

THE INFLUENCE OF FRATERNAL MEMBERSHIP ON BISEXUAL, PANSEXUAL, AND
POLYSEXUAL MEMBERS' SEXUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

by

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Abstract

Researchers have established that fraternity environments are rife with homophobia, heterosexism, and hypermasculinity, which diminish queer members' experiences, force them to develop coping strategies, and limit opportunities for them to explore or develop their sexual identities. While numerous studies explored the experiences of queer members in fraternities, no study in the extant literature specifically explored the unique experiences of nonmonosexual (e.g., bisexual, pansexual, polysexual) members. All studies either neglected the nonmonosexual community or grouped them with other queer identities and assumed they have an indistinctive experience. Scholars have called upon student affairs practitioners and scholars to address monosexism in higher education, and the present study explored this gap in the literature.

Using a narrative inquiry qualitative design, I engaged in semi-structured conversations with 8 nonmonosexual fraternity alumni, representing 8 undergraduate institutions and 7 inter/national fraternities. The conversations lasted 40-85-minutes and were recorded via Zoom. I conducted a thematic data analysis based on three-cycle coding and I made sense of three prevailing themes. First, participants' fraternal membership facilitated liberatory firsts, including their first sense of self-acceptance, first time finding queer community, and/or first time acting upon their sexual identity externally. Second, participants became aware of and were forced to cope with the hostile environments in their fraternities by performing a masculine or heterosexual identity, distancing themselves from hypermasculinity, homophobia, and heterosexism, and/or splitting queerness from hostility. Third, participants addressed monosexism and biphobia in their fraternities by internally grappling with their identities and the performance thereof, responding head-on through education, and/or disengaging from the fight.

A broader narrative of the present study is that fraternities are sites of multiplicity and complexity; the same environments and experiences that foster liberation for pan/bi/poly members may also re/create the negative implications of hetero/monosexism. Thus, the influence of fraternal membership is neither all good, nor all bad, but rather, multiple and complex. I conclude with five recommendations for practice: 1) resist monosexism as strongly as we resist heterosexism, 2) resist capitalist monosexism, 3) reimagine authenticity and queer student development, 4) deconstruct binaries, and 5) recognize the multiplicity and complexity of lived experience.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is vast literature delineating that students develop in college; the academic, personal, and professional challenges students face lead them to reconsider “their self-perceptions, develop new skills, and master developmental tasks” (Levine & Evans, 1991, p. 1). Further, scholars have asserted students’ development in college is mediated by their social identities (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender or sexual identity, disability, socioeconomic status, etc.) and the oppressive systems and power imbalances present at the institutions they are situated within (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, classism, ableism; Baxter Magolda, 2009; Jones, 2019; Harris & Poon, 2019; Okello & White, 2019; Abes & Wallace, 2020). For example, queer college students’ sexual identity development is influenced by their college environment (Zubernis & Snyder, 2007; Tillapaugh, 2015). Zubernis & Snyder (2007) shared that “students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender (GLBT), or questioning their sexual orientation [sic] experience the same stresses and concerns that affect college students in general, but have the additional stresses related to managing the stigma of being a sexual minority” (p. 75). They also stressed the salience of GLBT students integrating their sexual identity with their overall identity in a positive way as they develop as college students (Zubernis & Snyder, 2007).

Abes and Kasch (2007) delineated how queer students must first form a resistance to heteronormative structures in their environments before demonstrating developmental behaviors associated with Baxter Magolda’s (2009) self-authorship, demonstrating the salience of queer sexualities in college student development. Tillapaugh (2015) explored the factors that influenced queer college men’s development in college and found the “need to be out and proud or be closeted provides another dangerous condition related to the psychological wellness of

sexual minority males [sic] on his campus” (p. 71). Further, Tillapaugh (2015) documented that the “experiences of confronting homophobia, heterosexism, and heteronormativity have a direct connection to the holistic development and meaning-making of one’s multiple identities within the college experience” (p. 71). Zubernis and Snyder (2007) also documented the negative psychological and physiological implications of heterosexist higher education environments and the added stressors for queer college students.

Scholars have established for some time now that 1) gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) students are present in fraternities and sororities at similar rates to that of the larger campus population and that 2) GLB members join Greek-lettered organizations for the same reasons as their straight counterparts, such as friendship, fun, and sense of belonging (Case et al., 2005). Studies that explored the experiences of queer fraternity and sorority members have also documented the heteronormative, homophobic external pressures and structures (e.g., social events, proximity and non-privacy of housing) that press heterosexism upon GLB members and limit their opportunities for sexual identity exploration or processes associated with queer sexual identity development (Hughes, 1991) and chapter climates rife with homophobic and heterosexist attitudes, behaviors, jokes that limited the quality of their sorority and fraternity experience (Case et al., 2005). Yeung and Strombler (2000) delineated the struggles queer fraternity members face attempting to maintain a queer identity *and* a fraternity or sorority membership or identity. Trump and Wallace (2006) asserted that gay fraternity members are forced to develop a myriad of coping strategies as a result of the grossly heterosexist and homophobic environments of their chapters. Hall and La France (2007) explored the ways in which homophobia was communicated by members as a means to perform straight identities in service of heterosexual members’ desires. While numerous studies explored the general

experiences of queer members in fraternities and sororities (Hughes, 1991; Reisberg, 1998; Windmeyer & Freeman, 2000; Yeung & Strombler, 2000; Case et al., 2005; Hesp, 2006; Franklin, 2007; Hall & LaFrance, 2007; Hesp & Brooks 2009; Hussy & Bisconti, 2010; Neumann et al., 2013), no study in the extant literature specifically explored the unique experiences of nonmonosexual (e.g., bisexual, pansexual, polysexual) members. All studies either 1) neglected the nonmonosexual community entirely in their participant eligibility or 2) grouped the nonmonosexual community in with other queer identities (e.g. gay members) and assumed they have an indistinctive experience, demonstrating the need to examine the influence of monosexism in fraternal environments.

Monosexism, the structural system that oppresses people with a nonmonosexual sexual identity due to the hegemonic misconception that people can and/or should only be romantically, sexually, or otherwise attracted to partner(s) of a singular gender, is a system of oppression nonmonosexual college students face in addition to heterosexism (Balsam & Mohr, 2007). Nonmonosexual students face many barriers to synthesizing their sexual identities (Weinberg et al., 1994), and they often lack validation and affirmation of their identities (Matteson, 1995). The Jed Foundation (2021) shared that institutional monosexism leads to nonmonosexual students' development of internalized monosexism and a myriad of individual mental and physical health risks and negative outcomes. Broadly, Nonmonosexual people do not experience the visible, organized communities or sources of support that monosexual people, such as gay or lesbian people, do (Dolan, 2013). The monosexism nonmonosexual people may face in queer communities may outweigh the benefits of a respite from heterosexual communities, leaving nonmonosexual people void of an affirming community (Balsam & Mohr, 2007). In higher education, bisexual students experience bisexual-specific stress in LGBTQ campus spaces and a

lack of support addressing these issues, resulting in negative interactions with spaces specifically identified to support queer students (Tavarez, 2022). Broadly, neglecting the nonmonosexual community in research, even in studies exploring sexuality, is common (Brewster, 2017), as previously demonstrated by the review of the literature exploring queer fraternity members' experiences. Dolan (2013) called on student affairs scholars and professionals to seek a deeper understanding of the struggles nonmonosexual people face due to monosexism and what these students need to feel understood and supported.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the influence of fraternal membership on bisexual, pansexual, and polysexual¹ (pan/bi/poly; bi/poly/pan; poly/pan/bi; pan/poly/bi; bi/pan/poly; poly/bi/pan) fraternity members' sexual identity development. For instance, I aimed to examine how fraternal membership mediates poly/bi/pan members' experiences (repeated or lack thereof) undertaking the tasks Harper and Swanson (2019) posited to be salient to pan/bi/poly individuals' sexual identity development: labeling, salience and intersection of identities, coming out, community and/or political identity, and managing the impact of oppression/stigma (see Figure B). I used a narrative inquiry qualitative design (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016) to elevate the unique experiences of pan/bi/poly fraternity members; I chose these three sexual identities because they each are nonmonosexual, are most often the target of

¹ The six abbreviations pan/bi/poly, bi/poly/pan, poly/pan/bi, pan/poly/bi, bi/pan/poly, and poly/bi/pan will be randomly rotated throughout this paper in an effort to deconstruct any hierarchy between sexual identities. While bisexual is explicitly included in the typical LGBTQ+ acronym, pansexual and polysexual find themselves either in the Q for queer or the +, representing the many sexual and gender identities that exist beyond the acronym. The prevalence of an identity may encourage its societal acceptance and validation as legitimate; likewise, lack of representation may discourage its validity and acceptance. There is contention regarding which identities in the queer community have it harder or easier, such as assertions that bisexual or straight-passing people have an easier time existing in a heterosexist society. However, Marine & Gilbert (2021) professed our collective liberation is achieved not by spending our time trying to convince others to care about our most salient social identities, but rather by taking responsibility for how we may contribute to the oppression of others and take actions to reduce our complicity in the harm done to others. Thus, the three identities will be randomly rotated to destabilize any hierarchy in the queer community and to encourage unity within the pan/bi/poly community situated in a monosexist system and all queer communities in the face of a heterosexist and genderist society.

monosexism, and are either nonexistent or grouped together with other sexual identities (e.g., gay) in the literature related to sexual diversity of fraternities. In the conversations, I sought to destabilize the dichotomous and hierarchical research-participant relationships, foster authentic conversations, and center the relational nature of experience. The study was further informed by queer theory's understanding of the socially- and relationally-constructed nature of sexual identities, in that, an individual's ongoing, repeated actions—and others' reactions to those actions—continually re/create one's identities (Butler, 1990).

Participants had to identify as poly/bi/pan, be a current, former, or alumni member of a fraternity, and be at least 18 years old. I recruited participants through numerous networks of queer fraternity members and student affairs professionals or fraternity advisors who have access to queer fraternity members. I led and recorded 40- to 85-minute semi-structured individual conversations over Zoom with each of the eight participants. I did a thematic analysis based on a three-cycle coding analysis to analyze the data (the Zoom audio/visual recordings and auto-transcripts), including three rounds of coding (open, axial, and selective; Saldaña, 2009). Throughout my analysis and the representation of findings, I was cognizant of my closeness with my sexual identity and my positionality as a researcher who met the participant criteria; I was careful not to overlay my experience onto participants', and instead, I embraced a community of difference, undergirding that neither pan/bi/poly people nor bi/poly/pan fraternity members are a monolith. The transferability of the findings of the present study is supported by the participants' diversity of geographical location, institutional type, nonmonosexual identity, gender identity, age at the time of the study, chronological time of participants' undergraduate tenure, fraternity membership size, and proportion of queer membership within one's fraternity.

Through my analysis of my conversations with Brock, Don, Genesis, Gilan, Harry, Jake, Jordan, and Michael, I made sense of three prevailing themes of the influence of fraternal membership on bi/poly/pan members' sexual identity development. First, participants' fraternities facilitated a liberatory first, such as the first time feeling comfortable with one's identity, the first time finding queer community, or the first time disclosing their sexual identity. Second, participants became aware of hypermasculine, heterosexist environments in their fraternities and were forced to develop coping mechanisms, such as performing a masculine or heterosexual identity, distancing oneself from a particularly harmful person, or splitting one's queerness from hostility. Third, participants became were forced to recognize and respond to monosexism and biphobia as a result of their fraternal membership; participants were forced to grapple internally with their identity, respond to the monosexism and biphobia they encountered head-on, or disengage from disparaging situations. A broader narrative of these themes is that fraternities are sites of multiplicity and complexity; the same environments and experiences that foster liberation for pan/bi/poly members may also re/create the negative implications of hetero/monosexism. Thus, the influence of fraternal membership is neither all good, nor all bad, but rather, multiple and complex, which leads to numerous implications for practice and future research in support of more liberatory, affirming experiences for bi/pan/poly fraternity members and queer students in higher education.

In chapter two of this manuscript, I overview the existing literature on sexual identity, biphobia and monosexism, sexual identity development, queer sexualities in higher education, and queer fraternal membership. In chapter three, I discuss my study design, narrative inquiry, my modes of data collection, three-cycle coding analysis, and the goodness criteria of the present study. In chapter four, I provide an individual narrative of each participant's fraternal experience

and then I share the three themes and their respective subthemes I constructed during my analysis of the conversations. In chapter five, I provide a discussion of the findings as they relate to the extant literature, including a focus on the relationship between capitalism and monosexism and Eisner's (2013) call to focus on structural, heterosexual monosexism. I conclude with the limitations of the present study and six accompanying themes of recommendations for future research as well as five themes of implications for practice. As a student affairs practitioner with influence in fraternity and sorority advising and queer coalition and advocacy advising, I am deeply committed to the implications for practice I provide, including resisting monosexism and heterosexism, resisting capitalist monosexism, reimagining authenticity and queer student development, deconstructing binaries, and recognizing the multiplicity and complexity of experience.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review of literature moves from exploring understandings of sexual identity and nonmonosexuality to understandings of the three nonmonosexual sexual identities included in this study. From there, I discuss biphobia and its societal impacts and I provide conceptualizations of monosexism that aim to more holistically reveal and capture the structural foundations and implications of the oppression of nonmonosexual people. Then, I explore the evolution of bisexual identity development models, ending with the nonsequential task model of bi/pan/poly identity development. I then share literature on how higher education contexts mediate queer sexualities, including the role of monosexism. I conclude by detailing the research on how fraternal membership mediates queer sexual identity development, including the gaps in literature around nonmonosexual identities in fraternal contexts that the present study aims to interrogate.

Sexual Identity

Some researchers suggested one's sexual identity describes aspects of the partner(s) one prefers or lack thereof. For example, Jackson and Hogg (2010) posited, "Sexual identity is difficult to define and measure because it is an inner conviction that could be inconsistent with appearance or overt behavior, because it can change throughout life, and because it does not always reflect the perceptions of others" (p. 721). Jackson and Hogg (2010) shared that one's sexual identity is formed by early emotional interaction with parents or caregivers and is further modified by gendered and sexualized experiences throughout one's life. The development of one's sexual identity is conceptualized by some researchers as one aspect of one's broader

identity formation processes that involve one's own understanding of their sexuality across contexts (Stief et al., 2016).

Although Jackson and Hogg (2010) describe sexual identity as an *inner conviction*, other scholars disagreed. For example, in an interview with Felluga (2011), Judith Butler asserted identity itself is “an illusion retroactively created by our performances” (Felluga, 2011).

Individuals of all sexual identities, and namely queer sexualities, must continuously respond to others' mis/understandings of their sexual identities, prompting them to continually revise and rewrite their senses of self. In other words, sexual identities are relational in nature; individuals are not the sole proprietor of their sexual identity. One's inner convictions may be inconsistent with others' reactions to their appearance and behavior, welcoming in external pressures that individuals must continually and consistently respond to. For instance, an individual who proudly and outwardly self-identifies as bisexual may have only engaged in sexual activity with people of a different gender. Their sexual history and behaviors may welcome others to perceive them as straight and actively make comments that invalidate their bisexual identity (e.g., “you can't be bi if you've only had sex with women”). In this way, the individual is no longer the sole owner of (their) sexual identity, but rather, it is a relationally-constructed identity with shared ownership of those within the context of the discussion.

These pressures come from many sources, including even within the queer community (e.g., biphobia, monosexism). Further, in today's age with technology, individuals must be responding to these persistent pressures sometimes even when they are physically alone (Felluga, 2011). These external pressures can be so intense that even when one is physically alone with no technology or access to other humans, one must internally respond to them as external influences

are so strong even on one's internal re/making sense of (their) self and identity, which is why the performativity (Felluga, 2011) of one's sexual identity is so central to this study.

Additionally, while this paper is focused on sexual identity, gender identity is inherently connected to sexual identity. Sexual identity can be defined in terms of the gender identity or identities an individual is (or is not) attracted to (e.g., women who are attracted solely to women may identify as lesbian). Likewise, gender identity can also mediate one's sexual identity (e.g., sole attraction to women on behalf of women may indicate a lesbian sexual identity whereas sole attraction to women on behalf of men may indicate a straight sexual identity). I will now discuss nonmonosexuality, a categorical conceptualization of sexual identities.

Nonmonosexuality

Nonmonosexuality can be defined in opposition to monosexuality; three prevailing monosexual identities include lesbian, gay, and straight. Typically, these identities describe attraction to others of one gender (e.g., gay men may only be attracted to men). In contrast, nonmonosexual identities describe attraction to others of more than one gender (e.g., pansexual people may be attracted to others of all genders). Harper and Swanson (2019) created a model of sexual identity development for poly/bi/pan people, which I will overview later in this review of literature. The model explored beyond most existing models because it included other nonmonosexual identities beyond bisexual. Further, the authors aimed to deconstruct the hierarchy between the similar identities, while also validating that despite similarities, each of these identities is distinct (Harper & Swanson, 2019). The authors additionally highlighted the personal nature of sexual identity definitions and the greater importance of an individual's personal definition than a static version of a definition, consistent with Butler's (1990) conceptualization of identity (Harper & Swanson, 2019).

Many people who identify with a nonmonosexual identity use terms beyond just ‘bisexual’, such as pansexual and polysexual, and may not feel represented by previous sexual identity development models (Brown et al., 2017; Goodman, 2013). However, most studies do not differentiate between these identities and only seek “bisexual” participants (Flanders et al., 2016; King, 2011). Although people with most of the identities mentioned here identify similarly to bisexual people, some important differences need to be accounted for when understanding an individual’s identity development. Nonmonosexual people is a better term to use than bisexual when aiming to explore the experiences of people impacted by monosexism; including only bisexual participants may limit experiences to those impacted by biphobia, which does not explicitly reveal the structures in place that result in monosexism. Nonmonosexual people are those who do not fall into the heterosexual-lesbian/gay binary, including individuals who identify as queer, bisexual, pansexual, and polysexual.

Bisexuality

Brewster (2017) shared, “in its broadest conceptualization, bisexuality typically refers to a person’s experiences of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to people of more than one gender” (Brewster, 2017, p. 199). Jones (2022) reported a study using telephone interviews with a random sample of over 12,000 American adults. They found that “more than half of LGBT Americans, 57%, indicate they are bisexual,” “bisexual is the most common LGBTQ status among Gen Z, millennials, and Gen X,” and “nearly one in six generation Z adults identify as bisexual” (Jones, 2022). In the past 10 years, there was a doubling in “Americans’ Self-Identification as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Something Other Than Heterosexual” (3.5% in 2012 and 7.1% in 2021), with bisexual people making the greatest increase proportionally (Jones, 2022).

Despite many popular misconceptions, bisexuality is not new; in fact, there is cross-cultural and biological evidence to prove the existence of bisexuality across the course of history throughout many human cultures and in animal species. The emergence of the Kinsey Scale in 1948 from Alfred Kinsey's study of thousands of subjects scaling their sexual behavior found almost 12% of White men participants to be considered bisexual; one critique of the Kinsey Scale is that it solely includes sexual behavior and many queer theorists, scholars, and people highlight the vast nature of the bisexual experience beyond sexual attractions, desires, and behaviors. Brewster (2017) also highlighted the lack of focus on bisexuality amongst social science disciplines and the ignoring of bisexuality even within literature focused on people with a minoritized sexual identity.

Pansexuality

In an attempt to move beyond the binary confines of sexuality and gender, "pansexuality is a sexual-identity term that allows for the inclusion of attraction, fantasy, sexual activities, and desires that extend to people across the gender spectrum" (Elizabeth, 2016, p. 833). With pansexuality emerging in the early 1990s, Stief et al. (2016) stated:

Pansexual is a sexual-identity label used by people who feel that they are not attracted to men or women per se but rather to combinations of masculine, feminine, and nongendered traits. Although this is potentially consistent with most scientific conceptions of bisexuality as a sexual orientation, people who prefer the pansexual label often reject this, arguing that conventional definitions of sexual orientation place too much emphasis on the biological sex of one's partners and not enough emphasis on gendered presentations as well as nongendered traits. (p. 1076)

Despite its increased usage, the disparities between the amount of literature on pansexuality and on gay, lesbian, and bisexuality are striking. It is important to note the fluid nature of the term and the impact of that fluidity making the study of those who identify as pansexual more intricate. Further, the usage of the term and identity varies greatly among many social identity groups, and in some cases, namely communities of color, these connections are underexplored in academic publications (Elizabeth, 2016).

Polysexuality

Hunter (2002) described a dramatic transformation of sexuality to a new realm and identity, polysexuality, through several anecdotal stories and quotes from men who identify as polysexual:

The idea that you can only sleep with one gender is rapidly becoming outdated; I don't want to be restricted in what I do. I make that decision, not anybody else. It's my body and I'll do whatever I like with it to search out the most pleasure I can get. On a purely practical level, looking back through the mists of time, our desire to sleep with same-sex partners only has placed us in a position where we have been marginalized and feared; On a simple level, gay [sic] spaces offer a safe haven for unconventional heterosexuals (we are, after all, such fabulous hosts who sure know how to live it up). (pp. 74-75)

Hunter (2002) further shared quotes from polysexual men describing the impact this transformation and introduction of polysexuality has impacted both queer and straight communities and how oppression and monosexism are more than one-sided. These quotes highlighted the increasing number of straight-identifying people who are experimenting more and broadening their sexuality. They revealed the liberatory nature of polysexuality for both straight and queer people. For example, they concluded by delineating monosexism's impact on

queer people: “a gay person who wouldn’t sleep with a partner of the opposite sex is just as repressed in my opinion as the straight person who would rather die than admit to any kind of sexual feelings towards a person of the same sex” (pp. 75-76).

