predicted bi/demi-/pansexual fans' acceptance of others' sexual orientation fluidity. Further, our novel exploration of queer shipping suggests that non-normative fan behaviors and oppositional readings are beneficial for fans' SOFA, especially among heterosexual female fans. Our findings not only highlight the role of fandom within identity development but also illustrate the use of fandom as a discourse of resistance.

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**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics and Comparisons of Sexual Identity Categories across Study Variables*

Variable	Actual Range	Heterosexual ( <i>n</i> = 253)		Bi-, demi-, pan- sexual ( <i>n</i> = 320)		Lesbian ( <i>n</i> = 262)		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Eta</i> <sup>2</sup>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
1. Eudaimonic motivation	1–7	5.77 <sub>a</sub>	.86	5.92 <sub>b</sub>	.76	5.89 <sub>a,b</sub>	.83	2.73	.066	.007
2. Queer shipping	0–7	2.74 <sub>a</sub>	1.64	4.44 <sub>b</sub>	1.25	5.09 <sub>c</sub>	0.99	205.20	<.001	.348
3. Perceived album realism	1–7	4.59 <sub>a</sub>	1.17	5.11 <sub>b</sub>	1.16	5.58 <sub>c</sub>	0.92	49.63	<.001	.114
4. Queer message perception	1-7	4.23 <sub>a</sub>	1.48	5.48 <sub>b</sub>	1.35	6.14 <sub>c</sub>	1.00	134.75	<.001	.261
5. Sexual orientation fluidity acceptance	1–7	6.52 <sub>a</sub>	0.85	6.75 <sub>b</sub>	0.32	6.58 <sub>b,c</sub>	0.39	12.28	<.001	.031
6. Sexual identity development	1.25–7	5.83 <sub>a</sub>	0.70	4.04	1.06	4.42 <sub>c</sub>	1.10	247.61	<.001	.393
7. <i>Folklore</i> exposure	1-100+	30.09	20.17	29.73	20.53	31.01	20.32	0.26	.771	.001

*Note.* Subscripts that differ in the same row differ at *p* < .05 via LSD post hoc comparisons.

**Table 2***Correlations Between Study Variables for Heterosexual and Bi-, Demi-, and Pan-Sexual, and Lesbian Participants*

Heterosexual Participants ( <i>n</i> = 253)							
<i>Variables</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6	7.
1. Eudaimonic motivations	--						
2. Queer shipping	.13*	--					
3. Perceived album realism	.23***	.39***	--				
4. Queer message perception	.13*	.77***	.41***	--			
5. Sexual orientation fluidity acceptance	.11	.20**	.11	.25***	--		
6. Sexual identity development	-.02	-.18***	-.01	-.13*	.00	--	
7. <i>Folklore</i> exposure	.24***	.08	.13*	.12	.06	-.23***	--
Bi/Demi-/Pan-Sexual Participants ( <i>n</i> = 288)							
<i>Variables</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6	7.
1. Eudaimonic motivations	--						
2. Queer shipping	.14*	--					
3. Perceived album realism	.04	.45***	--				
4. Queer message perception	.15**	.80***	.52***	--			
5. Sexual orientation fluidity acceptance	.23***	.07	.01	.09	--		
6. Sexual identity development	-.06	-.04	-.04	-0.02	.03	--	
7. <i>Folklore</i> exposure	.16**	.13*	.11	.14*	.08	-.05	--
Lesbian Participants ( <i>n</i> = 227)							
<i>Variables</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6	7.
1. Eudaimonic motivations	--						
2. Queer shipping	.23***	--					
3. Perceived album realism	.12	.28***	--				
4. Queer message perception	.22***	.73***	.43***	--			
5. Sexual orientation fluidity acceptance	.12	-.01	.01	.07	--		
6. Sexual identity development	.04	.06	.11	.00	.01	--	
7. <i>Folklore</i> exposure	.17*	.05	.06	.05	.07	.00	--