Throughout these understandings of bisexuality, pansexuality, and polysexuality, it is crucial to keep in mind these are compilations of prevailing societal definitions. In my presentation of findings, I prioritize participants’ definitions and reasons for claiming or refusing to claim certain labels and the fluidity thereof. Further, I aim to continually orient myself as a researcher in line with Butler’s (1990) assertion that our actions create our identities; thus, sexual identity is a socially- and relationally-constructed phenomenon. Nonetheless, Hunter (2002) highlighted an integral phenomenon “Removing the final bastions of resistance from within our own [queer] community can only be a positive development” (p. 76), naming the success of the queer community’s ability to create more liberating spaces for all within society. I will now discuss biphobia, including how it typically shows up in society, followed by a discussion of monosexism and its impacts.

Biphobia and Monosexism

Biphobia, the oppression bisexual people face, is a singular form of monosexism. There is drastically more literature on biphobia than panphobia and polyphobia. Monosexism describes the larger system in place that oppresses all people with a nonmonosexual sexual identity, including pansexual, polysexual, bisexual, and more (e.g., some queer people). Monosexism represents the larger, structural, macro-level systems in place that perpetuate and complicate many complex forms of oppression (e.g., heterosexism, genderism, sexism, transphobia). For this study, monosexism more authentically represents the type of oppression the poly/bi/pan community faces and the type of oppressive systems this study aims to serve as an instrument to

deconstruct. I will first discuss biphobia and its many instruments to provide tangible examples of how biphobia exists in society and impacts bisexual people. Then, monosexism and its complexities will be discussed.

Biphobia

Klesse (2016) professed biphobia is “prejudice and discrimination against bisexual people. It covers antibisexual sentiments and negative attitudes regarding bisexual people and their (alleged) characters, bodies, relationships, families, and sexualities” (p. 120). An integral type of biphobia is the illegitimacy of bisexuality as a real, stable sexual identity. Biphobia also results in the over-sexualization of bisexual people and/or the reduction of bisexuality to a solely sexual phenomenon, ignoring the cultural aspects of the community and the romantic and emotional aspects of bisexuality as well.

Biphobic attitudes result in numerous disparities between the life experiences of bisexual people and their monosexual counterparts. Eisner (2016) reported on the disparities in the United States:

Over 40% of bisexual people have considered suicide, compared with 8.5% of straight people and 27% of gay people; Nearly 45% of bisexual youth have been bullied on the Internet, compared with 19% of straight youth; More than 1 in 4 bisexual people (27.6%) live in poverty, compared with 18.2% of straight people and 21.6% of gay people; About 1 in 4 bisexual people (25%) receives food stamps, compared to 15% of straight people and 14% of gay people; More than 1 in 5 bisexual people (22%) suffer from poor health, compared with 9.7% of straight people and 9.8% of gay people. (p. 794)

Eisner (2016) also noted the stark disparity between the likelihood of openly expressing one’s sexual identity: “55% of bisexual people are not out at work, compared with 8% of gay men and

6% of lesbians” (p. 794). Structures of monosexism originate from straight people but are also upheld by queer people. Bisexual people cite the lack of resources within LGBTQ communities specifically created for bisexual people (Eisner, 2016). Now, sources and impacts of biphobia will be discussed.

Bi-invisibility. The San Francisco Human Rights Commission (SFHRC; 2011) shared how bisexual people find themselves erased in history (i.e., how famous people have been designated lesbian or gay for their same-gender relationships despite their long-term relationships with different-gender partners). Bisexual people are routinely erased in literature and media. The SFHRC (2011) offered a few recommendations to create institutional changes that resist bi-invisibility: use *anti-LGBT bias* rather than *homophobia*, ensure accurate data collection, and include specific and separate information regarding bisexuality.

Bisexuality as an illegitimate and unstable sexual orientation. Bisexual people’s sexual identities are often viewed as invalid and/or as a stepping stone towards a fully lesbian or gay identity. Lesbian and gay identities are often viewed as more legitimate; for example, the common phrase “gold-star gay” is often used to describe someone who has only had sexual encounters with partners of the same gender (Brewster, 2017).

Biphobic interpersonal hostility. Brewster (2017) summarized the findings of a study by Michele Eliason that examined biphobia in 229 heterosexual college students. When asked “how acceptable” bisexual men were, 60% of the sample saw bisexual men as “somewhat unacceptable” or “very unacceptable”, compared to 50% of the sample viewing bisexual women (Brewster, 2017, p. 190). Brewster also highlighted how biphobia may be rooted in the idea that bisexual people are “heterosexual infiltrators” in lesbian and gay communities, stemming from

the misconception that bisexual people still retain “heterosexual privilege” and do not have to commit fully to anti-heterosexist ideologies in ways queer monosexual people do.

Bisexual people as sexually irresponsible. Brewster (2017) shared the negative stereotypes of bisexual people in relationships, as promiscuous, unfaithful, and incapable of monogamous romantic relationships. The author conducted a study of 353 undergraduate college students who identified as heterosexual, in which the students rated individuals of a variety of sexualities on their dating characteristics. The scholars found bisexual individuals were viewed as more likely to be assumed to date multiple people, transmit a sexually transmitted infection, and cheat than heterosexual people. Although, a 1994 study in San Francisco found that “bisexually identified MSMW (men who have sex with men and women) weren’t a ‘common vector or bridge’ for spreading HIV from male partners to female partners” (San Francisco Human Rights Commission, 2011). Another study of college students’ views of bisexual people shared, “when asked how likely it was that they would ever have a sexual relationship with an attractive bisexual person, approximately 75% of the students rated this possibility as very or somewhat unlikely” (Brewster, 2017, p. 191). These studies demonstrate the prominent presence of biphobia in college students.

Biphobia and minority stress. Brewster (2017) synthesized the studies that delineate a relationship between biphobia and minority stress: “a large-scale telephone survey conducted by Gregory Herek found that heterosexual women and men felt more negative affect toward bisexual individuals than toward a wide range of other groups, including lesbian/gay people, various religious groups, racial/ethnic minority groups, pro-life groups, pro-choice groups, and people with AIDS” (p. 4). Brewster (2017) hypothesized that the most central root of this minority stress is the dual stigmatization from both heterosexual and queer communities. Further,

at the outset of the AIDS epidemic, bisexual men were consistently blamed for the spread of AIDS and HIV to heterosexual women. There was also heightened blame and stigmatization of behaviorally bisexual men who would engage in sexual activity with other men without their girlfriends' or wives' knowledge, which further perpetuated the invalidity of bisexuality as a stable identity, leading to more minority stress for bisexual men (Brewster, 2017).

Scholarly skepticism regarding bisexuality. Brewster (2017) highlighted the lack of focus on bisexuality amongst social science disciplines and the ignoring of bisexuality even within literature focused on people with a minoritized sexual identity. Brewster (2017) shared a historical view of the skepticism regarding the validity of bisexuality coming from a range of individuals, including “researchers, scholars, and activists in lesbian/gay communities” (p. 2). These persistent and permeating beliefs led to a focus on the stability of bisexuality throughout the 1980s and up until the early 2000s. A common misconception was the assumption that bisexual people were in *identity foreclosure*, meaning they had foreclosed on an invalid, inaccurate sexual identity on their way to a gay or lesbian identity. Gary Zinik presented two competing theories in the 1980s: 1) a conflict model in which bisexual people are hiding their solely same-gender attraction and 2) a flexibility model in which bisexuality was validated and it was asserted that bisexual people are capable of experiencing sexual desires of more than one gender. Nonetheless, the skepticism and invalidation of bisexuality from scholars had a profound impact on biphobia and bierasure in literature, even literature produced by queer scholars (Brewster, 2017).

It is also important to note the detrimental impact of conflating data about bisexual people with data about gay or lesbian people, as shared by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission (2011):

Conflating the data will generally make the picture look more urgent. Yet few public health programs specifically reach out to bisexuals. This means that even though bisexuals may have greater need, the resources primarily wind up benefitting lesbians and gay men. (p. 13)

Thus, the present study intentionally does not conflate the data, and instead focuses on a specific population of nonmonosexual people. Nonmonosexual people are specifically impacted by monosexism and sometimes biphobia in addition to heterosexism and potentially other oppressions based upon their unique social identities. While the extant literature on queer fraternity members' experiences extrapolates data to paint a picture of nonmonosexual members' experiences, the present study focused on pan/bi/poly members' experiences to ensure the implications for research and practice and the resources created from them serve the needs of bi/poly/pan students.

Monosexism

While biphobia includes people's belief systems and behaviors targeted toward bisexual people, Eisner (2016) posited monosexism is a broad social structure "operating through a presumption that everyone is, or should be, monosexual (attracted to no more than one gender)" (p. 793). Monosexism represents the institutional and systemic nature of the oppression of bisexual people and biphobia is conceptualized as a single form of monosexism; anti-pansexual and anti-polysexual or panphobia and polyphobia are other forms of monosexism.

Monosexism does not aim to equate the power of straight and gay/lesbian individuals, as many critics of monosexism have inaccurately offered. Instead, monosexism aims to reveal the systemic oppression MGA (multi-gender attraction) individuals face (Miles the Bisexual, 2017). Miles the Bisexual (2017) explains how although monosexism can be perpetuated by straight-

cisgender individuals *and* gay, lesbian, and straight transgender people, these groups do it in different ways due to their access to power. Straight-cisgender people can perpetuate it through popular culture and social stigma, using the overarching power structures they have access to, whereas lesbian and gay people can perpetuate monosexism within the queer community, according to Miles the Bisexual (2017).

Likewise, in her discussion that distinguishes biphobia and monosexism, Eisner (2013a) stated, “monosexism is a structure that first and foremost comes from heterosexism and the patriarchy - 99.99999999% of it comes from heterosexual culture.” Eisner conceptualized the lesbian and gay individuals’ perpetuations of monosexism as bi/panphobia, as these people do not have access to the same power structures as straight-cisgender people. While biphobia “is direct negative attitudes and treatment of bi* people” (e.g., bias in media), Eisner (2013a) professed that monosexism is a structure that affects everyone (not just bisexual or pansexual people), by limiting others’ (even monosexual individuals’) options.

Eisner (2013b) described three ways how monosexual (e.g., lesbian, gay, or straight) people are negatively influenced by monosexism. First, monosexual people see the social punishment nonmonosexual people experience, and thus, are limited in their ability to explore further dimensions of their sexuality. Further, gay or lesbian people who have already ‘come out’ may have had negative experiences due to heterosexism, leading them to be more fearful of potentially going through a second ‘coming-out’ process, all of which limits their ability to experience their full range of sexuality. Second, monosexism separates entire populations of people and limits monosexuals’ potential for connection and relationships; this separation harms both monosexual and nonmonosexual people. Lastly, monosexism pushes monosexual people into oppressor roles or collaborates with the oppression of nonmonosexual people. This

normalizes the hierarchy created and the oppression enacted by monosexual people. Further, this normalization impacts other oppressions monosexual people face and since all oppressions (and their liberations) are interconnected, the separating nature of monosexism limits the potential for coalition building and collaboration between non/monosexual people to achieve collective liberation (Eisner, 2013b). Thus, Eisner (2013a) argued, “we need to pay lots more attention to structural, heterosexual, monosexism.”

Sexual Identity Development

While significant attention has been paid to gay and lesbian identity development, there has been little research on nonmonosexual identity development. I will first describe the progression of bisexual identity development models and then detail Harper et al.’s (2019) nonsequential task model of bi/pan/polysexual identity development.

The Evolution of Bisexual Identity Development Models

A model of bisexual identity development. Weinberg et al. (1994) drew upon one of the most widely known and used sexual identity development models, Cass’s (1979) model of homosexual² [sic] identity formation, in which Cass posited six stages gay and lesbian people must progress through to integrate a gay or lesbian identity into their comprehensive sense of self. Cass’s model had often been assimilated to the experiences of bisexual people, but this failed to include aspects of identity development unique to the bisexual experience (e.g., responding to monosexism). Recognizing these shortcomings, Weinberg et al. pioneered a four-stage model of bisexual identity development (1994). In the first stage of the model, similarly

² The terms “homosexuality” and “homosexual” perpetuate the medicalization of queer bodies; while the “natural origins of queer sexualities carry a certain political weight, invoking the naturalness of being ‘born this way’ fails to articulate a more substantive challenge to the effects of unexamined cis- and heteronormativity on our social institutions” (Eckhart, 2016, p. 239). Thus, other than when said in context, alternative terms, such as lesbian and gay will be used.

termed *initial confusion*, Weinberg et al. addressed the anxiety-inducing origins of identity confusion specifically for the experiences of bisexual people missing from Cass's model:

But being bisexual did add unique twists. First of all, as we saw in Chapter 3, a common source of confusion for the bisexuals was simply having sexual feelings for both sexes and not knowing what to do about them. They did not see themselves as either heterosexual or homosexual and were often unaware of the category 'bisexual,' which would have offered them another option to make sense of their sexuality. In our respondents' words: I suspected I was the only one who had such feelings; I wasn't aware there was such a thing as a bisexual lifestyle; I wasn't aware that being bisexual was an option till I heard the word 'bisexual'. (p. 145)

Weinberg et al. also acknowledged the effects of internalized biphobia on bisexual people going through the stages contribute to the anxiety they face around the idea they might be gay or lesbian. This first stage is marked by fear or negative thoughts related to any thoughts, feelings, or attractions outside of the confines of a heterosexual identity. The model highlighted the importance of the introduction of bisexuality to bisexual people during the second stage, *finding and applying the label*. As the bisexual individual explores labels and experiences relations with partners of multiple genders, one also navigates the vast societal negative attitudes toward bisexual people (Weinberg et al., 1994).

Progression to the third stage, *settling into the identity*, is marked by an onset of self-acceptance of one's bisexual identity and increased interaction with others who identify as bisexual. Social and communal support is pivotal to a positive experience during this stage and lack thereof may halt or regress one's development of a bisexual identity. A common experience during this stage is concern about the impact of a monogamous relationship on their bisexual

identity (Weinberg et al., 1994). In the fourth and last stage, *continued uncertainty*, even with the solidified adoption of a bisexual identity, bisexual individuals live with occasional uncertainty regarding the validity and permanency of their identity (Weinberg et al., 1994). A primary contributor to this uncertainty is the practical concern about transferring one's sexual feelings to tangible sexual behaviors. Uniquely, the study found, "for the men, confusion stemmed more from the practical concerns of implementing and managing multiple partners or from questions about how to find an involved homosexual relationship [sic] and what that might mean on a social and personal level" (p. 36). Other salient contributors include an absence of bisexual role models and external validation, reinforcing the critical role external factors play in the process of bisexual identity development (Weinberg et al., 1994).

The most common critique of Weinberg et al.'s model is the absence of a final stage where bisexual people reach acceptance (Knous, 2006). The dichotomic and stark contrast between Cass's model's final stage *identity synthesis* and Weinberg et al.'s final stage *continued uncertainty* powerfully perpetuates the validity of monosexuality and the invalidity of bisexuality and nonmonosexuality. While Weinberg et al. addressed the additional complexities of the process of bisexual identity development lacking in Cass's model, their model resists the potential for bisexual people to reach a permanent synthesized sexual identity in the manner their gay, lesbian, and straight counterparts do successfully.

An adaptation of a bisexual identity development model. Brown (2002) theorized a bisexual identity development model by adopting the first three stages from Weinberg et al.'s model with some adaptations to accommodate issues in the stages. First, Brown (2002), posited not all bisexual people will experience the first stage, *identity confusion*, and that with strong external support, bisexual individuals may not experience a substantial level of confusion or

anxiety that would require them to exist within this stage. Continuing with the thematic importance of external support, Brown (2002) professed the need for people within a bisexual person's life to support their bisexual label for one to gain an awareness of the label during the *finding and applying the label* stage and the need for the external support to continue for one to maintain their sense of self during the *settling into the identity stage*. Brown also highlighted the potential for negative community reactions to cause doubt and confusion for the bisexual individual even after labeling oneself as bisexual.

A stark difference in Brown's model is the fourth stage, *identity*, which addressed Weinberg et al.'s model's inability to successfully maintain a bisexual label. Brown emphasized *identity maintenance* to be a process-oriented stage, in contrast to the first three goal-oriented stages, in which a person enacts strategies to sustain their identity in this stage. With the process-oriented nature of this last stage comes a potential for an individual to stay in this stage forever, which limited Brown's model's ability to address the lack of Weinberg's model's permanency of a bisexual identity. Brown hinted at the *possibility* of successful adoption and acceptance of one's bisexual identity but still contributed to notions of bisexual individuals being unable to fully accept and synthesize their bisexual identity as gay and lesbian individuals can within Cass's model (Fliponymous, 2014).

A layer cake model of bisexual identity development. Bleiberg et al. (2005) posited a layer cake model of bisexual identity development that differed from Weinberg et al.'s and Brown's models in that it acknowledged the socialization of a bisexual individual in a heteronormative and heterosexist society in the first layer. Bleiberg et al.'s model was a process model that begins with the first layer in which, due to socialization practices, a bisexual person considers themselves to be included in the heterosexual community. As bisexual people become

conscious of their attractions toward people of the same sex or gender, one enters the second layer of the cake, which draws similarities to Brown's (2002) *identity confusion* stages and Weinberg et al.'s (1994) *initial confusion* stage, as each were the first stages within their respective models.

A bisexual person maintains their heterosexual identity in the third layer, but they begin to accept these attractions toward people of the same sex or gender, which relates to Cass's *identity comparison* stage and Weinberg et al.'s and Brown's *finding and applying the label* stages in respect to the self-acceptance of same-gender attractions as a part of one's sexual identity. Bleiberg et al.'s model diverged from Weinberg et al.'s and Brown's models with the inclusion of a fourth layer in which the bisexual person integrates their multiple gender attractions. The final layer of the cake model is the point at which the bisexual person adopts the bisexual label, which contrasts with other models' completion of this task in earlier stages (Bleiberg et al., 2005).

Despite being criticized for its simple nature and all authors being heterosexual, Bleiberg et al.'s model made an invaluable contribution to the evolution of bisexual identity development models by emphasizing the need for bisexual people to multiple aspects of their attraction as opposed to the fallacy of prior model's sole task of accepting the same gender aspects of a bisexual person's sexual attraction. Bleiberg et al. also introduced the salience of a process model in theorizing a bisexual individual's identity development. Later models preserve both contributions (Harper et al., 2019).

The emergence of bi identities beyond bisexuality. Shortly after the publication of Bleiberg et al.'s layer cake model, Knous (2006) created a model grounded upon Lemert's

(1967) sociopolitical theory of deviance with three stages of deviance in which a sociopolitical deviant identity is formed. Uniquely, this model utilized the term “bi” as opposed to “bisexual”:

The label bisexual refers more specifically to sexual behavior, which isn't what sexual orientation is really about. Laura, a 36-year-old bi woman, described her sexuality as the following: 'Bi. Not bisexual ...I think when it comes to orientations other than heterosexual, people tend to focus on sexual behavior, reducing queers—and especially bi's—to mere sexual beings. And 'bisexual' has that 3-letter word in the middle of it. So I sidestep it all by saying I'm bi.' Out of respect for Laura's preference, the remainder of this paper will use the term “bi” rather than “bisexual”. (p. 45)

This use of bi also relates to the vast array of identities within the bi umbrella. This paper adopts this notion of 1) resisting the reduction of queerness to sexual being and 2) acknowledging the many sexual identities under the umbrella by rotating the use of pan/bi/poly.

Knous's model began with *primary deviance*, which is marked by the initial deviant act. “In the case of bisexuality, this would involve either first attraction to or sexual act with all sexes. After this experience, the deviant identity is not yet formed and one's identity remains intact (i.e., I'm still straight)” (p. 45). Next, a bisexual individual enters stage two, *secondary deviance*, a key feature of which is labeling by oneself or by others. The coming-out process is especially important during this stage in addition to increased participation in behavior that exemplifies a bi identity (Knous, 2006). Stigma management emerges during this stage, which represents Weinberg et al.'s *continued uncertainty* stage and Brown's *identity maintenance* stage.

The third stage, *tertiary deviance*, includes the emergence of “a rebellion against social prejudice and participation in bisexual community-building, as well as being proudly out as

bisexual within wider gay and straight communities” (Knous, 2006, p. 48). The primary limitation of Knous’s study is the low number of participants. Nonetheless, Knous contributed the importance of “differences within the bi community that are important, such as whether one is monogamous or polyamorous, and whether a person prefers dating their same gender, different genders, or those who hold no preference” (Harper et al., 2019).

Bisexual youth of color intersecting identities model. Chun and Singh (2010) were among the first to create a model with an acknowledgment of the multiple identities one may hold. Chun and Singh, similar to Bleiberg et al., utilized a process model rather than a stage model, professing the saliency of the external context in which the bisexual person is situated. Chun and Singh made several contributions to the evolution of bisexual identity development models including acknowledging bisexual resiliency, explicitly separating bisexual identity development from the broader queer community, naming the biphobia within the queer community, and highlighting the limited support bisexuals have access to. Further, Chun and Singh (2010) pioneered a perspective of simultaneous developmental processes from the lens of race, which further models adopt. The overlap of different development processes is an aspect of Chun and Singh’s model and the model for the present study’s interview protocol is grounded upon.

The continued evolution of bisexual identity development models. Many scholars have professed the need to move beyond stage models to conceptualize bisexual identity development because the nature of sexual identity development to be a fluid or partial developmental process for many with potential back-and-forth movements (Goodrich & Ginicola, 2017). Some scholars have noted the inability of stage models to address intersectionality or the multiple simultaneous developmental processes that may be going on for

an individual in regard to identity. Stage models also perpetuate the misconception that further stages are universally preferred and morally superior (Fliponamous, 2014). Further, others have asserted that sexual identity development has no endpoint, refuting the previous stage models that have either an end or a finalization stage and the linearity of previous models (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2002).

The Nonsequential Task Model of Bi/Pan/Polysexual Identity Development

To address the inadequacies of previous models and conceptualizations of bisexual identity development, Harper and Swanson (2019) sought to “provide a non sequential task model” in which “many of the idiosyncrasies and unique developmental trajectories and interactions that exist for different people can be seen” (p. 349). This model comprises five aspects, each of which contains tasks of identity development that 1) can happen in any order, 2) can be of any level of importance to each individual, and 3) can happen once, many times, or never for each individual. By simultaneously encompassing tasks *and* a process, this model addresses the limitations of the static nature of task models. Harper and Swanson’s model contains various relationships between parts that reciprocally impact each other; nothing occurs in isolation. First, the model centers the individual in their sociopolitical context; they impact the processes, the five aspects, and the tasks within the aspects while the process, aspects, and tasks impact the person and each other as well. This model conceptualizes sexual identity development as a lifelong, fluid process. Thus, a key feature of this model, contrary to previous models, is that “one’s identity development is not measured by the number of tasks they complete or have completed, but instead this model can be used to conceptualize where a person is and where they may go” (Harper & Swanson, 2019, p. 355). While Harper and Swanson’s model encompasses

all bi/pan/polysexual identities because of the nature of the tasks, there is no explicit differentiation between the individual identities.

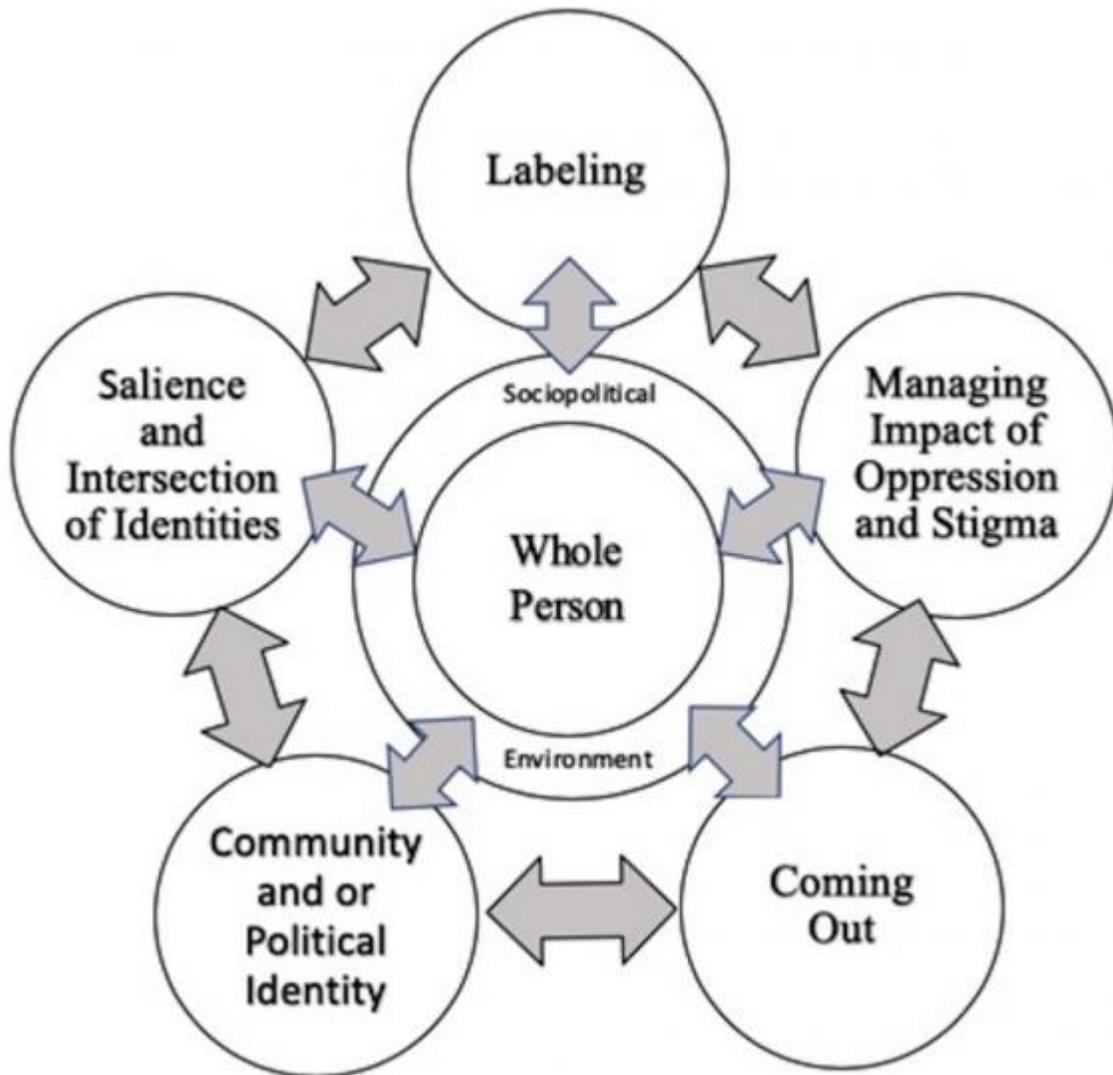


Figure 1. The nonsequential task model of bi/pan/polysexual identity development.

Figure A: The nonsequential task model of bi/pan/polysexual identity development (Harper & Swanson, 2019, p. 350)

The five aspects of the model. *Labeling* refers to “one’s understanding of their identity and the process of finding and accepting a label to match that experience (or rejecting labels because of how they limit experience” (Harper and Swanson, 2019, p. 352). Typically, before

identity exploration, individuals will first identify with a monosexual identity. *Salience and intersection of identities* “acknowledges that one’s sexual and/or affectional orientation identity development is only one part of a person’s identity, and other developmental process may happen simultaneously or intermittently with the process of sexual/affectional identity development” (p. 352). Gender identities, labels relating to sexual and relational behavior such as monogamous or polyamorous, and other social identities are other developmental processes that may be happening alongside and/or with their process of sexual identity development. *Coming out* includes “all the tasks that one undertakes related to understanding and accepting their own identity as well as sharing that information with others” (p. 353). This aspect exemplifies this model’s assertion that certain tasks may be of great importance, no importance, or somewhere in between for individuals; this aspect also highlights the nature of tasks to be revisited for some, sometimes many times, and to never be engaged in for others. *Community and/or political identity* describes “how one understands themselves in relationship to and connects to community and/or within a political context” (p. 354). Individuals within the model may find multiple communities that serve their needs or even subsets of communities (i.e. the bi/pan/ community within the larger queer community). *Managing the impact of oppression/stigma* “explores how one relates to their experiences in their sociopolitical context when it comes to experiences of microaggressions, discrimination, oppression, marginalization, stigma, etc.” (p. 354). Developing coping strategies and a positive sense of self in relation to one’s bi/pan/polysexual identity is a key part of this aspect (Harper et al., 2019).

Table 1. The nonsequential task model of bi/pan/polysexual identity development five aspects and tasks.

Labeling	Salience and intersection of identities	Coming out	Community and/or political identity	Managing impact of oppression/stigma
Identification within a monosexual label	Understanding and assumption of labels of closely related identities	Consider risks/benefits of coming out	Contact with positive role models/community	Becoming aware of and addressing personal impact of experiences of biphobia/ bipejudice in the heterosexual communities
Questioning and identity exploration	Exploring How bi/pan/poly identity fits with other aspects of identity and vice versa	Determine appropriate timing	Finding one's place in the bi/pan/polysexual community	Becoming aware of and addressing personal impact of experiences of homophobia/homoprejudice and other oppressions in heterosexual communities
Movement among different monosexualities	Finding specific images/models of bi/pan/polysexual people who are similar with/to other salient aspects of identity	Develop coming out strategies	Finding one's place in the LGBTQ + community	Becoming aware of and addressing personal impact of experiences of biphobia/ bipejudice in the LGBTQ + communities
Challenge of monosexual identity within self	Understanding of label within a cultural context (possible assumption of specific label based on culture- e.g. two spirit)	Develop coming out narratives	Finding one's place in the heterosexual community	Becoming aware of and addressing personal impact of experiences of oppression in the bi/pan/poly communities
Assumption of bi/pan/poly identity/label or rejection of labels	Exploration of How one's own gender impacts how one understands their attraction, label, etc.	Determine unsafe situations/people to not come out to	Finding one's place in various cultural communities	Becoming aware addressing the ways biphobia/bipejudice and homophobia/homoprejudice is internalized
Solidification of specific label (May be different)	Moving in/out of development based on salience of bi/pan/polysexual identity	Develop support around coming out tasks		Developing positive coping strategies and a positive sense of self that combats negative experiences
Continued to challenge and understanding of labels	Moving in/out of sexual identity development based on salience of other salient aspects of identity	Finding effective coping strategies when coming doesn't go as planned and/or dealing with the ambiguity of the coming out process When labels change, considering new risks/benefits about reengaging the coming out process		Becoming aware of and Addressing how other oppressions/stigmas impact one's sense of their bi/pan/poly identity in one's various cultural/ other identity communities Becoming aware of and addressing the intersection of multiple oppressions

Note. LGBTQ+ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus (Plus refers to all the identities under the LGBTQ Umbrella).

Figure B: The nonsequential task model of bi/pan/polysexual identity development (Harper & Swanson, 2019, p. 351)

In their recommendations for future research, Harper and Swanson (2019) encouraged the exploratory use of the model as a conceptualization tool by practitioners, as the present study aimed to do.

Queer Sexualities in Higher Education Contexts

There is vast literature delineating that students develop in college; the academic, personal, and professional challenges students face lead them to reconsider “their self-perceptions, develop new skills, and master developmental tasks” (Levine & Evans, 1991, p. 1). Further, scholars have asserted students’ development in college is mediated by their social identities (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender or sexual identity, disability, socioeconomic status, etc.) and the oppressive systems and power imbalances present at the institutions they are situated within (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, classism, ableism; Baxter Magolda, 2009;

Jones, 2019; Harris & Poon, 2019; Okello & White, 2019; Abes & Wallace, 2020). Students' development surrounding their sexual identity, or the adoption of their sexuality as an identity they hold, is important to their development as college students.

Zubernis and Snyder (2007) shared that "students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender (GLBT), or questioning their sexual orientation [sic] experience the same stresses and concerns that affect college students in general, but have the additional stresses related to managing the stigma of being a sexual minority" (p. 75). They also stressed the importance for GLBT students of integrating their sexual identity with their overall identity in a positive way as they develop as college students (Zubernis & Snyder, 2007).

Abes and Kasch (2007) delineated how queer students must first form a resistance to heteronormative structures in their environments before demonstrating developmental behaviors associated with Baxter Magolda's (2009) self-authorship, thus demonstrating the salience of queer sexualities in college student development. As Butler (1990) asserted that our identities are always in flux and never arrive at a destination of development due to the performative nature of identities, it is crucial to continually revisit the socially- and relationally-constructed nature of sexual identities. Tillapaugh (2015) explored the factors that influenced queer college men's development in college and found the "need to be out and proud or be closeted provides another dangerous condition related to the psychological wellness of sexual minority males on his campus" (p. 71). Further, Tillapaugh (2015) documented that the "experiences of confronting homophobia, heterosexism, and heteronormativity have a direct connection to the holistic development and meaning-making of one's multiple identities within the college experience" (p. 71). Zubernis and Snyder (2007) also documented the negative psychological and physiological implications of these heterosexist environments and the added stressors for queer college

students. While queer students broadly are impacted by heterosexism in higher education, nonmonosexual students are additionally impacted by monosexism.

Addressing Monosexism in Higher Education

Weinberg et al. (1994) found that nonmonosexual students face many barriers in synthesizing their sexual identities. Matteson (1995) found that nonmonosexual students often lack validation and affirmation of their identities. The Jed Foundation (2021) declared that internalized monosexism, as a result of structural and societal monosexism in higher education, leads to individual risks factors for queer and questioning students, including “identity concealment, perceived burdensomeness, and thwarted belongingness, which are linked to depression, suicidality, and coping mechanisms that exacerbate negative mental health outcomes” (p. 6) as well as other consequences that lead to higher rates of negative physical health outcomes than their heterosexual peers. Dolan (2013) highlighted that nonmonosexual people do not experience the visible, organized communities or sources of support that monosexual people, such as gay or lesbian people, do. Likewise, Balsam and Mohr (2007) found that the monosexism nonmonosexual people may face in queer communities may outweigh the benefits of a respite from heterosexual communities, leaving nonmonosexual people void of an affirming community. In a study of nine bisexual students’ use of LGBTQ campus spaces, Tavarez (2022) found that “all participants experienced bisexual-specific stress within LGBTQ campus spaces, and as a result of bisexual-specific stress and lack of support in addressing these issues, participants shared negative impacts on their participation within LGBTQ campus spaces” (p. 167). Horowitz and Newcomb (1999) highlighted the ‘normalizing’ experience that nonmonosexual affinity time can facilitate for nonmonosexual people. Dolan (2013) asserted:

By studying and seeking deeper understanding of the barriers that nonmonosexual people face due to monosexism, the meanings and truths of genuine nonmonosexual identities, and what nonmonosexual communities need in order to feel understood and supported, student affairs scholars and professionals can begin to understand the unique barriers and obstacles that these students face. (p. 29)

Further, Tavaréz (2022) called on LGBTQ campus spaces to do better to address monosexism:

Based on these findings, it is important that student affairs professionals and others working with queer/trans-spectrum students demonstrate a commitment to examining and challenging the ways LGBTQ campus spaces perpetuate and sustain monosexism in ways that hurt bisexual students in order to promote and maintain bisexual-inclusive LGBTQ campus spaces. (p. 175)

Thus, this synthesis of findings delineates the structural monosexism that permeates higher education, even spaces explicitly and linguistically devoted to serving queer students. This discussion of queer sexualities in higher education implores the need to interrogate through research the monosexist and heterosexist environments, subcultures, and conditions within higher education institutions and their impact on queer college students. Thus, I will now discuss the experiences of queer members in fraternities.

Queer Fraternal Membership

The heteronormative and cisnormative environments in fraternities and sororities are well established in research (Case et al., 2005; Trump & Wallace, 2006). Further, queer members' coping mechanisms and strategies for coming out as a result of these hostile environments are documented as well (Trump & Wallace; Hall & La France, 2007). Scholars have found that dedication to maintaining social capital can lead to the communication of homophobia within

fraternity environments (Hall & La France, 2007). As practitioners aim to implement interventions to create more affirming fraternal environments, students stress the importance of personal interaction between non/queer members in decreasing heterosexism within fraternities (Hesp & Brooks, 2009). I will discuss five foundational contributions to the study of queer members' experiences in fraternities and conclude with a discussion of the gaps in the literature the present study aimed to close.

An Exploratory Study of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Members

Case et al. (2005) conducted a quantitative, exploratory study of over 500 gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) fraternity and sorority members and found the presence of GLB members of sororities and fraternities to be similar to that of the larger campus population at the time of the study, 1993-1995 (5-6% for fraternities and 3-4% for sororities, while acknowledging the number is likely higher because the approximations do not take into account chapter members whose GLB identities are unknown). Likewise, the researchers found GLB members' reasons for joining (e.g., friendship, camaraderie, social life, parties, having fun, and support group, sense of belonging) and what GLB members determined to be the most common benefits or outcomes of joining (e.g., social and interpersonal skills, long-term friendships, and leadership skills) mirrored that of their straight counterparts.

Case et al. (2005) also found that 84% of the fraternity respondents held at least one executive board leadership position. In regard to 'coming out' experiences, the scholars found that 75% of the fraternity members had not told a single member of their chapter; 12% of respondents who graduated before 1980 had come out to at least one person, whereas 39% of the general sample who graduated after 1980 had told at least one person. Fraternity members experienced a more positive acceptance from members when they chose to reveal their sexual

identity voluntarily than when their identity was revealed involuntarily; nonetheless, the majority of the folks who decided to ‘come out’ were met with acceptance from members.

The majority of the respondents in Case et al.’s study shared their sexual identity diminished the quality of their fraternity experience as an undergraduate member; nearly half of the fraternity members felt their need to hide their identity prevented them from developing closer relationships with other members. Although “over 70% of the respondents reported that they had encountered a climate of homophobic or heterosexist behaviors or attitudes within their chapter, with derogatory remarks or jokes about GLB people being the most prevalent example” (p. 40), 89% of the fraternity members were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with their experience in the fraternity as a whole. This demonstrates the heterosexist environments present in fraternities *and* the potential for fraternity environments to be a positive experience for GLB people. This duality implores the need to further critically examine the influence of fraternal membership on queer members’ sexual identity development.

A Qualitative Study of Gay Men in Fraternities

Trump and Wallace (2006) examined how five gay fraternity men at five different institutions existed in fraternal spaces, including their coping strategies, gay identity development, and fraternity brothers’ reactions to their disclosures of their sexual identities via in-depth structured interviews. Their findings mirrored that of Case et al.’s (2005); Trump and Wallace (2006) found participants described their fraternity environments as homophobic and rife with heterosexism. All five participants “had a clear understanding that heterosexuality was the only accepted form of sexuality within their fraternity” (p. 11). Participants shared the overt, repetitive homophobic jokes, slurs, and beliefs present in their fraternity. As they became more involved in their organizations, they began to normalize these damaging norms.

Also similar to Case et al.'s (2005) finding of a high level of leadership among GLB members, termed *assimilation coping mechanisms* by the scholars, Trump and Wallace (2006) found participants:

were able to find successful ways to effectively blend in as just another brother, their blending efforts seemed to have a reversal effect in that the participants became highly recognized by their fellow chapter members as possessing desirable qualities of leadership. Thus, it was not long before the participants of this study began to take on leadership positions within their fraternities. (p. 16).

The scholars found a second theme of coping mechanisms, avoidance, in which participants decided it was easier to hide their sexual identity than to deal with non-acceptance, ignored everything homophobic or related to queerness, avoided specific members who routinely made homophobic jokes, and/or dodged scenarios in which they had to share anything about their romantic or sexual lives. Lastly, Trump and Wallace (2006) found a third theme of coping, passing, in which participants resisted gay stereotypes, alternated their behaviors, and engaged in more straight stereotypes around their fraternities. This finding is key to the present study because it highlights the performance of sexuality. Trump and Wallace (2006) did not explicitly highlight their participants behaviors' as performatives (Butler, 1990), but they shared "when visiting his fraternity house, one participant 'tried to be more macho, or to watch the things that I would say or the way that I would act, or try to not necessarily have them suspect that I would be gay'" (pp. 13-14). This participant highlighted how their sexual identity is a socially- and relationally-constructed identity, in line with my orientation to my study. Other participants more explicitly recognized their ability to perform a straight identity; participants engaged in intimate

activities with women solely to perform an interest in women to their members, made up elaborate stories, and brought women dates to fraternity functions.

Although Trump and Wallace (2006) do not recognize coming out as a continuous, ongoing task that Harper and Swanson (2019) delineate in their bi/pan/poly development model, or as a non-absolute way of defining one's sexual identity as Butler (1990) delineates, they offered six prevailing factors that were influential in participants' decisions to come out to members in their chapters. First, the *enmeshed nature of fraternity life* that made it difficult for members to date other men, do activities in secret, or feel as close to other brothers (similar to Case et al.'s finding) encouraged members to come out. Second, the *prevailing diversity within chapters* encouraged members to come out because a higher level of other forms of social identity diversity (e.g., race, religion) lead participants to believe their chapter would be more accepting of "just one more form of diversity" (p. 17). Third, increased *participants' levels of homosexual identity development*, determined by internal awareness of being gay, self-acceptance of one's identity, and sexual activity with same-gender partners, lead to participants coming out. Fourth, their belief in the validity of their *brotherhood* influenced members to come out. Fifth, through *reflections on previous coming out experiences*, participants discussed coming out as a process of trial and error among non-members and members, with more positive experiences leading to coming out to more people. Sixth, *pent-up frustrations* from hiding themselves lead members to come out to more members.

All participants 'came out' to most or all of their chapter members in Trump and Wallace's (2006) study, using a combination of three approaches. First, participants used a *member-specific approach*, through which formal status, perceived level of acceptance, and degree of familial attachment determined which specific members participants choose to come

out to. Second, participants used a *systemic approach*, through which members coordinated a sequential order of who to come out to. Lastly, participants used a *passive/reactive approach*, in which they created scenarios in which they could indirectly come out to members by way of action or by involving a non-member friend or other member to do it for them. The in-depth nature of Trump and Wallace's (2006) interviews informed the qualitative methodology of the present study.