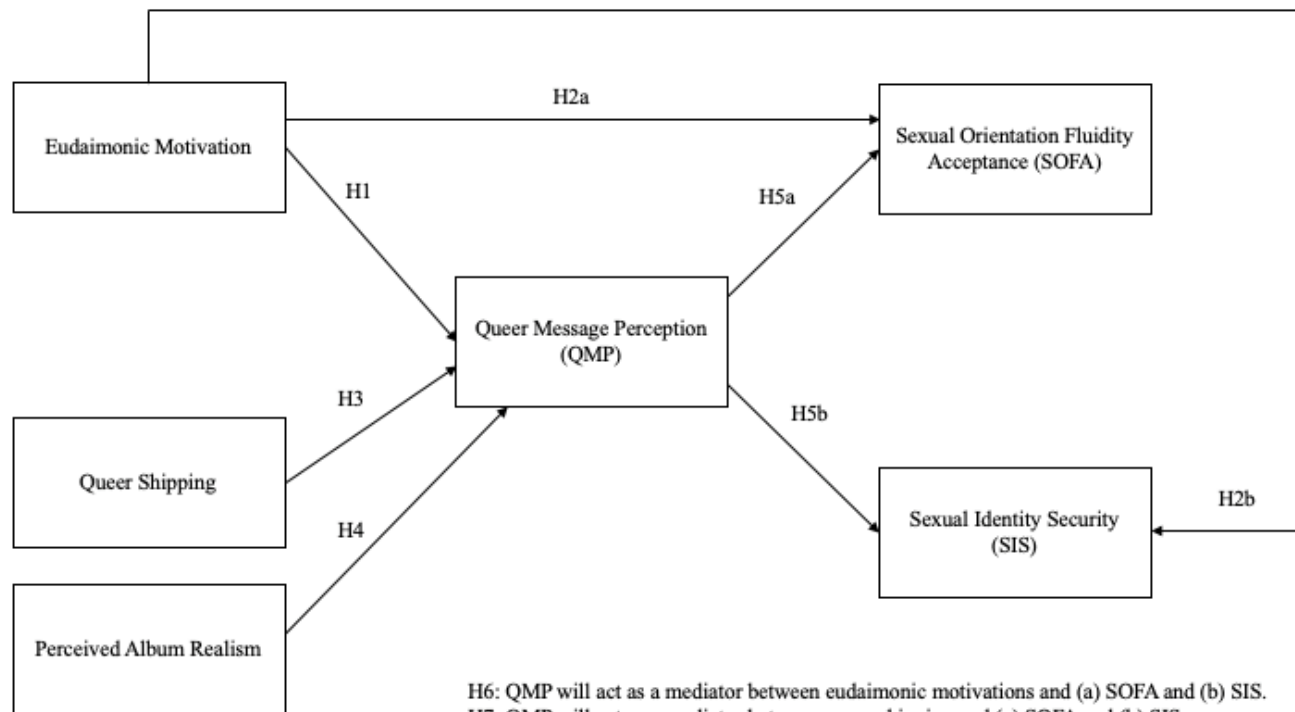
Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table 3***Mediation Effects*

Mediation Paths	<i>Heterosexual</i>		<i>Bi/demi-/pan-sexual</i>		<i>Lesbian</i>	
	<i>b(SE)</i>	95% CI	<i>b(SE)</i>	95% CI	<i>b(SE)</i>	95% CI
Eudaimonic motivation → QMP → SOFA	.006 (.011)	[-.017, .018]	.002 (.004)	[-.001, .012]	.002 (.005)	[-.001, .020]
Eudaimonic motivation → QMP → SIS	-.002 (.005)	[-.010, .007]	-.003 (.003)	[-.007, .002]	.000 (.004)	[-.011, .004]
Queer shipping → QMP → SOFA	.180** (.051)	[.090, .259]	.039 (.042)	[-.028, .108]	.028 (.040)	[-.032, .096]
Queer shipping → QMP → SIS	-.075+ (.044)	[-.150, -.006]	-.007 (.042)	[-.074, .064]	-.007 (.038)	[-.071, .055]
Perceived album realism → QMP → SOFA	.028* (.015)	[.008, .057]	.011 (.012)	[-.028, .108]	.011 (.017)	[-.011, .044]
Perceived album realism → QMP → SIS	-.012* (.009)	[-.150, -.006]	-.002 (.011)	[-.074, .064]	-.003 (.015)	[-.027, .023]