A Study of the Attitudes and Communication of Homophobia

In their study of ninety-eight fraternity men at a mid-sized, urban, private university, Hall and La France (2007) collected questionnaires that explored how the social adjustment attitude function (how attitudes are held because they serve a purposeful value for the person) drove homophobia and homophobic communication in fraternities. They explored how group cohesion within the fraternity (e.g., brotherhood), recruiting new members (e.g., rush), and sorority partnerships mediated the presence of homophobia within fraternities. The scholars examined participants' attitudes toward gay people, hetero-identity concern (one's beliefs about themselves being identified as a particular sexual identity), and perceptions about homophobic communication within their fraternity.

Hall and La France (2007) found a direct relation between the social adjustment function to attitudes toward gay fraternity members; in other words, they shared, "participants who perceived that the presence of gay fraternity members would reduce trust and cohesiveness within the fraternity, hamper member recruitment, and damage relationships with sororities, held more negative attitudes about gay fraternity members" (p. 52). Gay men in fraternities were viewed as obstacles that prohibited heterosexual members' achievements of important goals. The scholars also determined that as more homophobia was present in their fraternity, members

became more concerned about maintaining a heterosexual identity themselves, which demonstrates the impact of others' communication on their own beliefs. In tandem, the researchers concluded the more participants personally believed gay men were detrimental to the fraternity (the impact of self-communication), the more hetero-identity concern they demonstrated. Lastly, Hall and La France (2007) found the more concerned participants were about maintaining their straight identity, the more homophobic comments they made. Making negative comments about gay people was one method participants demonstrated they maintained their straight identity. A very salient finding of this study was how participants believed homophobic communication is a way to perform a straight identity (Hall & La France, 2007).

A Case Study of a College Fraternity Community

Hesp and Brooks (2009) examined how gay fraternity members “affected chapter culture, the experiences, perceptions, and transitions of the gay members, and whether the beliefs and behaviors of heterosexual brothers were consistent or in conflict with the values espoused by the inter/national fraternities” (p. 395). Unlike prior studies (Case et al., 2005; Trump & Wallace, 2006; Hall & La France, 2007), this study explored straight members' perceptions as well as non-member perspectives. The scholars found that although ‘gentlemanly behavior’ was a founding principle of fraternal organizations, not all members acted in accordance with this value. Their participants were pessimistic about the potential of educational programming to have a positive impact on the levels of acceptance in their chapters; instead, they stressed only personal interaction between queer and non-queer members would improve the integration [sic] of gay members into fraternities. Participants also shared a support group of gay fraternity members at their university would be successful in improving their experiences in the fraternities, but also questioned the confidentiality of a support group and the possibility of finding a sizeable group

of gay fraternity members at their university. Although participants did not think non-discrimination policies at the inter/national level would be very effective, they still believed all organizations should include sexuality within them (Hesp & Brooks, 2009).

Conclusion

The extant literature provides numerous guides for the present study. Case et al. (2005) discovered the presence of gay, lesbian, and bisexual members of fraternities that was formerly doubted, as well as the commonness in experience for them and their non-queer counterparts. Case et al. (2005) and Trump and Wallace (2006) documented the heterosexist and homophobic environments present within fraternities; Trump and Wallace (2006) also found the unique strategies for coming out and coping mechanisms that gay members utilized to navigate the hostile environments. Hall and La France (2007) explored how homophobia was communicated by queer and non-queer members as a means to perform straight identities. Hesp and Brooks (2009) brought straight members and a non-member to the conversation and examined their perceptions of campus- and headquarters-based interventions. While these studies bring numerous contributions to the study of queer members' experiences in fraternities, no study explored how fraternal membership influences the *sexual identity development* of queer members.

Likewise, while numerous other studies explored the experiences of queer members of fraternities and sororities (Hughes, 1991; Reisberg, 1998; Windmeyer & Freeman, 2000; Yeung & Strombler, 2000; Case et al., 2005; Hesp, 2006; Franklin, 2007; Hall & LaFrance, 2007; Hesp & Brooks 2009; Hussy & Bisconti, 2010; Neumann et al., 2013), no study in the extant literature specifically explored the unique experiences of nonmonosexual (e.g., bisexual, pansexual, polysexual) members. All studies either 1) neglected the bi/poly/pan community entirely in their

participant eligibility or 2) grouped the pan/poly/bi community in with other queer identities (e.g. gay members) and indirectly assumed they have an indistinctive experience. Lack of focus on the nonmonosexual community is common in research related to sexuality (Brewster, 2017). Thus, I aim to answer Eisner's (2013) call to pay lots more attention to structural, heterosexual, monosexism in the present study by amplifying the experiences of pan/poly/bi fraternity members. I will now share my methodology for the present study.

CHAPTER III

STUDY DESIGN

This study aimed to explore the influence of fraternal membership on pan/poly/bi fraternity members' sexual identity development. I sought to elevate the unique experiences of bi/pan/poly fraternity members using a narrative inquiry qualitative design. The present study aimed to discover themes that speak to a broader narrative that may exemplify the impact fraternal membership has on poly/pan/bi members' sexual identity development.

The research questions that guided my study were:

- How, if at all, does fraternal membership mediate bi/pan/poly members' sexual identity development?
 - How, if at all, does fraternal membership influence pan/bi/poly members' experiences (or lack thereof) undertaking tasks related to 1) labeling, 2) salience and intersection of identities, 3) coming out, 4) community and/or political identity, and 5) managing the impact of oppression/stigma? (refer to Figure B)
- How, if at all, does fraternal membership influence poly/pan/bi members' performativity of their sexual identities? In other words, how do their actions re/create a sexual identity in/across their fraternal membership, if at all?

I will begin by describing narrative inquiry, the qualitative methodology I used for this study. Then, I will discuss my methods of data collection, including how I recruited participants, the participant criteria for eligibility in the study, and the semi-structured conversation practice I employed. Next, I will share the method of data analysis I used, Saldaña's (2013) thematic analysis coding. Finally, I will discuss the goodness criteria of my data, including my

positionality as a researcher and how I come to this study as well as the transferability of the data in this study.

Narrative Inquiry

Lindsay and Schwind (2016) shared how narrative inquiry can be used in higher education research. The scholars delineated how narrative inquiry is based upon the philosophy that “experience is relational, temporal, and situational, and as such, if intentionally explored, has the potential to be educational” (p. 14). Narrative inquiry centers participants’ lived experiences, typically gathers stories through interviewing and engaging in conversation, and aims to order the stories into a chronological narrative (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). I chose this qualitative methodology because it best aligned with the purpose of this study: to authentically elevate the lived experiences of pan/bi/poly fraternity members. Further, narrative inquiry acknowledges the relational nature of experience, which aligned with my orientation towards sexual identity—that it is a socially- and relationally-constructed and collectively-mediated and -owned identity. Next, I will discuss the methods of data collection.

Data Collection

Participants

Participant recruitment. I recruited participants by posting a call for participants on several Facebook groups where 1) pan/bi/poly fraternity members are likely to frequent or 2) fraternity headquarters or campus professionals who have access to poly/pan/bi fraternity members are likely to frequent (see Social Media Post in Appendix A). These included the following Facebook groups: National Association for Student Affairs Professionals (NASPA) Fraternity and Sorority Knowledge Community (KC), NASPA Fraternity and Sorority KC-New Professionals and Graduate Students, NASPA Gender and Sexuality KC, Student Affairs

Professionals involved with Leadership and Diversity Programs, Future Student Affairs Grad Students, and a secret group dedicated to queer- and trans*-identified professionals in the sorority and fraternity advising profession. Within these posts, I encouraged folks to share with their various networks as well (e.g. the fraternity and sorority communities of the campuses or inter/national fraternal organizations they engage with through work). Likewise, I contacted directors of Sorority and Fraternity Life Offices via email at various institutions asking them to share the call for participants with their fraternity and sorority communities (see Listserv Email in Appendix B). The call for participants was additionally posted in the Association of Fraternity and Sorority Advisors (AFA) weekly newsletter. I also sent the call for participants in a GroupMe for graduate students who work in various sorority and fraternity offices. Recruitment was ongoing, including as initial data collection occurred.

Within research related to sexual identity, there are many difficulties that arise during the recruitment of eligible participants, as delineated by Grzanka and Arnett (2017):

Issues of power and inequality influence how respondents identify their sexual orientation for the purposes of a research study. Stigma and discrimination toward sexual minorities continue to affect people in cultures across the globe; accordingly, many respondents may not identify as nonheterosexual due to fear of being ‘outed,’ criminalized, or persecuted. (p. 1534)

Thus, I also utilized a methodological approach offered by Cohen and Arieli (2011) called the snowball sampling method (SSM) to recruit a sizable sample of eligible participants with rich variety and complexity. With SSM, “one subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on” (Vogt, 1999, p. 300). Cohen and Arieli (2011) offered, “in this method, the sample group grows like a rolling snowball” (p. 424).

I contacted initial participants from already established connections from four universities I had worked and/or studied at and from various connections within the professional field of fraternity and sorority advising and student affairs more broadly. I connected to other eligible participants in the networks of the initial participants and then continued that process with the newer participants.

Interested participants were directed to a short Qualtrics Form that included: 1) the purpose statement for the research study, 2) the participant criteria, which potential participants needed to confirm they fit, 3) a field for potential participants to identify their sexual identity as they define it, fraternity affiliation and host institution, fraternity member status (current, former, or alumni), age, and any other salient social identities they would like to share at the outset of the research process, 4) an inquiry as to the preferred mode of communication for me to follow up with them, and 5) what they wanted their study pseudonym to be (see Participant Interest Survey in Appendix C). I intentionally empowered participants to choose their own pseudonyms as sense(s) of self and identity is central to sexual identity development (Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014). In my researcher positionality statement, I share how the monosexism I experienced resulted in a split sense of self throughout my sexual identity development, which I predicted to not be uncommon for those with a nonmonosexual sexual identity. I propose a pseudonym is an opportunity for participants to identify and celebrate an empowered sense of self and identity that is authentically who they are as a whole person; perhaps a pseudonym could be an act of resistance against hetero/monosexist systems. One's pseudonym is the way they will be represented in the study data and the reporting and sharing thereof; thus, I wanted participants to play an active role in increasing the authenticity of their narratives.

Upon completion of the Qualtrics form, I contacted potential participants, provided additional study details (see Informed Consent Form Email in Appendix D), and sent them the informed consent form to complete (see Informed Consent Form in Appendix E). Once participants returned a completed informed consent form, I sent them a Calendly link to schedule a 75-minute conversation block when they were available.

Participant eligibility. For inclusion in this study, participants had to identify as bisexual, pansexual, or polysexual. I chose to include these three identities because they each are nonmonosexual, are most often the target of monosexism, and are often nonexistent or grouped together with other sexual identities (e.g., gay) in the literature related to the sexual diversity of fraternities. I recognize this study intentionally resists the grouping together of separate, distinct, sexual identities, and also, I perceive value and power in the unity of poly/bi/pan identities against heterosexism and genderism as well as systemic and structural monosexism originating from both straight and queer communities.

As these three sexual identities are very nuanced, similar, and also, distinct, I prioritized subjects' personal definitions of these labels over common social and scientific definitions. In other words, I cared more about how subjects defined their sexual identity, why they chose a particular label, and what that label meant to them than what scholars or scientists define these terms to be. Nonetheless, for purposes of recruitment, common definitions provided included: individuals attracted to more than one gender, individuals attracted to all genders, and individuals who experience attraction irrespective of gender. Participants also had to identify as one of the following: a current undergraduate member of a social fraternity, a social fraternity alumnus, or a former member (e.g., an initiated member of a fraternity who chose to disaffiliate during or beyond their undergraduate tenure) of a social fraternity in some capacity. Lastly,

participants had to be at least 18 years old. I will now elaborate on the semi-structured conversation method of data collection I used.

Semi-structured Conversations

I led semi-structured conversations with participants. Participants selected a 75-minute time block for our conversation based on their availability. I aimed for 60-minutes of recorded data. The conversations occurred over Zoom and the participants were given the option to turn their video on or off; all eight participants kept their video on throughout the entirety of our conversations. I recorded the audio and visual components of the conversations using Zoom software.

As the participant arrived at the Zoom room, I would greet them and then begin making small talk, which would typically begin with asking them where they were currently geographically and asking about the weather. I was physically in Arizona for all the conversations, so I would make jokes about how it is perfect weather in the winter, the season during which each conversation took place, how it is going to be too hot in the summer, and how it is sunny seven days a week. Six of the eight participants worked at a higher education institution or in a higher education-adjacent role, so the conversation typically led to conversations about their professional lives. The purpose of these introductory pieces of the conversation was to establish rapport and a relationship with participants, which was typically most effective through finding similarities in our educational or professional journeys.

I called this data collection method *conversations*, as opposed to interviews, in an effort to destabilize the dichotomous and hierarchical researcher-participant relationship. I tried to foster a research environment embodying some aspects adjacent to Nicolazzo's (2016) utilization

of critical collaborative ethnography (Bhattacharya, 2008; Lykes, 1989; Foley & Valenzuela, 2008). Nicolazzo (2016) conceptualized critical collaborative ethnography as

grounded in the commitment of working *alongside* participants rather than conducting research *on* or *about* them (Bhattacharya, 2008). Entering into a collaborative research relationship with participants means researcher(s) and participant(s) work together to make meaning of their shared realities (Lykes, 1989). Although absolute collaboration can never be fully realized in research, the creation of a collaborative process for the current study involved the development of close, trusting relationships (Foley & Valenzuela, 2008) rooted in shared sense of solidarity about the research itself (Lykes, 1989). (pp. 540-541)

In the conversations, I often shared some of my own experiences when it related to what they were sharing; I also made space for the participants to ask me questions. This approach aided in building relationships with participants.

I began each conversation with a grand tour question (Spradley, 1979): “Tell me about a time when you were thankful for your fraternity?” Then, I employed interviewing by comment (Spradley, 1982) as I very loosely followed the interview protocol (see Interview Protocol in Appendix F), but often more so just drew on questions when the conversation appeared to need more direction.

The recorded portions lasted between 40 and 85 minutes; one lasted about 85 minutes, three lasted about 60 minutes, three lasted about 50 minutes, and one lasted 40 minutes. I found it very interesting the contrast in the conversation between when it was being recorded and when it was not. There was one conversation where we were debriefing afterward and I said “wait, can I start recording because this is exactly what I want to hear about.” In other words, despite efforts

to engage in critical collaborative ethnography and destabilize the dichotomous and hierarchical researcher-participant relationship or otherwise foster a more conversational, low-stakes interaction, the formalness and rigid constructs of formal qualitative research appeared to still pierce the authenticity of the conversations.

Three-Cycle Coding Data Analysis

I did a thematic analysis based on three-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2009). First, once I conducted all of the conversations, I engaged in *open coding*, in which I watched the video recordings and followed along on the Zoom auto-transcripts. I *openly* coded data, naming direct quotations for what their code may be (e.g., monosexism, biphobia, gay members). Then, I engaged in *axial coding* and I began to draw connections between the codes. I threw all the codes I have constructed across all interviews during the first stage into one location. I grouped the codes into categories. After I had developed several categories, I engaged in the final step, *selective coding*. While the selective coding aims to develop a ‘core category’, I recognized there were multiple ‘core categories’ as I made sense of the data. Thus, I developed these categories into three themes, from which I continued to make sense of as I revisited the data to share the narratives of the participants through the themes and subthemes in my representation of findings.

Goodness Criteria

In this section, I will share how I come to this study in two parts. First, I will share a researcher positionality statement I wrote prior to finalizing the methodology for this study. Then, I will add to that statement with the additional knowledge and perspectives I gained alongside this study, graduate study, and my lived experiences as a bi/Pansexual person. Finally, I will share the transferability of the study in regard to the variability in participants.

Researcher Positionality

I joined a social fraternity with approximately 150 members during my first semester at a large, public institution in the southeastern United States. Throughout my active membership, I publicly identified as straight. Our organizational culture was rife with overt anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes, behaviors, and norms; in retrospect, I see the negative impact this had on my healthy self-acceptance of a non-straight, nonmonosexual sexual identity. As I navigated my complex sexual identity development, I noticed a split sense of self: a straight half that would flourish in the fraternal context and a gay half that would flourish in separate social groups dominated by queer-identifying and explicitly-allied friends. In hindsight, I recognize how this phenomenon convoluted my adoption of a secure sexual identity. Nearly two years after joining my fraternity, I revealed my sexual identity for the first time; I told a close friend who was not a member that I was bisexual. Almost one full year after and a few months into my first romantic relationship with a man, the first member of my fraternity accidentally found out. Soon after, I encouraged another close friend who was also not a member to tell more members, including four members who were currently my roommates on my behalf, which Trump and Wallace (2016) termed the passive/reaction approach. Gradually, more members became aware through several means. While the heterosexism and homophobia present in my fraternity had immense negative impacts on my sexual identity development, the acceptance and support I was met with from my fellow fraternity members had an equally impactful positive influence on my journey to self-acceptance and what I now describe as identity pride or synthesis (Cass, 1979). I write this positionality statement prior to finalizing the study design and nearly two years after my first disclosure. I identify as either pansexual or bisexual; consistent with the literature utilized in this study, my sexual identity is ongoing and evolving. My sexual identity is typically my most salient identity in my personal, academic, and professional settings. I recognize my positionality as a researcher

who would be a potential participant in this study, is immensely passionate about LGBTQ+ inclusion in fraternities and sororities as well as disrupting monosexist, genderist, and heterosexist norms in society, and the potential implicit biases that I bring to this study. Thus, I will employ a thematic data analysis based on Saldaña's (2009) three-cycle coding.

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I build upon this research positionality statement nearly one year later as I have completed all interviews and I now begin the data analysis procedure. In the two years after my undergraduate tenure, and most notably in the past year, I have developed a lot; (my)³ sexual identity has become even more salient to (my) overall identity in personal, academic, and professional settings. I am indebted to the queer friends I have met who have become very important people in my personal life as well as the faculty, colleagues, scholars, cohort mates, and undergraduate students I have had the pleasure to engage with who have impacted me in a myriad of positive ways.

In addition, I reflect on how my closeness to (my) sexuality mediates how I come to, and move through, this study. Zaytoun (2010) posited, "the self is never complete, and a fixed truth cannot be known; one recognizes the tendency to pretend to be complete, but knows completeness cannot be achieved" (p. 152). In other words, Zaytoun (2010) described how people, namely queer people, aim to have a fixed identity in which they have full control over or are the sole author of. I think about how I considered hanging a bi/Pansexual pride flag in my office to declare to students my sexuality. However, I now view (my) and others' sexual identities as ever-evolving, and truly socially- and relationally-constructed, as asserted by Butler (1990). My closeness to (my) sexuality mediates how I come to this study in many ways. First, in

³ I write *my* in parentheses to demonstrate the interdependent being and ownership of (my) identities.

Chapter 4, when I share an introduction of each participant, I aim to share the way they described (their) sexual identity in their own words, using direct quotations, while also recognizing even this declaration does not create a fixed, complete identity for the participants. For instance, readers may read the participants' disclosure of (their) sexual identity, and then read further information (e.g., they currently have a partner who is a man, they have only dated women, or they lean towards particular gender(s)) and contribute to the ever-evolving nature of the individual's relationally-constructed identity by considering their sexual identity to be something else.

Throughout this study, I realized I am increasingly passionate about disrupting monosexism as I repeatedly experience bi/panphobia in friendships and professional settings. Engaging with literature on monosexism has given me the language and tools to better locate and reveal, and thus, resist and deconstruct the oppression I have more specifically experienced (monosexism), and also, its inextricable relationship with cis/heterosexism. Nonetheless, I am careful to not overlay my experiences onto participants'. While I shared some similarities in lived experiences with some of the participants, I actively recognize I cannot take things for granted in my analysis. I consider poly/bi/pan members of fraternities to not be a monolith, but rather a community of difference (e.g., while hetero/monosexism most accurately describes the structural oppression I face/d, other systems (e.g., cissexism, or racism) may be the most applicable to a participant).

As a staff member in a fraternity and sorority life office, I interact with many fraternity members each day, which leads me to be attuned to the differences in experiences in fraternal membership more broadly. Likewise, I recognize I am included in the audience for the

implications for practice, and also, I am uniquely positioned to implement these changes in the community I have direct formalized influence and engagement with.

Transferability

The diversity of the eight participants in this study supports the transferability of the findings of the present study. Geographically, three participants attended institutions in the midwestern region of the United States, two in the southeast, one in the northeast, one in the northwest, and one on the west coast. Four participants attended large, public institutions, three attended midsize, public universities, and one attended a small, private college. Regarding their nonmonosexual identities, four participants identified themselves as bisexual, one pansexual, one queer, one bisexual/fluid, and one bisexual/queer. In regard to their gender identities, three participants indicated an identification or exploration with a non-cisgender gender identity, including “nongendered,” “genderfluid non-binary/gender-queer, still figuring this one out lol,” and “being identified as he/they.” Participants also shared other social identities they deemed salient to them, which varied greatly among them (see Table 1). Likewise, participants’ ages ranged from 24 to 36 at the time of the present study as well as the years of their active under/graduate membership (2006 to 2020). Further, the membership sizes varied greatly, ranging from a participant who was the sole initiate in his pledge class joining a fraternity of under ten members to a participant who joined a fraternity of over 150 members alongside a pledge class of 40 people. The ‘known’ queer membership during one’s undergraduate membership ranged from over 25% of one’s entire membership being queer to one participant who was the only queer member of their entire fraternity to their knowledge during their undergraduate membership. The variability in participants’ lived experiences and identities

supports the transferability of the findings of the present study to other nonmonosexual fraternity members across campuses in the United States. I will now share the findings of the present study.

CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

I will begin this chapter with an overview of the eight participants I engaged in conversation with, first through demographic information, and then, through individual narratives, I construct about each participant’s fraternal experience. Finally, I discuss the three themes and their respective subthemes I constructed during my analysis of the conversations, describing their fraternal membership experiences influenced their sexual identity development as poly/bi/pan people.

Participants

I begin with Table 1 below that delineates concrete details from the Qualtrics form they filled out to indicate their interest in this study, as well as other details I gathered from conversations to demonstrate the diversity in demographic information and experience of the group of participants.

Table 1:

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym and Pronouns	Sexual Identity	Age	Undergraduate University Geographic Region	Undergraduate University Institutional Type	Other Salient Social Identities	Type of Member
Brock he/him	Bisexual	25	Northwest	Midsize, public		Alumni fraternity member
Don he/him	Bisexual	24	Midwest	Midsize, public	Black	Alumni fraternity member
Genesis they/he	Pansexual	30	Southeast	Large, public		Alumni fraternity member

Gilan he/him	Bisexual	24	Southeast	Large public	I might consider myself non-binary/gender-queer, still figuring this one out lol	Alumni fraternity member
Harry he/they	Bisexual/Fluid	25	Midwest	Large, public	Low socio-economic status, first-generation college student	Alumni fraternity member
Jake he/him	Bisexual	26	West Coast	Midsize, public	First-generation college graduate	Alumni fraternity member
Jordan he/him	Queer	36	Northeast	Small, private	White, cisgender, upper-middle class	Alumni fraternity member
Michael he/him	Bisexual/Queer	31	Midwest	Large, public	First-generation college student	Alumni fraternity member

Now, I will share narratives I have constructed from the stories and experiences the participants thoughtfully contributed to this study through the conversations. Then, I will share moments from our conversations to construct a narrative including their fraternal experiences or positions held, other involvements in their undergraduate tenures, how they describe their sexual identities, other identities they deem salient to them or their fraternity experiences, and/or details

regarding their sexual identity development broadly throughout their lifespans. I conclude by sharing their academic, fraternal, occupational, and/or professional involvements and where they resided geographically at the time of the study. I weave together these moments from our conversations to increase the humanity of the participants in research as whole people and recognize their contributions to this study and its purpose, which sets up a significant understanding of who participants are before I share the themes I have constructed across participants' experience to create a broader narrative of the influence of fraternal membership on bi/poly/pan members' sexual identity development.

Brock

Brock shared he was thankful he joined his fraternity his first semester of college before classes even started because he moved nine hours to the school by himself and felt he would have been very much on his own without the fraternity, especially his pledge class. Brock held three chair positions in his fraternity and two leadership positions on the Interfraternity Council; he also worked as a lifeguard and was involved in a church group. Brock stated these three experiences were very separate groups. Brock considers himself bisexual, and shared, "I guess [I] had, like, more relationship stuff with women, but I think more on just the casual side of things, more so, with men on that side...there's attraction on both ends...through different periods of my life there have been times, where it's been more time spent with women...in some periods of life, there's been more times with men." Brock shared, "I hear straight white male...sometimes I have to remind myself that I'm not that community...because of just how I present myself, I think I enjoy some of the privileges from that." He considers his religiosity, his small, rural hometown, and his friend groups to be other important parts of his identity. Brock's fraternity had over 40 members, with one gay member and one other bisexual member that he

was close with, along with a few others that “would consider themselves on the [queer sexuality] spectrum of some sort.” After graduation, Brock worked for his fraternity’s national headquarters as a leadership consultant alongside a bisexual and a gay consultant. At the time of the conversation, Brock was in his first year of a master’s program in educational leadership in higher education at a private, religiously-affiliated university in the south-central United States and worked as a graduate assistant in the fraternity and sorority life office at the institution.

Don

Don originally aspired to join a historically-Black fraternity at the first institution of higher education he attended. However, he transferred to a different institution and they did not have that fraternity. After getting involved on campus, he met a lot of members from the fraternity he ended up joining after going through formal IFC recruitment his second year. Don’s fraternity had 42 members, 11 of which were openly gay during his undergraduate membership, leading to lots of members dating one another; he was the only bisexual member to his knowledge. Don considered peer advising his most salient involvement in his undergraduate experience, followed by his fraternity and IFC leadership positions, and then serving as an orientation leader for the university. Don shared he identifies as bi, which to him means “liking two genders.” Don also noted the salience of his identities coming from a predominately-Black hometown with a racialized and classed reputation that was commonly known at the university as well as navigating assumptions that “being black meant being strong and being angry and being LGBTQ meant being soft.” According to Don, being Black led to salient experiences in the fraternity, as did being bisexual. At the time of the conversation, Don was in his second year of a master’s program in student affairs and higher education at a university in the southeastern

United States and worked as a graduate assistant in the fraternity and sorority life office at the institution.

Genesis

Genesis had been friends with members of their fraternity well before joining but noted “the depth to our friendship severely increased” when they joined. Genesis’ pledge class of 11 added to the current fraternal membership of 15 members, one of which identified as gay. Genesis considered himself a “jack of all trades,” devoting his time to helping other members in their chair positions since he was a little older and closer to graduation. Genesis shares “I don’t like to say I’m a gender, you know what I mean, like, more non-gendered. I tend to behave like a, you know, more typical dude because that’s how I was raised...my parents are very traditional, you know, cis, white, heterosexual people.” They added, “Growing up being told you’re a guy, you have to be a man...(laughing) well that’s fucking bullshit. I’m like, hold on, I’m getting the short end of the stick. What if I don’t want to be that kind of guy, where did my decision get thrown out the window here?” Fortunately, Genesis found the opportunity to explore both their gender and sexual identities in college. He shared, “When I decided that, like, the definition of straight didn’t quite define me anymore, I kind of looked up a few of the terms...it [pansexual] was the closest one that really kind of captured what I felt.” He added, “I do lean much more heavily towards the ladies, I mean, I’m married to one.....because while I can be attracted to both body types, I have multiple types of girls that I like, but I have a smaller number of types of guys that I like.” Genesis repeatedly expressed how much more important a potential partner’s soul or personality is to him than their physical appearance. At the time of the conversation, Genesis served as the alumni vice president for their chapter and lived in the southeastern United States.

Gilan

One of Gilan's goals for college was to get involved, so he rushed a fraternity his first semester, but chose to drop because he was not making a lot of friends and found the environment too stressful and full of a bunch of "fitness dudes who are all really into going to the right [social] place at the right time." Then, he joined a different fraternity during his second semester of college that had some of those same types of members, but "also more people who were just, like, goofing off," and he shared that it "definitely checked that box for me." During his third semester, Gilan held a position as the historian for his fraternity. The next semester, his fraternity was suspended by the university, but Gilan shared he had already planned to distance himself from the organization anyways due to the hostile environment and making more like-minded friends outside of the fraternity. Gilan stated, "I'd say bisexual is probably good...I'm not super attached to labels...I'm just not really concerned with gender as far as sexual attraction goes." He added, "I generally have found that I lean towards people who sort of go against gender norms a little bit, so, I find myself more into feminine men or masculine women." Gilan also shared, "I have a girlfriend now, so I feel that's something I definitely struggle with, like, maintaining my [bisexual] identity while I have a girlfriend...but, I've gotten more comfortable expressing my feminine side, now that I do have a girlfriend, sort of to prove a point." Gilan was the only participant who did not disclose his sexual identity to a single member during his undergraduate membership. At the time of the conversation, Gilan had graduated two years prior and moved to a big city in the northeastern United States but had only told one member since. The member he told also identified as bisexual, and they were, to their collective knowledge, the only queer members of the fraternity's 150-person membership.

Harry

Harry was going to transfer from their university after struggling to find community in other student organizations, but then a fraternity sent him a scholarship application. They won the scholarship, began going to the fraternity's events, and joined during their first semester of college. Harry shared that his fraternity connected him to campus involvement and that everyone was always willing to drop everything to help one another; he loved having so much community on campus, within and beyond the fraternity. Harry served in three leadership positions in his fraternity and two on the IFC executive board. Their fraternity had 60 members, 4 of which were openly gay, and one member identified as transgender; they were the only bisexual member. To describe his sexuality, Harry shared a quote from Robin Oaks that resonated with him: "You're attracted to the same *and* different genders, rather than the binary of man and woman." They added, "I don't know, for me, it's, like, weird to only like one gender...I still have preferences with genders, but it's not, like, that's, like, my focus...it's been shifting more from appearance to, like, soul." Harry also shared "I think I was kind of exploring it [their gender identity] last year and, like, this year I started being identified as he/they...being more non-binary, being able to express more of me...sometimes I feel one way more than the other, sometimes I'm kinda neutral...overall, I would say, like a non-binary male." At the time of the conversation, Harry held a master's degree in educational leadership and policy analysis and worked as a coordinator in a fraternity and sorority life office at a university in the western United States.

Jake

When Jake transferred to his undergraduate institution from a community college, he shared that while most people already had their cliques, he had no friends, and was experiencing depression and anxiety. He originally rushed a local fraternity but chose to drop from the process after some hostile experiences with the new member educator. Then, Jake became a founding

father of the fraternity he joined and was very thankful to have friends he could hang out with, and most notably, guy friends [sic], which he typically struggled forming friendships with growing up. Jake served as a new member educator for his chapter, which he deemed a huge learning experience. Jake's fraternity had 70 founding members, 2 of which were openly gay. Jake shared he was the only bisexual member; for him, "it's not 50/50, like, I'm more so, like, romantically attracted to men, but I know for a fact I'm still very much attracted to women as well, but I pretty much, like, I generally go towards men." Jake is a proud first-generation college student. He described his family as hyper-conservative and shared they would make fun of him for being "liberal." Jake's sexual identity has become more salient as he has gotten older. At the time of the conversation, Jake was a recent graduate of a master's degree program in college student personnel and worked for his fraternity's national headquarters, living in the mid-Atlantic United States.

Jordan

During Jordan's last semester of his undergraduate tenure, he was chatting with some fraternity members saying he wished he had joined a fraternity; they encouraged him to join the next semester since he was starting a master's program at the same institution. He went through recruitment as a graduate student and joined a pledge class of seven individuals, each of which he was about four years older than. Due to hazing, the pledge class dwindled to three people, two of which ended up dropping as well, leaving him as the sole initiate that semester. Jordan served as a new member educator the next semester, and then relocated and became a leadership consultant for his fraternity's national headquarters while continuing to work towards earning his master's degree. Jordan deemed his consultant experience to be very salient and transformative toward his personal and professional development, particularly because of the southern

institutions he was assigned to as a “northeasterner transplanted to the deep south” and how it mediated his sexual identity. Jordan described his sexuality as “probably more to the gay side [of the Kinsey Scale⁴]...but I know I’m romantically, emotionally, and sometimes, sexually attracted to women.” He “flips between, you know, gay, queer,” but still feels as though he fits the definition of “bi-ness,” but could see how he could be argued to be “on the margins of the traditional, dominant understandings of the label.” At the time of the conversation, Jordan was an assistant professor of educational leadership at an institution in the south-central United States and had worked in higher education for 15 years, including as a campus-based fraternity and sorority advisor.

Michael

Michael found his fraternity at a campus life night where he connected with the members fast and noticed the members were very involved on campus. He went to a small Christian high school and his siblings were quite a bit older than him; he was looking forward to finding a place to make friends, especially with men that were closer to siblings than what he grew up with. Michael served as the philanthropy chair and standards chair for his fraternity which comprised 65 members; his fraternity earned a nickname with Pi exchanged for Bi because 11-12 of the members were out as gay. Michael stated his fraternity was “absolutely” the most salient experience in his undergraduate tenure. From age 18 to 26, Michael identified as bisexual, and then, in grad school, the first time he had queer friends, he met his partner and “thought more about, like, the term gay just because I wasn’t seeing anybody else, but exclusively with a man.” Michael shared, “as terms evolve, I just now kind of think of myself as just being, like, queer...I

⁴ First published in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948), the Kinsey Scale aims to describe people’s sexual attractions ranging from straight, bisexual, and gay, with 0 being exclusively straight and 6 being exclusively gay ([Kinsey Institute](#)). The Kinsey Scale has been updated to include an additional category of “X”, relating to no socio-sexual contacts or reactions. The Kinsey Scale is imperfect, reinforces the gender and sex binary, and oversexualizes sexuality.

don't like to necessarily box myself into any one thing." After graduation, Michael worked for his fraternity's national headquarters; then, he studied a master's degree in higher education administration program. At the time of the conversation, Michael worked in student affairs at a university in the southeastern United States.

Now, I will discuss the themes I constructed as I made sense of the data during my analysis to represent the broader narrative of the influence of fraternal membership on poly/bi/pan members' sexual identity development.

The Influence of Fraternal Membership

Through my analysis of the data, I made sense of three prevailing themes. First, participants' fraternities facilitated liberatory firsts (e.g., first time feeling comfortable in their poly/pan/bi identity, first friendship with a queer person, first time coming out to anyone). Second, participants' fraternities were rife with hypermasculinity and heterosexism, thrusting them into the development of coping mechanisms and skills to navigate these environments that are tumultuous, especially for queer people. Third, participants became aware of and addressed monosexism and biphobia within their fraternity, which led them to grapple with these structures and battle against the internalization thereof.

Facilitating Liberatory Firsts

Six of the participants had at least one liberatory experience as a result of their fraternal membership. For many, this liberatory experience included feeling a sense of self-acceptance with their pan/bi/poly identity for the first time, finding queer community for the first time, and/or acting upon their sexual identity externally for the first time, whether that was coming out, labeling oneself as bi/pan/poly, or engaging sexually with partners of the same gender.

Sense of self-acceptance. Jake, who grew up in a “very conservative country area” within a community and a family with strong ties to very anti-queer belief systems, shared how the contrast of his fraternity’s accepting environment catalyzed his comfortability with his sexuality:

I was really uncomfortable at first when I joined [fraternity name], but then I got a lot more comfortable with it [my sexuality] because I met people who, their views weren’t as aggressive [as people from home] and, for them it [nonheterosexuality] was normal... they were like ‘oh yea, it’s normal, it’s a normal thing’...they almost taught me to be more comfortable with it...because it helped me see that, like, I wasn’t weird, I wasn’t different, you know, like, I think it helped me see, like, I *can* have guy friends and be who I am, again it sounds really corny, but...if I hadn’t joined my fraternity, I wouldn’t have been more open to embracing myself and exploring my sexuality and being more confident in it, because I think even from the time I joined to when I graduated, there was this clear progression of this is who I am, and I’m comfortable with it.

For Jake, his fraternity facilitated his first feelings of liberation from his own uncomfortability with his bisexual identity that was built by his upbringing in a homophobic environment. He even shared that regarding the acceptance he found within his fraternity, “I felt like that was enough, it almost made me not want to tell my family...because I was like, I have this acceptance already and I don’t really need it from anyone else.” Nonetheless, he also shared there were still “highs and lows,” as he still was negatively affected by hurtful things he heard other members say about him regarding his sexuality that prompted an ongoing battle with his insecurities, reinforcing the reality that these feelings of liberation still occurred within a heterosexist, monosexist organization situated within a larger system of hetero/monosexism.

Likewise, Brock delineated how engaging with the bisexual members within his undergraduate fraternal membership drastically refuted many internal biphobic misconceptions he had developed before joining:

[My bisexual fraternity members] were the first people I talked to about this experience, and I think that was really helpful to have people in that situation...I think [regarding] the bisexual community too, like, there hadn't been a lot of that [prior to joining]... I think the times that I'd been interacting with the [bi] fraternity brothers that I interacted with, it was good to have other [bi] people because I think sometimes there's this thought, like, you can't be that way, you can't be bi, so for other fraternity members to also have that experience is helpful to think, like, 'I'm not crazy!'

For Brock, his fraternity provided the space to discuss his experience and sexuality with others for the first time. This space facilitated a lot of un/learning for Brock, which prompted him to be more comfortable with his identity. He also shared that this fraternal space contrasted directly with the church he attended during his undergraduate experience, where there was no space to discuss nonheterosexuality. Further, Brock shared how a fellow bisexual consultant he worked alongside helped "validate" his bisexuality within a monosexist society.

While close friendships generally with members facilitated self-acceptance for Jake and close friendships specifically with bi members facilitated self-acceptance for Brock, Michael found self-acceptance through the president of his fraternity during his freshman year, even though he was not that close with him. Similar to Jack and Brock, this environment contrasted with the family environment he grew up in:

I remember having a conversation with him about how I was raised in a really Christian-centric household and how I didn't know if I really, truly believed that, like, two guys can

be happy together, like if it was, like, possible from a design standpoint, and he was just really encouraging to me about, like, ‘you realize that we lost to whole generation of people who would have showed us what it would look like to be in a same-sex [sic] relationship and have this normal life that everybody else has, like, you realize that [nonheterosexual] people also don’t have a lot of examples of that just because people haven’t been able to come out for years’, so he was really encouraging about that.

At the time of the study, Michael was in a committed relationship with a partner of the same gender and he reflected on how it was within his fraternity that he realized for the first time that two men partners could be happy together. Once again, though, Michael’s liberatory experience of a *first* still occurred within a fraternity environment rife with homophobia and heterosexism.

Don shared how the comfortability he felt as a result of his fraternity lead him to be more able to help future queer members feel comfortable, institutionalizing this practice within the fraternity. For each of these four participants, the fraternity facilitated the first time they felt a sense of self-acceptance or comfortability with their sexual identity. For many, this liberatory experience occurred within a queer subculture within the fraternity, which was typically the first time they found queer community.

Finding queer community. In high school, Don shared “I turned a lot to music and television to get a lot of who I was,” but also noted the shortfalls of doing so in that there was very little queer representation, let alone bi representation. Moreover, Don noted bi representation was often imperfect, typically showing all bi people as nonmonogamous; while Don finds nothing wrong with nonmonogamy, he expressed that this perpetuated an incorrect stereotype of the bisexual community. Thankfully, Don shares:

Going into college, I really did want to find that sense of [queer] community, and so I mean I just got really lucky with [fraternity name] in the way that I did find a bit of [queer] community... I've never had a group of guys that I actually talked to about that stuff ever, ever, ever...having those different conversations with [fraternity name] really helped me flesh out a lot of deeper issues us as LGBTQ individuals typically have.

Finding this queer community also motivated Don to institutionalize a queer-affirming environment within his fraternity for future queer members with a *pay it forward* mindset.

Likewise, Genesis, who grew up in a very rural, heterosexist environment, discussed how finding queer community within their fraternity lead them to unlearn a lot of previous misconceptions they had about queerness. Before college, Genesis shares:

When I noticed it [same-gender attraction], I didn't embrace it because I didn't feel it was something that should be embraced; it wasn't super supported, I didn't see anybody else that expressed anything like those feelings. I didn't know anybody else like that, anybody [who was queer] that I knew that was, like, kind of withdrawn and not really outgoing and so there was no appeal to me...I saw the problems, but I never saw any of the reward.

Genesis' fraternal membership facilitated a transformative friendship between him and a gay member. This friendship and community, facilitated by their fraternal membership and situated within a hetero/monosexist institution, revealed what Genesis described as the reward of embracing queerness: "the biggest reward is just being able to be yourself."

Brock's fraternal membership also facilitated him finding queer community for the first time. He shared that the other bi members within his fraternity:

Provided space where, like, unintentionally I was with other people that were like me... it's not a community that I ended seeking out necessarily, but because I found myself

with other people like me, um, it offered that opportunity to talk about [bisexuality]...the fraternity provided a safe space for people to have thoughts and opinions and learn and grow from their peers, instead of being taught in the classroom and being checked by professionals and teachers.

Evidently, Brock further reflected on the potential of the structure of a fraternity to create positive implications for queer and straight members to learn alongside one another through peer education which he deemed to be more effective and influential than typical, classroom learning.

While Don was actively seeking queer community as he entered college, Genesis and Brock accidentally stumbled upon it. Nonetheless, each participant's fraternal membership facilitated them finding queer community for the first time, which had positive liberatory implications for their sexual identity development. Similarly, Michael shared that in contrast to his home environment, within the queer subculture within his fraternity, he "could have more dialogues about it [his sexual identity] without, like, going further into the closet." In many cases, the community the participants found often facilitated them doing the exact opposite of going further into the closet; many participants' fraternal membership facilitated them acting upon their sexual identity externally for the first time.

Acting upon sexual identity externally. For Jake, the support he felt from his fraternity members was the catalyst for him to feel comfortable enough to engage sexually with partners of the same gender for the first time. He shared:

In terms of my identity development, I honestly don't know if I would have embraced being bi more and, like, experimented with dudes and things like that...I don't think I would have had those moments I did have...if I hadn't had the support from my members to make a Tinder [sic] or things like that...[without my fraternity] I wouldn't have grown

that way...I would've still been really scared to do so...what really helped was the fact that I knew I had support for these things.