*Note.* *b* = standardized mediation effect. QMP = queer message perception. SOFA = sexual orientation fluidity acceptance. SIS = sexual identity development. +  $p = .075$ ; \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$





H6: QMP will act as a mediator between eudaimonic motivations and (a) SOFA and (b) SIS.  
 H7: QMP will act as a mediator between queer shipping and (a) SOFA and (b) SIS.  
 H8: QMP will act as a mediator between perceived album realism and (a) SOFA and (b) SIS.  
 RQ: Will the model fit different for those who identify as heterosexual, bisexual, or lesbian?

Figure 1. Hypothesized model.

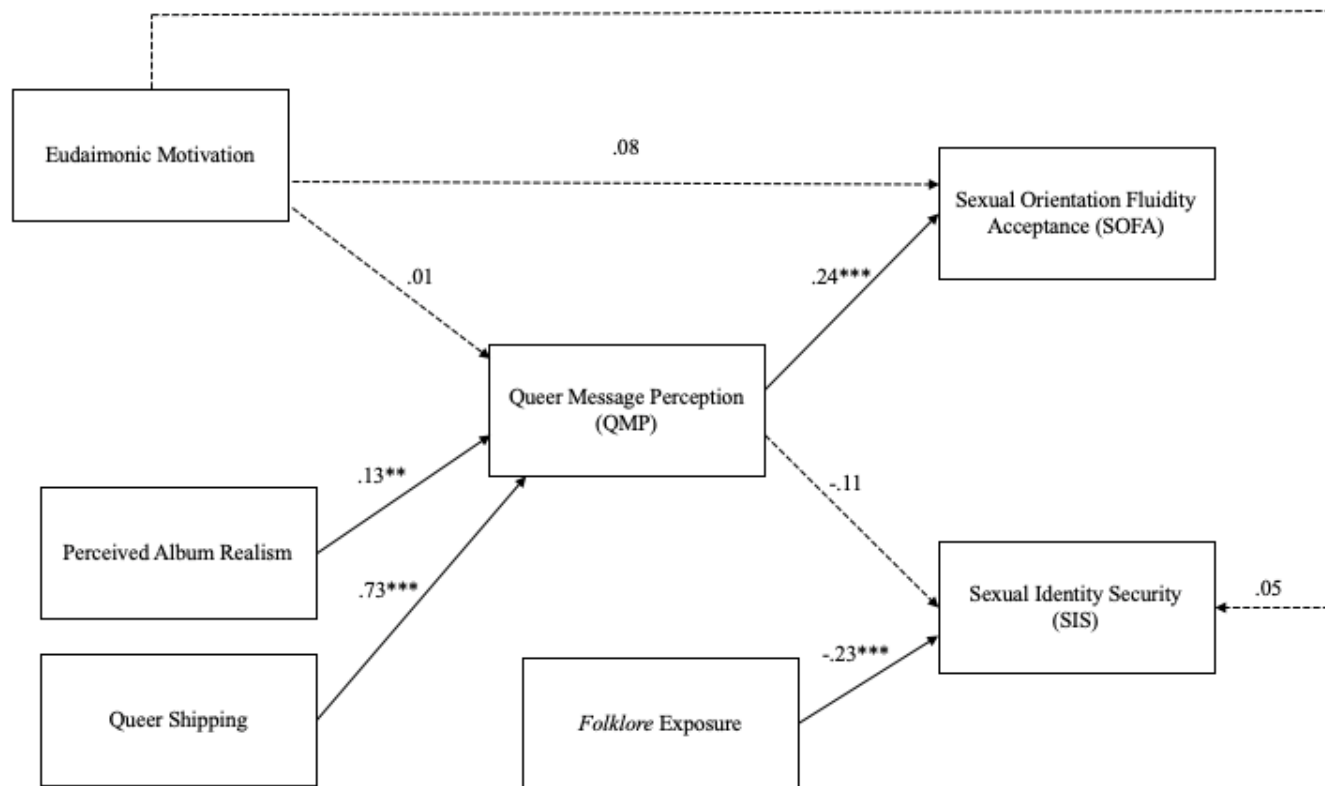


Figure 2. Observed model for heterosexual women.  
 \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

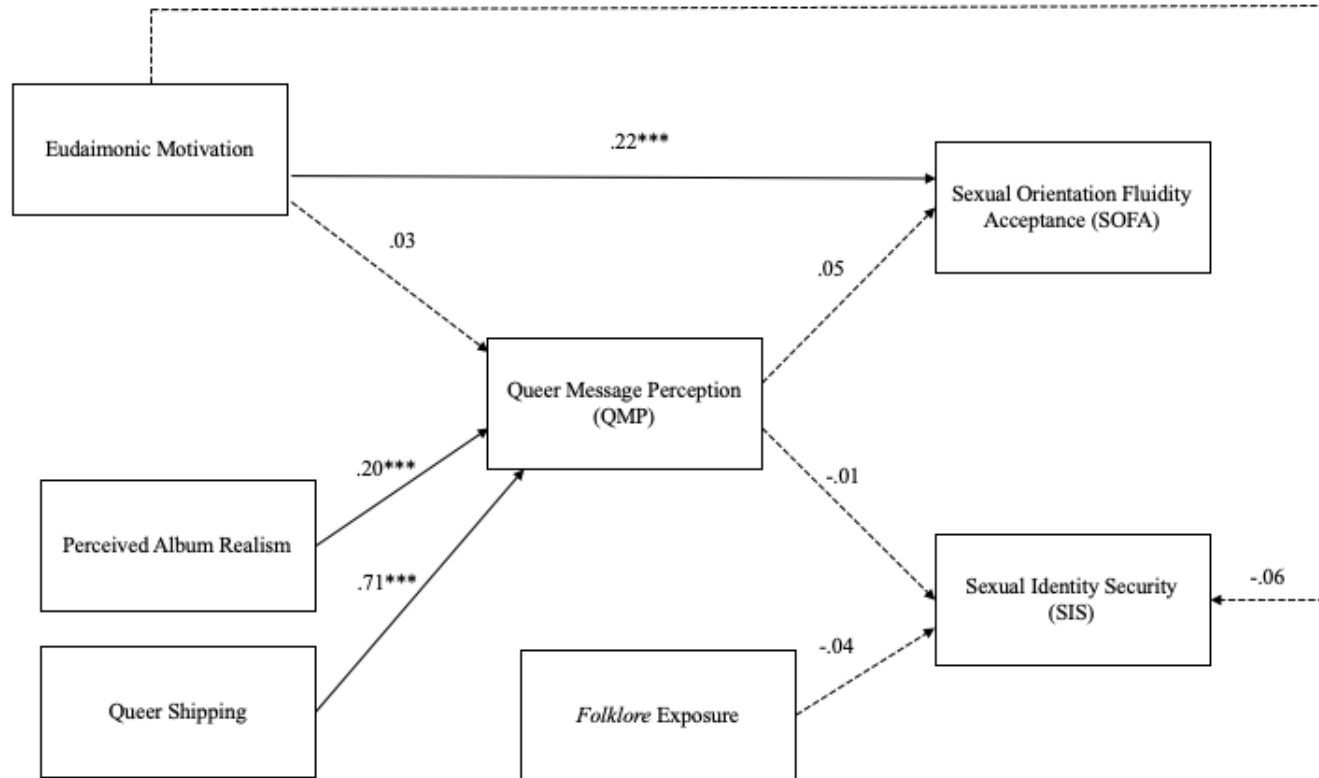


Figure 3. Observed model for bisexual women.  
 $+p = .05$ ;  $*p < .05$ ;  $**p < .01$ ;  $***p < .001$