Jake noted the salience of these experiences in regard to his overall sexual identity development; a lot of Jake's *firsts*, facilitated by his fraternal membership, were things he said he had wanted to do long before coming into college, but it wasn't until he felt the support from fellow members that he felt confident enough to do so. Jake's narrative highlights the potential for fraternal membership to facilitate the reversal of repressed sexual desires developed from anti-queer home and familial environments during one's upbringing.

While Jake's undergraduate fraternal membership led him to explore sexually with men, Jordan's experience working as a consultant for his fraternity's national headquarters is what catalyzed his exploration. As a consultant, Jordan was traveling nonstop to universities in the south-central United States that were home to the chapters of his national fraternity that he was assigned to as their leadership consultant. This consistent transient identity and the heterosexist culture in which he was embedded led Jordan to perform differently depending on the context. He performed straight actions, mannerisms, and all the like while engaging with chapter leaders and members at universities, which brought him credibility and power in his professional sphere. Meanwhile, Jordan utilized his opportunity as a constant traveler to explore sexually casually with men in the locations to which he was traveling. Being on the move consistently provided Jordan with an appropriate excuse as to why he could never progress things beyond short-lived casual interactions with the men he met on the road, preserving his straight performances in the professional sphere and resisting the need for him to become more visible in any sphere. Jordan continued this dichotomous lifestyle when he transitioned to working as a campus-based advisor in a fraternity and sorority life office; nearly every weekend, he would drive two hours to a

nearby big city and spend time at queer-identified establishments to the point where “people thought I lived in [city name].” It was not until Jordan met his current partner who worked in the same professional field as him that his multiple lives/selves had to blend. While Jordan’s experiences are adjacent to the undergraduate experiences of other participants, they still highlight the influence of his fraternal membership on facilitating the first times he acted upon his sexual identity externally.

The gay member Genesis befriended and other non-queer accepting members of their chapter created a space where Genesis felt comfortable opening up for the first time about their attraction to men:

So he was the first one that I realized that I talked about actually having, like, any sort of attraction [to men], as opposed to, before that, the farthest I would really say is, like, I can tell when a man is good looking... my chapter was made up of a bunch of really accepting types of guys so it definitely led me to be more open to coming out and just basically not hiding anymore.

Although Genesis said he did not have much to hide and that he “could totally get by with just saying I was a cis male heterosexual for the rest of my life,” he also noted that “even just having just a little bit of me that I couldn’t express, it still hurts a little.” Thus, Genesis demonstrated the integral role the people they met and the relationships they developed as part of their fraternal membership played in their sexual identity development. Without his fraternity, Genesis said he “would have never had to go through any of the difficulties of finding myself, but then I wouldn’t know myself.” Genesis continued this theme of the difficulties associated with becoming visible being worth the reward of furthering one’s self-exploration, all of which was facilitated by their fraternal membership.

The supportive, loving, and caring environment in Don's fraternity also led him to become visible in ways greater than ever before. Likewise, Brock mentioned that:

I think it [his sexuality] was very easy to just ignore and not explore it at all...even though it wasn't like I went full-on jumping to the deep end, I would say that without my fraternity I don't think I would have nearly explored as much...the church could've easily shut me down very quickly and I wouldn't have wanted to touch it.

Don and Brock both highlighted how the contrast between their fraternity's accepting environments and other environments they experienced either before or simultaneously during their undergraduate fraternity membership impacted their willingness to explore their identities. For Harry, he found his interest in activism for the queer community in the reforms he initiated in his fraternity, another dimension of their sexual identity development.

Fraternal membership influenced all but one of the participants' sexual identity development through the facilitation of liberatory experiences. Finding queer community for the first time or being embedded within a much more accepting environment or subculture than what they experienced prior to coming to college or joining their fraternity often catalyzed a sense of self-acceptance for participants, which further lead to participants acting upon their sexual identities externally for the first time. Each of their narratives is unique and the synthesis thereof creates a beautiful broader narrative of the potential of fraternal membership to facilitate bi/poly/pan members' liberation. However, this liberation often occurred in queer subcultures and this liberation always occurred within a broader hetero/monosexist system, whether that was the fraternity, campus, or society. Participants' *firsts* and liberatory experiences did not shelter them from the hypermasculine, heterosexist environments present in their fraternities.

Becoming Aware of and Coping with Hostile Hypermasculine, Heterosexist Environments

All but one of the participants shared how the hostile hypermasculine, heterosexist environments present within their fraternities influenced their sexual identity development; the environments led them to become aware of the presence of hostility and then develop coping strategies to navigate these environments, coping strategies that often proved to be effective in similarly hostile environments beyond their fraternal membership. Four participants (Jake, Jordan, Michael, and Gilan) learned to perform a masculine or heterosexual identity by altering their modes of expression and/or what they chose to discuss and what not to discuss within the fraternal environment as well as lying about one's sexual experiences. Four participants (Michael, Gilan, Jake, and Harry) learned to distance themselves from the hypermasculinity, heterosexism, and homophobia present within their fraternity; they avoided particularly hostile individuals, situations, or the fraternal organization as a whole as a means to cope with the damaging environment's impacts on their sexual identity development. Six participants (Gilan, Harry, Michael, Genesis, Jordan, and Brock) learned to split queerness from hostility; structurally, cognitively, and/or socially, participants compartmentalized queerness and non-queerness, sheltering one's queerness from potentially harmful heterosexist and homophobic environments.

Performing a masculine or heterosexual identity. Participants experiencing a hypermasculine, heterosexist environment in their fraternities learned to perform a masculine or heterosexual identity to avoid being stigmatized and retain respect in their organizations. In many ways, this included suppressing femininity and avoiding any action that is hegemonically stereotyped to be representative of queerness. Throughout the participants' narratives, it became clear the same fraternal environments that facilitated liberating experiences for participants, especially in relation to feeling comfortability with one's bi/poly/pan identity or generally

expressing oneself more authentically, were dually hostile and caused participants to conduct inauthentic performances of themselves as a means to exist within the hypermasculine, heterosexist environments they were embedded within. For example, Jake, whose fraternity made him feel comfortable about his identity for the first time also shared:

I would intentionally talk a little bit slower, lower my voice a little bit, I wouldn't get as excited about things, I would try to be more stone cold and just straightforward...I was like, 'I'm gonna get more respect that way.'

As a result of his fraternal membership, Jake learned to act in accordance with what he made sense of to be stereotypically masculine, heterosexual modes of expression. Likewise, Jordan shared similar sentiments:

I was much more conscious of how I was presenting, my mannerisms, what I was talking about, what I wasn't talking about, what I was comfortable challenging... part of the performance is clothing attire, part of the performance is mannerisms; you gotta make sure that your wrist doesn't go limp at any point, or be mindful of potentially how your voice sounds because you don't want to raise any questions about your credibility.

While Jake was nearly entirely 'out' in his fraternity, he still performed a less authentic version of himself in to garner more respect from members. For Jake, it was less about the visibility of his identity and more about how he showed up in fraternal spaces, perhaps he made sense of the environment that being bisexual is acceptable, but outwardly acting against the masculine, heterosexual norm was punished by the system he was embedded within. On the contrary, Jordan was not 'living out' during these performances he conducted during his consultant experience; he performed to avoid a queer label being placed on him. Consistent for both participants is that their fraternity experience facilitated such a hypermasculine, heterosexist space that they

developed coping mechanisms in the form of performing masculine, heterosexual identities to avoid stigmatization and retain respect in their organizations.

Jordan further explained how these external pressures to perform were so intense that they led him to lie about sexual encounters:

I may have engaged in some form of sexual assault [by lying about having sex with a woman] when I was in undergrad as a member because of this notion of hypermasculine focus on sex and how many people I slept with...I had this pressure where I have to sleep with this person or else my chapter brothers won't like me.

In this narrative, Jordan reveals the intensity of these external pressures to act in accordance with the hegemonic masculine and heterosexist structures of his fraternity. This highlights the influence of fraternal membership to lead bi/pan/poly members to recognize the power of performance and the power of place and context one is situated within, as Jordan further delineated:

Place and context probably matter, I would argue, more, within bisexual or pansexual communities because of this constant code-switching or performance that has to be had with questioning not only the performance you're doing to the outside world but also the performance that you're reinforcing or problem enticing cognitively in your brain.

Whether it was performing as a means to cover one's identity or performing to perform one's identity less authentically (in other words, Jake was out as bisexual, but performed masculinity to demonstrate that he was still a masculine bisexual, a more accepted identity in his fraternity), for some, participants' fraternal membership facilitated the development of performing skills, and for others, their fraternal membership advanced performing skills they had already developed prior to their fraternal membership.

For example, Michael, whose fraternal membership facilitated the first time he truly believed two men could be happy romantically together, also shared how the heterosexism in his fraternity led him to replicate coping mechanisms he developed years before coming to college: “I learned how to deal with homophobia all along growing up in that [my home] environment...I would just go further into the closet.” Michael learned to cover his sexuality when the heterosexism in his fraternity became too intense.

Gilan said, “I think joining a fraternity was more about, like, who I was trying to be rather than who I already knew I was.” He grappled with the fluidity of his authenticity as a result of the hypermasculine environment his fraternity fostered:

Before you come out, you’re hiding something and outwardly showing something different maybe than what you really are...a big part of my coming out has been expressing femininity, there’s just not a ton of room for that in a fraternity, it’s a very masculine environment...being masculine or feminine doesn’t really have to do with being gay or straight or whatever but sometimes they are correlated, and, in my case, they are, and I felt, like, I don’t know, I was just wanting to stop being just, like, frat dude... some part of the way I acted around [fraternity name] is authentic, I’m not entirely pretending to be someone else, but it’s more pushing your personality in a certain direction to fit in with the group...I acted that way for two years; I didn’t want to and I kind of questioned why I ever did to begin with I guess.

For Gilan, his fraternity limited his ability to express femininity, which was inextricably linked to his coming out processes. Gilan expanded his narrative by discussing how his fraternity mediated his coming out processes, “I wasn’t even concerned about the consequences of being out, I just didn’t want to come out, the act of telling everybody just seemed like it was going to

be a whole thing; which is a theme throughout every instance of me coming out, but was most prevalent in [fraternity name].” Thus, Gilan demonstrated how his fraternal membership facilitated him to avoid coming out experiences that were especially anxious-inducing. Further, his fraternity experience drew him to find less value in performing and shifting his personality to be more similar to those around him. Instead of changing himself, Gilan found more value in changing the environment around him, as many other participants did as well, which will be further explored in the next section.

Distancing from hypermasculinity, heterosexism, and homophobia. When participants became aware of the hostile environments their fraternities fostered and the impact of heterosexism on their wellbeing, participants often distanced themselves from their fraternity in a number of ways, demonstrating how their fraternal membership facilitated the development of another skill to cope with heterosexist and homophobic environment: to distance oneself. For example, Michael shared his reaction to a particularly vulgar experience encountering homophobia in his chapter:

My big brother did get really drunk one time... I was driving for him and he called me a f*g while I was driving for him...and that was pretty upsetting just because I'm like, 'I opted to drive you and your friends around, to do this nice thing for you, I'm gonna have this relationship with you, and, like, this is what I'm getting out of this'...things like that, the more I think about I'm, like, did I really need that [the fraternity] because I can make friends, so I don't know, yeah, I don't know if I would do it [join a fraternity] again.

For Michael, the homophobia he experienced in his chapter was so strong, even among members he was close to, that he questioned if he would even join his fraternity if he went to college

again. This demonstrates the influence of his fraternal membership in leading him to avoid situations in the future that could be harmful.

While Michael considered avoiding the organization entirely, Jake and Gilan discussed avoiding specific members as a means to avoid harmful situations. Jake shared: “the people who responded [to me coming out] negatively, I would, like drop, like, not pay attention to.”

However, for Gilan, the structure of a fraternity made avoiding specific members more complex; he shared, “in a group setting, it goes off of who I’m the least comfortable around, whether or not I’m going to go; when you’re in a fraternity, it’s the least comfortable person in the whole fraternity.” These narratives highlight their fraternal memberships’ impact on leading them to become aware of and address the personal impact of homophobia in heterosexual communities and finding effective coping strategies when coming out doesn’t go as planned.

While sometimes the distancing was initiated on behalf of participants, sometimes external factors initiated or expedited the distancing of oneself from the hostile fraternal environments. For example, Gilan’s fraternity lost recognition from the university, prohibiting formalized fraternity events, but he noted he already planned to distance himself:

I was at a point where like my strategy was sort of distancing from [fraternity name], I don’t think I’m fitting in with them very well so I’m just going to make some other friends and that’s just what I’m going to do... I’m not on bad terms [with fraternity members], I just don’t really talk to them.

Likewise, Jake shared how the times he was pushed out of fraternal leadership still impact him through persistent insecurities even years after graduation:

People would say, like, ‘I don’t think [Jake] should be in an exec position because I think he’s too emotional to be in one; I don’t want Luke to be the Vice [President of

Recruitment] because I don't think we want someone like him to be the face of the fraternity because then we won't get more guys that we actually want' ...it did affect me a lot because it really brought down my confidence about 'I could be a good student leader' ...it even showed up when I was applying for jobs outside of grad school...I wrote the cover letter, I submitted it and I was like 'I'm not gonna get this job, I was never the recruitment guy, like, I wasn't the right face of the fraternity and all those things came back to me...it did affect me because, even today, I have to remind myself 'I know what I'm doing' ...it's wild because when I talk to chapters, I still get those insecurities of 'okay, well, maybe I'm not the face they want to see coming into their chapter, I'm not like the frat man looking kind of thing.

Jake highlighted how being pushed out of fraternal leadership for what he presumed to be his sexual identity or performance thereof, still impacts him today, which reveals the power of damaging fraternity experiences to negatively impact pan/poly/bi members down the road with a hyper focus on the impact of one's sexual identity on one's professional abilities, especially within hypermasculine contexts, such as fraternities. Nonetheless, Jake developed resilience strategies, such as consistently reassuring himself and actively refuting the self-doubt when it arises. Also, Jake distanced himself to find ways he could utilize his leadership capabilities; after being pushed out of fraternal leadership, Jake said, "I kind of shut down for a bit and stopped being as active in the chapter for a while, I focused more on IFC and things like that, bigger level things." Jake was not the only one pushed out of fraternity leadership; Harry noted how he did not get to become president because of how much he advocated for queer people within his chapter, making sure they all felt safe and comfortable. Although these fraternal contexts

facilitated liberatory firsts for these same members, Gilan reflected on whether fraternities are even desirable spaces for queer people:

It's not so much that anyone cares that you're queer in a fraternity, it's sort of just, like, why would you join a fraternity if you're queer; if I had been out and stuff before, there's no way I would have rushed, I would have been, like, 'I hate this', so I just had to have that realization halfway through.

Gilan's reflection leads to the next subtheme of becoming aware of and responding to hostile hypermasculine, heterosexist environments. Participants, who were often simultaneously feeling those first senses of comfortability with their pan/bi/poly identities and acting upon them, began to split their queerness from hostility structurally, cognitively, and/or socially.

Splitting queerness from hostility. After his sophomore year, Gilan spent the summer at home, which was in a different geographic region of the country. He shared, "I came out to everyone at home, outside of my college group, so I came back to campus feeling very liberated and very different as a person. I think I was ready to go find more like-minded individuals." After feeling the liberation of living out at home, Gilan did not desire to return to the hypermasculine, heterosexist environment of his fraternity, demonstrating the influence of Gilan's fraternity on his desire to seek more informally-designated queer-affirming social spaces. Likewise, Harry explained, "I wish more things like [the secret group dedicated to LGBTQ+-identified professionals in the sorority and fraternity advising profession] existed, because, like, I just think we don't have that for our undergraduate members." Harry noted the power of a formally, structurally-designated queer-affirming social space to be liberating for professionals in the field and that they wished it existed for queer undergraduate members to build community among one another. These queer-affirming social spaces are acts of resistance against the

dominant heterosexist ideologies present within fraternal spaces. The heterosexism Gilan and Harry experienced in the fraternal environments led them to see the power of these resistant spaces and to seek them in the future for themselves and others.

Michael's chapter was actively trying to change its stereotype of having many queer members by recruiting exclusively non-queer members, but this was not unique to his organization at the institution. Michael also shared that, defining of his college time, were social media trends that reflected Team Edward and Team Jacob from the Twilight movie series. His chapter took on this trend by having 'Team Gay' and 'Team Frat'. While Michael cautions that these team structures "really wasn't about sexuality, it was really more about, like, standards that we set for ourselves in regards to how we thought we should, like, maintain relationships with women," it is still clear that linguistically and structurally these teams denote the prevailing belief in the fraternity was that *frat* and *gay* (re: queer) may be mutually exclusive, especially within an organization that was aiming to change its stereotype of having queer members by excluding queer members in recruitment. Genesis shared similar considerations about splitting queerness from fraternities: "should we have, like, hetero and homosexual [sic] fraternities, like should we split it, do we have, but then it's like, do we have [fraternity name] hetero, [fraternity name] homo, like, that's really fucking, that sounds really bad, you know." Michael and Genesis reflected on simply structurally splitting fraternities into straight and gay fraternities, which structurally excludes nonmonosexual people; structural monosexism. In each narrative, the participants further reflected on how their pan/poly/bi identity existed in heterosexual spaces and how their queerness may be split from the hostile environments.

Brock may have been splitting queerness from hostility cognitively, rather than structurally. He reflected on members who primarily were from small, rural hometowns, would

cite freedom of speech and actively try to use “every possible problematic term.” Brock shared he was not impacted by these “microaggressions” because he said, “I don’t necessarily see myself under that term [the f– slur].” For Brock, he may have been cognitively splitting his queerness from the hostility within his fraternity as a coping mechanism for the homophobic environments he encountered. Further, Brock shared how he increased his activism for other queer people within the chapter, and often thought of doing so as an ally for others, rather than advocating for himself.

Likewise, Jordan revealed how he cognitively split the performance of queerness from the heterosexist environments he encountered while serving as a consultant for his national fraternity:

Different actions in the real world challenge your cognitive thinking of who you see yourself as a sexual identity, so time and place certainly influence how one sees themselves, but also the behaviors they do not feel comfortable engaging in...dominant ideologies impacted how I should perform in this space...power and space signaled what was deemed as acceptable, therefore, what is going to get me credentialed.

For Jordan, he cognitively separated his queerness in his performance of sexual identities to retain his credibility as a leadership consultant. As previously shared, Jordan found queer community elsewhere through transient relationships and the development of multiple lives/selves and the performativities thereof. While this queer community, whether it is a subculture embedded within a hostile, hypermasculine, heterosexist environment (e.g., fraternity) or a community existing completely disparate from the fraternity or otherwise hostile organization, can facilitate liberation from hegemonic, heterosexist, and homophobic structures for queer people, these queer communities are far from perfect. Although they can provide

refuge from heterosexist heterosexual spaces, queer spaces do not shelter pan/bi/poly people from monosexism and biphobia, which are equally detrimental to one's sexual identity development as heterosexism.

For example, Gilan also shared that he has experienced “feeling not gay enough around all gay men, and even more strongly, not straight enough around straight people.” Participants' fraternities facilitated liberatory firsts while dually presenting participants with hypermasculine, heteronormative environments leading them to perform, distance, and split themselves as a means to cope with the hostile environment. Likewise, the monosexism and biphobia within participants' fraternities mediated their sexual identity development.

Managing Monosexism and Biphobia

Five of the participants were forced to recognize and respond to monosexism and biphobia as a result of their fraternal membership. Describing the biphobia they experienced in their chapter, Harry shared, “fraternity members, like everyone else, just assumed I was gay...they'd be like ‘you can't like men and women.’” Likewise, Jake shared:

After I would either tell them or they would find out that I like men, they would constantly question if I actually liked girls, to the extent, people trying to show me, like, porn, they'd be like, ‘Do you actually like this?’ and it'd be straight porn...one of the most common responses was ‘Are you actually sure you like girls? Or are you just saying that to make yourself feel better about it?’

Similarly, Don shared, “the guys I was closest to said ‘you can't be bi, you haven't done anything with a girl,’ and it's like, well, bro...the instances will come up when they've said certain things like, ‘hey I don't know how you're bi when you haven't done anything with a girl.’” On the contrary, Brock shared how he had to remind himself he was not straight. Further,

Jordan noted how his fraternal environment lead him to live in two different worlds, one straight and one queer.

These monosexist and biphobic environments had implications on participants' sexual identity development. For three participants, (Harry, Jake, and Brock), it led to internal grappling with one's identity and the performance thereof, especially when it came to dating women. For four participants (Harry, Jake, Jordan, and Don), it catalyzed participants to respond to the monosexism and biphobia head-on, typically through educating others, and sometimes even oneself, recognizing how these oppressive structures can be internalized, even for nonmonosexual people. For two participants, (Harry and Jake), it also led them to disengage from particular members or situations, perhaps while recognizing they are not the sole owners of their identities; as Butler (1990) delineated, individuals' ongoing, repeated actions—and others' reactions to those actions—continually re/create their identities.

Internal grappling. Harry opened up about how the monosexism and biphobia they encountered in their chapter caused them to grapple with their internal sense of who they are, in ways that replicated monosexism and biphobia they experienced before college:

I wasn't still exploring, but I wasn't confident in my identity...I guess, it [the fraternity environment] was like growing up when you're bullied for quote 'being gay', sometimes you hear all that and it gets ingrained in you that you're not who you are.

Harry's story highlights the influence of his fraternal environment on the labeling of his nonmonosexual identity and his continued challenging and understanding of labels for himself. These replicated former experiences he had, thus the fraternity served as a perpetuation and continuation of broader societal monosexism and biphobia. Further, Harry and Jake shared how the monosexism and biphobia present within their fraternities caused a lot of anxiety, insecurity,

and confusion within their dating spheres, specifically with dating women. For example, Harry highlighted how their fraternity facilitated more internal grappling:

But it did impact me being confident in my dating life and knowing who I am 100% ...sometimes I'd question 'Am I actually bi? Am I actually gay?', then I'd be like 'What the fuck?' People's thoughts and opinions were starting to get in my head and it did cause some frustration and confusion for a little bit when it was a constant battle I had to go against...it led me to sometimes, like, only filtering men on a dating app rather than men and women... 'Do I look gay? What the fuck?' Gay and bi doesn't look a certain way, but sometimes you start having those thoughts.

In this narrative, Harry also revealed the performative nature of sexuality. While Harry's fraternal membership led him to internalize others' misconceptions of their sexual identity, closing himself off to women partners, Jake's fraternity facilitated a social environment in which Jake did not feel comfortable pursuing women romantically because of a fear of monosexist beliefs:

That also caused a lot of fear because I was like, 'What if one day I meet a girl that I like and I wind up dating her, but if she gonna like the fact that I also like dudes and then if I don't wanna tell her that like is one of her friends that knows gonna tell her that?' That was a fear of mine too...there was a girl I started talking to, but her roommate knew, and I was super scared she was gonna tell her and she wouldn't like me anymore, so much anxiety.

Jake's narrative reveals how his fraternity's monosexist culture led him to internalize fears that others would embody these beliefs as well, thus limiting his romantic opportunities due to embedded social networks.

On the contrary, Brock shared “sometimes I hear ‘straight white male,’ and, like, especially talking about a lot of those identities and privileges and stuff, like, sometimes I have to remind myself that I’m not that community.” While Brock’s story could be perceived as the opposite end of a false binary as Jake and Harry, it continues to reveal the influence of monosexist and biphobic environments on participants’ development of a pi/poly/bi sexual identity. While participants grappled with this confusion, anxiety, and frustration as a result of the environments internally, participants also responded to them head-on through education.

Responding head-on through education. Jordan highlighted the dearth of dialogue around nonmonosexuality in queer communities, “very salient conversations about bisexuality do not happen; I don’t know if it’s an unwritten rule within the gay, queer community that you are either straight, gay, or lesbian, but this other, like, mythical creature doesn’t exist, I don’t know.” Given this lack of education and knowledge around nonmonosexuality, participants experienced many direct instances of monosexism and biphobia, leading them to respond head-on, educating their members and themselves, typically through informal rebuttals to the monosexist comments they encountered. For instance, Harry shared:

And when someone would magically just say ‘oh, like, he’s not interested in women or whatever,’ [I’d say] ‘I am actually, thank you for telling me how I feel’...the more I pushed back on that, the more confident I got in my identity.

Harry reveals how consistent rebuttals to biphobic comments led them to feel more confident in their identities; Harry’s fraternal environment also catalyzed him to be an activist for other queer people, namely, bisexual people, both within and beyond the fraternity.

Like Harry, Don's fraternity led him to consistently respond to and educate his fraternity members and others beyond the fraternity. For them, their fraternity's monosexism sparked bi activism as it influenced their sexual identity development. Don noted:

[The biphobia] it really just leads to me having that conversation and explaining to them, you know, doing something [sexually] with a girl doesn't dictate if a person is bi or not; sexual orientation is sexual, so sexual feelings you have going towards another person...people call me gay all the time, like, I'm not gay, that is not my vibe, like I'm not gay! There's nothing wrong with being gay, that's just not who I am...so you know just being aware and cognizant of what people asked to be called...understanding and consistently educating.

Likewise, Jake also noted how the biphobia and monosexism he encountered in his fraternity led him to consistently respond to these oppressive structures:

People question if I'm actually bisexual, they're like 'you're just gay,' and I'm like 'Well, no, no, that's not how it works'...just because I'm not super masculine doesn't mean that I'm not bisexual, you know, like, I'm not just gay...and so that was something I had to push back on a lot...[I'd say] 'I know what I like, I know what I prefer, what I like more, but that doesn't mean I don't like this one type of person.'

Similarly to how their fraternal environments were simultaneously liberating spaces that facilitated empowering experiences, and also, were damagingly heterosexist and homophobic places, participants' fraternity's monosexism led them to internally second-guess their senses of self, and also, the monosexism led them to reassert themselves and gain confidence in who they were.

Harry, the only bisexual member in his chapter shared how the monosexist environment led him to seek self-education and other bi people:

So, it was important for me to try to connect with other people who had the same experience as me...there wasn't a lot of other bi people; I knew a lot of gay people, but not really the bi experience, I guess really...so it led me to looking up and researching things like Robyn Ochs⁵ and just tryna see the community in a different light. I just started using Reddit in the past year; there's a bisexual men's page that I freakin' love, it's so great, and I wish I had that sooner because it's been helpful to have a role and see what that looks like because TV does a terrible job representing bi people.

Harry found community online when it was not available to them in their fraternity or other in-person social circles. Later in their narrative, Harry elaborated how this self-education also helped them unlearn internalized monosexism and biphobia. While in some cases the monosexism and biphobia resulted in responding explicitly head-on, in other cases, participants shared that the environments caused them to disengage from the fight against monosexism and biphobia.

Disengaging from the fight. Harry noted how with women, they felt compelled to refute claims they were gay because logistically they had to be bisexual in order to be a potential partner for women. However, Harry shared:

If guys [in my fraternity] said I was [gay], I would just kind of shrug it off because I'm like, 'well it doesn't really matter for you, like, I don't know, sometimes I just felt since I wasn't confident yet, I just felt, like, inferior, sometimes, and I didn't know why...now

⁵ Robyn Ochs is an educator, speaker, and grassroots activist. She identifies as bisexual and has long been a proud, outspoken, and effective activist for the bisexual community.

I'm at this point I'm not as afraid, sometimes I am and get upset, but that's one less person I have to deal with and their phobias.

Harry highlighted how the monosexism and biphobia within his fraternity led him to avoid consistently confronting monosexism and biphobia from members in his fraternity, thus demonstrating his response to these consistent microaggressions. They also highlighted avoiding biphobic people as a means to cope with these damaging environments. Likewise, Jake shared, "I don't owe them an explanation for it, I'm like, 'it's fine, I'm gay' ...I've gotten to the point where I don't really care if people know [my sexual identity]." These narratives reveal how the fraternal membership rife with monosexism and biphobia led participants to develop effective coping strategies, sometimes foundationally antithetical, that they could deploy in different contexts as a means to respond and exist as a nonmonosexual person in a monosexist system.

Conclusion

The aforementioned findings delineate the three prevailing themes I made sense of through a three-cycle coding analysis (Saldaña, 2009). The themes and their respective subthemes paint a broader narrative of the influence of fraternity membership on pan/poly/bi members' sexual identity development; there was multiplicity and complexity within participants' experiences. The fraternal environments catalyzed liberatory *and* disparaging experiences and influences for participants. Next, I will discuss the findings as they relate to the extant literature as well as implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS

I begin this chapter with a discussion of the findings and how they relate to the extant literature, namely how the experiences of the participants in the present study compared to that of participants in prior studies exploring the experiences of queer fraternity members. I then answer Eisner's (2013) call to address structural monosexism by drawing conclusions from the literature on addressing monosexism in higher education. Next, I introduce *capitalist monosexism*, a budding concept that reveals the link between the ideologies of capitalism, neoliberalism, and monosexism. Then, I overview the limitations of the present study and offer six accompanying recommendations for future research. Lastly, I offer five themes of implications for practitioners.

Discussion

Queer, Nonmonosexual Fraternal Membership

A prevailing theme throughout the broader narrative of the influence of fraternal membership on participants' sexual identity development is the multiplicity and complexity of influences within a singular experience, encounter, relationship, environment, or organization. In other words, participants' fraternal environments often catalyzed their liberation from hetero/monosexist structures while dually presenting them within hetero/monosexism, resulting in the development of a myriad of coping mechanisms to combat these oppression structures, and sometimes, also, the internalization thereof. Throughout this discussion, I will weave together the findings across the extant literature, often sharing how this study reached the gaps in the literature, while continually returning to this broader theme of multiplicity and complexity of experience throughout.

Seven of the eight participants held at least one formal leadership position in their chapter and some held multiple; the one participant who did not hold a formal leadership position demonstrated non-positional leadership through their mentoring and willingness to aid younger leaders in their chapter. Further, three participants held at least one position on their campuses' Interfraternity Councils (IFC), two participants served as a consultant for their fraternity's inter/national headquarters after graduation, and one participant served in an alumni leadership role at the time of the study. While the present study explored pan/bi/poly members and specifically the influence on their sexual identity development, the findings are consistent with the extant literature on queer fraternal membership; 84% of the gay or bisexual fraternity respondents in Case et al.'s (2005) study held at least one executive board leadership position and Trump and Wallace (2006) found gay fraternity members held a high level of leadership as an assimilation coping mechanism. Most importantly, the poly/bi/pan members' in the present study achieved these formal leadership positions in the face of heterosexism, homophobia, and hetero-identity concern (Hall & La France, 2007). For example, Jake shared how his chapter did not want him to be the vice president of recruitment because they doubted his recruitment abilities as a bisexual person and were worried he would bring too many queer members into the fraternity. Likewise, Harry noted how he was pushed out of becoming president because he advocated strongly for his fellow queer members in his chapter. Despite this, Jake served as his chapter's new member educator in addition to positions on the IFC and Harry served in three leadership positions in his chapter, held two IFC positions, and led his chapter through queer-affirming changes in language, policy, and practice. Michael's fraternity's charge to change the gay stereotype by recruiting no more queer members and Jake and Harry's fraternities' resistance to their formal leadership is consistent with Hall and La France's (2007) findings that group

cohesion within the fraternity (e.g., brotherhood), recruiting new members (e.g., rush), sorority partnerships mediated the presence of homophobia within fraternities; vice president of recruitment and president are two roles that directly guide the vision for these three aspects of fraternity life. Hall and La France (2007) found that gay men in fraternities were viewed as obstacles that prohibited heterosexual members' achievements of important goals; the pan/poly/bi members in the present study indicated their existence and advocacy were also viewed as obstacles to their straight counterparts' heteronormative, heterosexist, homophobic fraternal agendas.

The hypermasculinity, heterosexism, and queerphobia participants in the present study encountered mirrored that of the fraternal environments queer participants described in the decades of extant literature (Hughes, 1991; Reisberg, 1998; Case et al., 2005; Trump & Wallace, 2006; Hall & La France, 2007; Hesp & Brooks, 2009). Likewise, despite the disparaging environments in their chapters, the majority of participants in this study shared their satisfaction with their holistic fraternity experience, as did 89% of gay and bisexual participants in Case et al.'s (2005) study. However, while the majority of the gay and bisexual fraternity members in Case et al.'s (2005) study indicated their sexual identity diminished the quality of their fraternity experiences as undergraduate members and almost half of the respondents felt the need to hide their identity prevented them from developing closer relationships with other members, half of the pan/bi/poly participants in this study shared their fraternity was the first time they developed queer community, thus presenting the near opposite of experience regarding the impact of one's sexual identity on their fraternal experience. It is more likely that this finding is a result of the generational difference, rather than the specificity of nonmonosexual queer participants in the present study, as Case et al.'s (2005) study is a revisit of Case's (1996) study, through which half

of the participants had graduated college before 1980, compared to the present study's sample whose fraternal membership occurred from 2006 to 2020. This provides a hopeful probability that fraternal environments are mirroring societal trends in becoming more accepting (Jones, 2022). Likewise, 12% of Case et al.'s (2005) respondents who graduated before 1980 had come out to at least one person and 39% of the general sample who graduated after 1980 had told at least one person; six of the eight participants in the present study were out to nearly all members in their chapter during their undergraduate member and the other two were living out in other contexts at the time of the study. This may indicate that queer members of fraternities are becoming more visible broadly, at rates that are consistent with that of the larger society (Jones, 2022). The monosexism bi/poly/pan members experienced in their fraternities in addition to heterosexism and homophobia makes it unlikely that fraternal membership facilitates increased visibility for poly/bi/pan members at drastically more significant levels than for their gay, monosexual counterparts.

Further, while pan/bi/poly participants in the present study became aware of the hypermasculinity, heterosexism, and homophobia in their chapters and responded by developing coping mechanisms, including performing, distancing, and splitting strategies that were very similar to the coping strategies the gay members in Trump and Wallace's (2006) study (avoidance, passing, and assimilation), participants' fraternities in the present study also facilitated their first sense of self-acceptance, first queer community, and first external sexual identity experience. Trump and Wallace (2006) shared, "all participants had a clear understanding that heterosexuality was the only accepted form of sexuality within their fraternity" (p. 11). Meanwhile, all but one of the participants in the present study shared at least two instances in which at least one example of nonheterosexuality was accepted within their

fraternity. Some participants in this study indicated it was not necessarily their sexual identity itself, but rather the way they performed it and how intensely that contrasted or challenged the hypermasculine, heteronormative environment in their fraternal that determined the level or frequency of stigmatization or nonacceptance they were met with. For example, Jake shared how, despite many members in his fraternity knowing he was bisexual, he still performed actions that were more in accordance with traditional, hegemonic masculine norms that were more accepted in his fraternity. In addition, Gilan shared that despite being confident members of his fraternity would not have cared if he came out as bisexual and some members being rumored to be bi being met with indifference, he still chose not to come out to a single member. He added, “I don’t know if it actually has anything to do with sexuality, [fraternity name] culture was to be macho and cool and not care what other people think... opening up about your feelings doesn’t line up with that.”

This highlights the inextricable link between hypermasculinity and heterosexism and the need for resistance to one to be combined with resistance to the other. The difference in experience in the present study and Trump and Wallace’s (2006), both of which are methodologically very similar (qualitative interviews of five to eight participants) could be the result of many factors. First, it could be the generational difference in participants’ years of undergraduate membership. Or, it could be a defining difference between the influence of fraternal membership on gay members’ sexual identity development and bi/poly/pan members’ sexual identity development. All participants in the present study indicated, at varying levels, an interest in women, in some manner, whether that was romantically, sexually, or other. Butler (1990) asserted individual’s ongoing, repeated actions—and others’ reactions to those actions—continually re/create their identities; participants in both studies indicated the power of

performance in re/creating their identities in every direction (gay members in Trump and Wallace's *and* bi/poly/pan members in this study created a heterosexual identity through that process, meanwhile pan/bi/poly members who experienced overt monosexism found others' reactions creating a monosexual identity for them). Nonetheless, participants' declaration of attraction to women in the present study in their interviews may have fostered the difference in experience within heteronormative environments in their chapters. Thus, I will now discuss the influence of monosexism on participants' sexual identity development experiences.

Answering Eisner's Call

Eisner (2013) defined monosexism as “the system, the base structure...the structural privileging of monosexual identities and behaviors,” and asserted, “we need to pay lots more attention to structural, heterosexual monosexism.” My purpose for this study was to answer this call as it relates to improving the influence of fraternal membership on pan/bi/poly members' sexual identity development. I do not separate this section to separate monosexism from heterosexism; in fact, I separate this section to do the exact opposite. I aim to reveal how monosexism, as delineated by Eisner (2013), “first and foremost comes from heterosexism and the patriarchy.” I also aim to call attention to how monosexism exists in fraternities, as microcosms of our larger hetero/monosexist society, as demonstrated across the findings from pan/bi/poly participants' narratives. Ultimately, I aim to answer Eisner's (2013) call since no study in the extant literature has explored monosexism in fraternities, nor has higher education literature broadly often explored this structural oppression that nonmonosexual people face, and all people, including monosexual people, are negatively affected by (Dolan, 2013; Tavarez, 2022).

During their undergraduate membership, seven of the eight participants were the only nonmonosexual person in their chapter to their knowledge. Four of these participants shared explicit experiences of monosexism and biphobia they encountered in their chapters. These participants experienced at times painful, confusing, anxiety-inducing experiences grappling internally with their sense of self and identity. It also led to the internalization of biphobia and monosexism, responding head-on to these structures, and/or disengaging with particularly harmful members or situations. Having *queer* monosexual members in the chapter did not shelter these members from oppressive monosexism. For example, Don knew 11 gay members in his chapter of 42 members, but during his undergraduate membership, he was the only bisexual member to his knowledge. He shared that he has learned of other bisexual members since graduating and this may signal the powerful influence of inextricably linked heterosexism and monosexism in a fraternal environment at limiting bi/poly/pan members' opportunities, safety, or comfortability associated with becoming visible. Likewise, Michael shared he knew 11-12 gay members in his chapter's 65-person membership and Jake knew two gay members in his chapter's 70-person membership, but to both Michael and Jake's knowledge, they were the only bisexual/queer, nonmonosexual members in their chapters. Harry, also the only bisexual, nonmonosexual member in his chapter's 60-person membership, knew four gay members and one trans* member (their sexual identity unknown) in his chapter. Nonetheless, despite sometimes even a considerable portion of one's chapter identifying as gay, a queer monosexual identity, bi/pan/poly members still became aware of and were forced to address monosexism in their chapters. This finding is consistent with Dolan's (2013) finding that nonmonosexual people do not experience the visible, organized communities or sources of support that monosexual (e.g., gay, lesbian) people do. In addition to his fraternity, Don elaborately shared how he lacked

support as a nonmonosexual person in the LGBTQ support centers on his undergraduate and graduate campuses:

Straight's have the entire world, gays have gay spaces...even LGBTQ centers to an extent, I think typically, lean more towards being gay...now, I'm not saying they don't do the work to encourage people of different identities to fall into it, but, also intrinsically I do think they only do work for gays and trans* [people]...that's just my two cents of seeing even how this [Don's graduate institution] center works and how the one from my undergrad works, um, they just don't do enough work to make sure there are spaces for other identity people to find [their space].

Don's reflections that LGBTQ centers he has experienced only work towards liberation for gay and trans* people are inconsistent with the extant literature. Scholars have found that LGBTQ centers do not center trans* people's needs, lived experiences, and the cissexism and transphobia they may experience on cissexist campuses, resulting "in the potentiality for marginalization of trans* individuals' interests in these spaces" (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014; p. 265; Marine, 2011). Nonetheless, Don highlighted the monosexism he encountered in his experiences with LGBTQ centers and the lack of support he experienced. Further, Don revealed the intense forces of heteropatriarchy that permeate queer communities and enforce division, leading to the development of implications for practice that encourage students to think collectively across queer communities for collective liberation (Marine & Gilbert, 2021).

These findings woven together from Don, Michael, Harry, and Jake's narratives are consistent with Balsam and Mohr's (2007) finding that the monosexism nonmonosexual people may face in queer communities may outweigh the benefits of a respite from heterosexual

communities; in other words, some participants encountered monosexism even within the queer subcultures of their fraternities, leaving them void of a nonmonosexual-affirming community.

Broadly, participants' fraternal membership influenced their sexual identity development by catalyzing their internal grappling with their identity. For instance, Harry questioned their own identity and let other people's thoughts and opinions get in their head ("not knowing who I am 100%"), leading to some frustration and confusion as well as losing confidence in their dating life with women; the monosexism Jake encountered led him to experience a lot of fear and anxiety regarding dating women. Matteson (1995) asserted that nonmonosexual students often lack validation and affirmation of their identities; the present study demonstrates how fraternal organizations, namely the hetero/monosexism fostered within their environments, can perpetuate this lack of validation and affirmation of nonmonosexual students' sexual identities, thus highlighting the need for monosexism in fraternity environments to be interrogated as strongly as scholars asserted heterosexism must be challenged (e.g., Case et al., 2005; Trump & Wallace, 2006; Hall & La France, 2007; Hesp & Brooks, 2009).

On the contrary, Brock was the only participant who knew of a fellow bisexual member in his chapter during his undergraduate membership; he also worked alongside a fellow bisexual consultant during his tenure working for his fraternity's national headquarters. Brock shared how engaging with these bisexual members drastically refuted many internal biphobic, monosexist misconceptions he had developed prior to joining. The contrast between the dearth of conversation regarding bisexuality in his lived experiences before joining or in the other communities he was involved in during his membership (his church) and the liberating conversations he had with fellow bisexual members ("so for other fraternity members to also have that [bisexual/nonmonosexual] experience is helpful to think, like 'I'm not crazy!'")

demonstrate the potential for his fraternal membership to facilitate a lot of un/learning for Brock. This liberating experience led Brock to feel more comfortable with his identity. This finding is consistent with Horowitz and Newcomb's (1999) discovery of the 'normalizing' experience nonmonosexual affinity time can facilitate for nonmonosexual people.

Overall, the findings from the present study demonstrate that fraternities serve as microcosms of hetero/monosexual higher education communities and society broadly; the influence of hetero/monosexism in fraternities on bi/pan/poly members' sexual identity developments mirrors that of the influence of hetero/monosexism in higher education and society as well. Case et al. (2005) found that gay, lesbian, and bisexual fraternity and sorority members join for the same reasons as their straight counterparts (e.g., friendship, camaraderie, social life, parties, having fun, and support group, sense of belonging). Thus, these hetero/monosexual structures are being replicated in spaces pan/bi/poly members are aiming to find community, a circumstance that could exacerbate the negative mental and physical implications. The Jed Foundation (2021) asserted monosexism has on queer and questioning students.