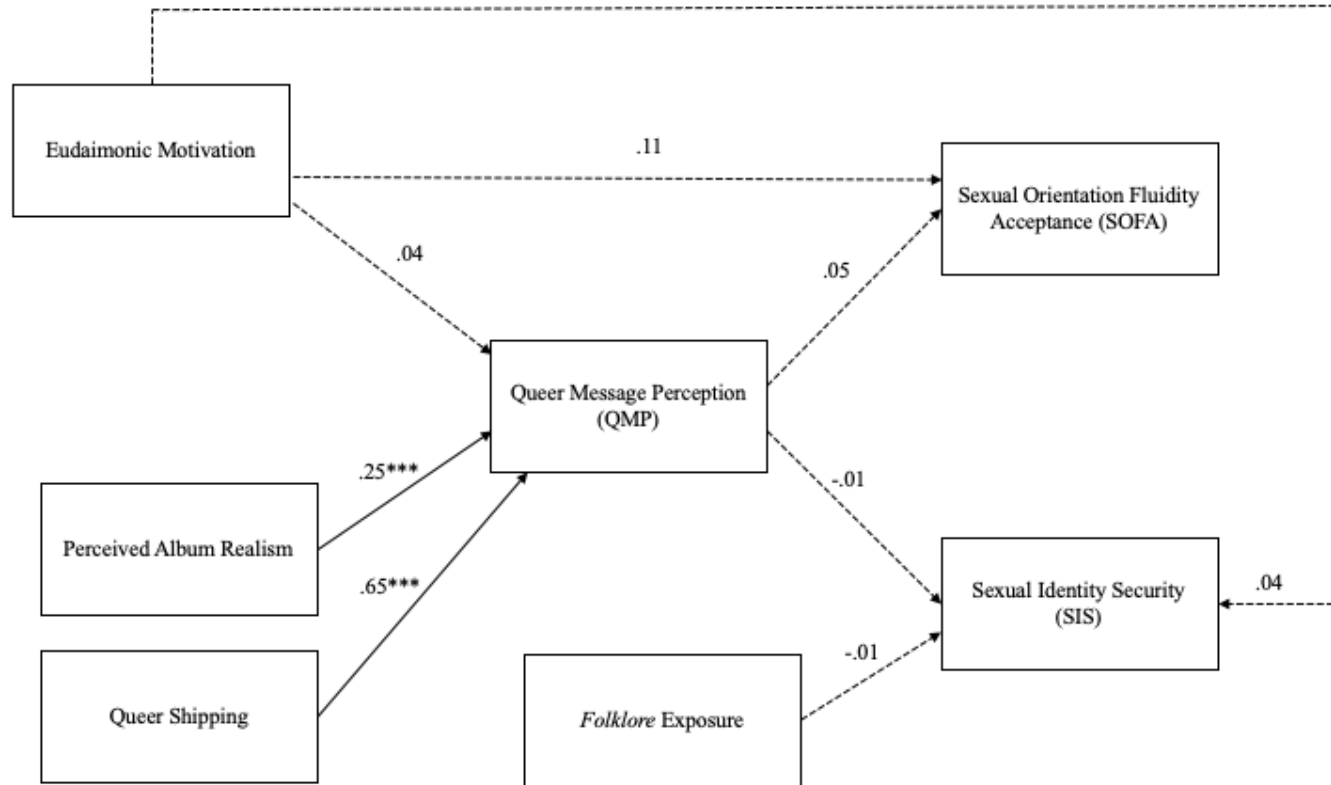


Figure 4. Observed model for lesbian women.  
 \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$