In addition, Don discussed the intersections of his racial and sexual identities as a Black bisexual man. He shared the impacts of anti-Blackness in white spaces and what he cannot be or do being around white people as a Black person, such as acting authentically, because it will come across as aggressive to white people. Don revealed that whiteness was the norm in his fraternity and shared, "at the end of the day, I had to be like, aye, like, listen, this is the way I move, blah blah blah," demonstrating the need for him to preview his mannerisms for white people before being able to embody even a semi-authentic version of himself. Don also shared that in his lived experiences broadly, "being black meant being strong and being angry and being LGBTQ meant being soft." His fraternity's anti-Blackness led him to develop coping

mechanisms to navigate these hostile environments. Similar to how Don and other participants distanced themselves from or otherwise avoided hetero/monosexism, Don discussed the coping mechanisms he developed while being forced to respond to anti-Blackness in his fraternity:

It ain't that deep to me, like, we can still be friends, like, it is what it is, like, it's not really like that deep...because it's a fraternity, so I'm going to still see you at least a little and have some love for you, but I'm not gonna like you like that.

Don shared he typically decided to go with being more aggressive around men because that was more accepted in regard to hypermasculinity. Don, being the only participant who identified themselves as a Person of Color demonstrated both: 1) how responding to hetero/monosexism, hypermasculinity, homo/biphobia, racism, and anti-Blackness are all interlinked regarding the influence of fraternal membership on poly/bi/pan members' sexual identity development, and 2) the need to center the experiences of pan/bi/poly People of Color in research related to sexuality because of the intersections of oppression they may face. Wilson (1996) delineated how racism and capitalism are inextricably linked; I will now discuss how monosexism and capitalism are in relationship as well.

Capitalist Monosexism

At the time of the present study, there was no existing literature discussing *capitalist monosexism*. I came to this idea through my conversation with Harry. Capitalist monosexism sheds light on the interaction between capitalism and monosexism and how each structural system feeds off the other. For example, Harry shared his experience with dating apps. They have their apps set to all genders. However, he noticed he received more matches with men than women, and the app nearly only shows him men now, which does not reflect how he described his sexual identity. Dating apps make money from the advertisement's users see during their

time using the app. Since Harry was getting more matches with men, they are more likely to keep getting matches and keep using the app, thus viewing more advertisements and providing the app with more revenue, demonstrating how capitalism fuels monosexism and how monosexism dually supports capitalist values.

Studies show that in reference to “swiping right” or “liking” a potential match, “men do it 46% of the time, while women do it just 14% of the time” (Time, 2014). Thus, it is also the case for bisexual women that dating apps will change their algorithm to similarly view more men and show their profiles to more men. This aligns with Eisner’s (2013) exposing of how monosexism is rooted in patriarchal and phallogentric understandings of bisexuality; common misconceptions include bisexual men are gay and bisexual women are straight, both of which are grounded in patriarchal and phallogentric ideologies. It is foundationally important to acknowledge how this understanding has perpetuated invisibilities and erasures of non-binary and gender non-conforming people as a result of the research that exists. As *capitalist monosexism* is a budding concept, I encourage future researchers to explore this concept, which leads to the limitations of the present study and six accompanying themes of recommendations.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While the transferability of the findings of the present study is supported by the participants’ diversity of geographical location, institutional type, nonmonosexual identity, gender identity, age at the time of the study, fraternity membership size, and queer membership within one’s fraternity, I will offer six themes of limitations of the present study and accompanying recommendations for future research.

Intentionally Recruit Participants from Culturally- and Identity-Based Fraternities

First of all, this study may be more appropriately titled: The Influence of *Historically-white* or *Non-Culturally-Based* Fraternal Membership on Bisexual, Pansexual, and Polysexual Members' Sexual Identity Development. Although pan/bi/poly members from culturally- and identity-based fraternities were sought through the call for participants, no participants were members of culturally-based organizations. For these findings to be representative of the influence of "fraternities", the influence of culturally-based fraternal organizations must be explored, including historically-Black, Latino/x, Asian American, and Native American fraternities. I recommend further research to intentionally seek participants from culturally-based fraternal organizations in their call for participants by finding listservs and social network groups that are specifically designed for culturally-based organizations' members. I also recommend exploring the influence of fraternities created for queer and affirming membership, such as Delta Lambda Phi Social Fraternity, on pan/bi/poly members' sexual identity development.

Include Participants with Other Nonmonosexual Identity (Non)Labels

Second, all participants in the present study identified as bisexual, pansexual, fluid, or queer; there were no polysexual participants. I recommend future researchers continue to prioritize participants' own coming to their labels over hegemonic or scientific definitions of sexual identity labels by leaving definitions open-ended for participant eligibility; this also supports Butler's (1990) assertion that our ongoing, repeated actions—and others' reactions to those actions—continually re/create our identities, stressing the influence of performativity in the re/creation of our identities. By leaving labels open-ended, we as researchers resist monosexist structures that require nonmonosexual people to "prove" their nonmonosexuality (e.g., dating or having sex with people of multiple genders). Nonetheless, recognizing the breadth of nonmonosexuality and those most directly impacted by monosexism, I recommend future

researchers intentionally seek participants with other nonmonosexual identities other than the four represented in the participants in the present study, such as omnisexual, demisexual, sapiosexual, and/or questioning. Further, asexuality and asexual people are also impacted by monosexism (in addition to all the inextricably linked cis/heteropatriarchal structures). Thus, including asexual and/or aromantic people in the participant pool may reveal interconnected forms of oppression, such as acephobia and anti-asexual structures. Recognizing how Jordan lied about sexual encounters with women to be accepted and liked by his fraternity members demonstrates the need to explore asexual members' experiences as people who may have similar or adjacent experiences in an environment where heterosexuality is the norm and is structurally pressed upon members. Lastly, those who choose not to label their sexual identity may be adjacent to the nonmonosexual community in that neither may have a monosexual identity. Thus, this community that embraces a (non)label should be explored as well.

Other Social Identities

Third, participant diversity in other social identity categories should be explored to expand the transferability and interrogate how systems of oppression are interconnected. For example, seven of the eight participants identified as white. Hetero/monosexism and racism are interconnected structures of oppression, as indicated by Don, and having a primarily white group of participants may diminish this interconnectedness of oppression. I recommend further researchers intentionally recruit more Participants of Color to their study, which may coincide with efforts to include members of culturally-based organizations (Gillon et al., 2019). I encourage future research to intentionally recruit participants with other underserved identities in higher education and fraternities that were not explicitly identified in the present study, such as

Disabled participants (Stapleton & Nicolazzo, 2019) or Veteran students (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017).

Interrogating Strong Affinities

Fourth, the majority of the participants in this study expressed a strong affinity to their fraternity, the field of fraternity and sorority life, and/or higher education broadly. Six of the eight participants had earned or were pursuing a degree in higher education administration or student affairs at the time of the study. Five participants were working professionally at a higher education institution at the time of the study, four of which were working or had previously worked in a campus fraternity and sorority life office. Three participants were working or had previously worked professionally for their fraternity's inter/national headquarters. Two participants served in a volunteer capacity for their local chapter. While these demographics are unsurprising given the strategies for the recruitment of the participants, participants' strong affinities could be the result of a very positive experience within their fraternity and/or a very negative experience within one's fraternity and a desire to make it better for the next generation of pan/bi/poly fraternity members. Either way, this strong collective affinity may result in pronounced or exaggerated findings than what is representative of the general bi/pan/poly communities within fraternities if more passive members were included in the sample. I do not recommend future research turn away from participants with strong affinities, but rather, I recommend future researchers continue to take the necessary steps to ensure the validity of their findings through multiple rounds of coding or group coding as well as being careful not to overlay one's own experience onto participants and embracing a community of difference.

Exploring Diversity in Institutional Type

Fifth, the types of institutions participants attended were very homogeneous. Seven participants attended public institutions; only one participant attended a private institution. All participants attended a predominantly-white institution; only one participant attended a Minority-Serving Institution, a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI). No participants attended a community college, Tribal College or University, Historically-Black College or University, Women's College, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution, online institution, or religiously-affiliated institution. Given the breadth of institutional missions and types within United States' higher education and the impacts of these missions and types on fraternal contexts of the institutions fraternities call home, diversifying the scope of participants' undergraduate institutional type would increase the transferability of the findings of the study.

Examining Levels of Membership

Lastly, despite the calls for participants being directed to Greek communities on three campuses, all participants were alumni fraternity members, having graduated two to sixteen years prior to the time of the study, thus having experienced different contexts in their personal, academic, and professional lives since graduation. It would improve the transferability of this study if current fraternity members' experiences were included in the participant sample because their experiences would be more current, perhaps bringing about additional nuances that improve the authenticity of the results of the study. Likewise, including participants who chose to disassociate from their fraternity during their new member process, as an initiated undergraduate member, or as an alumnus may provide additional perspectives from many angles that may improve the authenticity of the results. While the six themes of recommendations guide future research, I will now overview five themes of implications for practitioners.

Implications for Practice

Two advocates for critical praxis in student affairs work, Marine and Gilbert (2021), asserted:

Educators are both inevitably complicit in the oppressive system they inhabit as well as uniquely positioned to disrupt and dismantle it in service of a more equitable world.

Student affairs is thus at an important crossroads moment; the question of regression or resistance to neoliberal ideologies connects to the values and principles at the very core of the higher education profession. (p. 6)

The perspectives provided by these scholars guide the following implications for practice. Those who work in fraternity and sorority advising, queer students' and staff support services, or are otherwise in relationship with fraternity and sorority members or queer students and/or otherwise have influence or are embedded within student affairs and higher education are both embedded within a hetero/monosexist institution, and also, may be in the perfect position to dismantle these oppressions. At the time of the study, I serve as a coordinator for a fraternity and sorority life office. Therefore, I utilize "we" in the following implications for practice to demonstrate that I am committed to these recommendations in my practice. Also, I aim to be in community and in consistent discussion with other practitioners who are committed to dismantling hetero/monosexism in fraternal contexts and fostering the conditions for healthier, more-affirming sexual identity development experiences for pan/bi/poly fraternity members, students, and people in general. I now offer five themes of implications for practice.

Resisting Monosexism and Heterosexism

First, practitioners should resist monosexism as strongly as we vow to resist heterosexism, hypermasculinity, and homophobia. When we create Greek LGBTQ+ Ally Trainings or when we coordinate programming or affinity spaces for queer fraternity or sorority

members, we must resist monosexism. In formal trainings or in informal conversation, we must explicitly name monosexism and biphobia and validate the role it plays in serving broader systems of cis/heteropatriarchy. We must give the students we work alongside, queer and non-queer, this nonmonosexual-centered language (e.g., ‘monosexism’, ‘biphobia’, ‘nonmonosexual’) in the ways we may teach students monosexual language (e.g., ‘homophobia’, ‘heteronormative’). Recognizing how four participants were forced to routinely educate others within and beyond their chapters about the nonmonosexual experience and argue for the validity thereof, we must look for opportunities to take this burden off of nonmonosexual students. We must look for the potential across campuses and institutions to educate students, faculty, and staff so that nonmonosexual students have less of a responsibility to.

Practitioners must understand that neither representation nor compositional diversity implies inclusion; one in six members of Michael’s chapter identified as gay, and yet, he still experienced homophobia and monosexism. Four participants, despite having other queer members, experienced heterosexism and monosexism. We must recognize the ‘normalizing’ experience nonmonosexual affinity time can facilitate for nonmonosexual people (Horowitz & Newcomb, 1999) and acknowledge the additional barriers nonmonosexual people face in finding visible, organized communities or sources of support, even within queer spaces (Dolan, 2013; Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Tavarez, 2022). Thus, we must consider taking the burden off of nonmonosexual students to find nonmonosexual community by creating and formalizing nonmonosexual-affinity spaces within queer spaces that can facilitate the type of liberatory experiences Brock had within nonmonosexual-affinity relationships, “so for other fraternity members to also have that experience is helpful to think, like, ‘I’m not crazy!’”

Resisting Capitalist Monosexism

Second, we must recognize the inextricable link between capitalism and monosexism and interrogate how neoliberal forces and academic capitalism permeate our work of deconstructing hetero/monosexism. For example, when we actively recruit queer students into fraternities through an LGBTQ support page on a fraternity and sorority life website, we must ask ourselves why we are doing it. Are we doing this to support numeric metrics of success fueled by capitalism (e.g., recruitment numbers), or are we doing this because we truly believe the organizations on our campus have the potential to facilitate liberatory firsts for pan/bi/poly members even in the face of societal and institutional hetero/monosexism? Are we trying to create the illusion that these spaces are queer- and nonmonosexual-affirming or are we fostering a realistic representation of the state of these spaces to the best of our knowledge? When asking queer, nonmonosexual members of organizations to share their experiences, are we empowering them and amplifying their voices or are we commodifying their existence and experience in service of neoliberal ideologies of productivity (e.g., a ‘thriving, diverse Greek community of X members’)? Are there formal measures in place (e.g., Ally trainings, Nonmonosexual-affinity spaces) that will support these students, or do we need to create those before we should support the recruitment of these students? In our educational trainings or affinity spaces, are we limiting discussions on certain forms of oppression (e.g., cissexism, monosexism) to dilute our queer-affirming efforts in line with the demands of capitalism (e.g., retaining alumni donors), or are we boldly, radically supporting our most underserved and marginalized communities?

Reimagining Authenticity and Queer Student Development

Third, we must answer the call of queer and disability theorists and scholars to decolonize and ‘crip’ authenticity of students’ identities and embrace fluid notions of authenticity. Whereas many student development theories power-evasively conceptualize

authenticity as the ability to be genuine to one's true self (Baxter Magolda, 2008), these theories fail to interrogate the oppressive power structures within institutions that foster complex pathways in and around authenticity for students with underserved identities (e.g., queer and disabled students). Further, Indigenous scholars have called for the decolonization of authenticity and an understanding of the grounding of authenticity in "history, community, geopolitical context, storytelling, and at times, blood" (Kupo & Oxendine, p. 138). Thus, Abrams and Abes (2021) asserted scholars should embrace 'cripped authenticity', in which as students' authentic selves change and develop (e.g., alternating sexual identities or the performance and disclosure thereof based on life events or contexts), students' previous, current, and future selves are not viewed as more or less authentic, but rather, their authentic selves are simply viewed as having changed. Michael, Jordan, Gilan, Harry, and Genesis each delineated at least one change or emerging change in a sexual or gender identity throughout their lifespan. We must view these changes as their authentic selves changing, not more or less authentic versions of themselves. I think about how Jordan lived through multiple selves during his consultant experience; we must view these multiple selves as a result of the oppressive hetero/monosexual environment he was embedded within rather than him presenting more and less authentic versions of himself.

Further, Miller et al. (2019) professed, "students choosing not to routinely disclose queer or disability identities should not automatically or categorically be viewed as less mature than their peers who disclose" (p. 316), which contradicts numerous sexual identity development models discussed in the review of the literature (Cass, 1979; Weinberg et al., 1994; Brown, 2002; Bleiberg et al., 2005; Knous, 2006). Miller et al. (2019) further delineated that how a student performs their identity does not reflect the development a student has experienced, but rather, it reflects the influence of the cis/heterosexual [and monosexual] environment (e.g., their

fraternity or institution) they are embedded within. I return to how Harry, “started being identified as he/they” years after his graduation or how on the participant interest survey, Gilan indicated regarding his gender identity, he is “still figuring this one out lol.” Practitioners must view these processes and tasks associated with identity development as nonsequential. We must view, for example, Harry and Gilan’s grappling with their identities throughout their lifespan as a reflection of the influence of the cis/hetero/monosexist environments they are embedded within rather than a reflection of “how developed” they are. We must destabilize and fundamentally deconstruct notions that being “more developed” is always better for students, namely queer, nonmonosexual students. We must interrogate how these ideas force students to be ‘out’ or visible and how institutions may press forced disclosure upon queer students (e.g., ‘outness’ barriers to seeking LGBTQ+ support). We must be cognizant of our own complicity in systems that push queer students to be ‘out’ or ‘visible’. Ultimately, reimagining authenticity and development is liberatory for queer, nonmonosexual students, as it places the burden on institutions and systems to deconstruct their hetero/monosexism rather than queer people to be “more authentic” or “more developed” in service of hetero/monosexist desires, which calls us to also deconstruct the oppressive non/queer and non/monosexual binaries.

Deconstructing Binaries

Fourth, we must center the deconstruction of binaries in our work. March (2020) asserted the “radical emancipatory possibility” (p. 455) of rejecting binary understandings, and instead, embracing queer and trans* notions and understandings of liminality, between, interstice, incoherence, ambiguity, fluidity, and space. We must examine how our campuses are physically or departmentally structured to perpetuate a queer and non-queer binary. For example, while a campus’s LGBTQ space may provide immeasurable support for queer students in the face of an

anti-queer institution, we must never lose sight of the ultimate goal of eradicating cis/heteropatriarchy and its other inextricable forms of oppression from the entire institution and the society in which the institution is embedded within. In other words, we must recognize that queerness is everywhere throughout the institution, it just shows up differently in different contexts because of the oppressive forces also present within the institution. I am not advocating for the removal of LGBTQ centers, but rather, I am encouraging us to dismantle non/queer binaries that may exist at the doorway of the LGBTQ center (e.g., everything within the space is queer and everything outside the space is queer).

In regard to fraternal contexts, I encourage us to amplify Gilan's words, "it's not so much that anyone cares that you're queer in a fraternity, it's sort of just, like, why would you join a fraternity if you're queer." Gilan is demonstrating that from his experience in a fraternity, he has made sense of the fraternal context as: fraternity equals non-queer, queer and non-queer are a binary, and thus, fraternity cannot equal queer. As practitioners, we must respond to these false binaries in all angles of our work. We must think about the massive physical spaces fraternities and sororities take up on college campuses through chapter facilities, large-scale events, or just the sheer population or proportion of students involved within these organizations. We must think about how to many queer students, both members and non-members, these massive spaces often read as 'non-queer'. We must think about the implications that has for all students as they journey within higher education. We also then must think about the two binaries central to fraternity and sorority life: the member/non-member binary and the fraternity/sorority binary.

We must interrogate the binary of member and non-member. What does it mean to have some of the most powerful student organizations on your campus have such a strong binary understanding of "you're in or you're out" through rituals, closed-door events, and otherwise

exclusionary practices and policies; fraternities are built upon a premise of exclusion. We must acknowledge how some fully-initiated members, like Gilan, still do not feel as though they are ‘in’. We must acknowledge the liminality of how some initiated members choose to disassociate formally or informally by distancing themselves. We must examine how the physical spaces (e.g., neighborhoods or “Greek Villages”) on or around our physical campuses perpetuate a binary of non/member, and thus, also a binary of non/queer. Most obvious, we must deconstruct the binary of fraternity/sorority that is the most obvious facet of the gender binary. What does it mean and what messages do we send when we split sororities and fraternities as polar opposites? Namely, historically-white organizations are split into councils based upon this false dichotomous gender binary (e.g., Interfraternity Council, Collegiate Panhellenic Council), whereas culturally-based organizations are typically housed in all-gender councils (e.g., National Pan-Hellenic Council, Multicultural Greek Council, National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations), which reveals the implications of racialized cis/heteropatriarchy and racialized notions of ‘claiming gender’. What does it mean and what messages do we send when we pair one fraternity and one sorority for events like Homecoming? What *would* it mean to rename a ‘Fraternity and Sorority Life’ department or office to the ‘Department/Office of Siblinghood’? What would it mean for campuses if siblinghood housing were the frontrunners in deconstructing the cissexist, binary structures within on-campus housing and roommate selections? As cis/heterosexist ideologies negatively impact all people, including ‘non-queer’ people, Eisner (2013) delineated how deconstructing monosexism liberates all people, even beyond those identified as nonmonosexual. Further, the deconstruction of gender, sexual, and colonial binaries liberate all people from these oppressive forces, namely those most underserved and directly affected by them.

Recognizing the Multiplicity and Complexity of Experience

Practitioners must recognize the multiplicity and complexity of nonmonosexual fraternity members' experiences. The broad narrative of the influence of fraternal membership on bi/pan/poly members' sexual identity development was that their fraternal environments were both liberatory as well as hypermasculine, homo/biphobic, and hetero/monosexist and that their fraternal experiences facilitated both liberatory experiences as well as the forced development of an awareness of and coping mechanisms to deal with hetero/monosexism. For example, participants were pushed out of leadership because of hetero/monosexism and hetero-identity concern as they were also pushed into formal leadership positions to serve their chapter and pushed into the process of leadership to advocate for queer-affirming policies and practices. Likewise, despite the hetero/monosexism participants in this study experienced, the majority were still pleased with their overall fraternity experience. Further, while the hetero/monosexism in their chapters produced harmful, painful experiences for participants, it also led them to develop coping mechanisms that proved useful and liberatory in their fraternity and other contexts beyond their fraternal environment. As practitioners, we must recognize this multiplicity and complexity in the experiences of the students we have the opportunity to work alongside.

This may look different for each of us. For some of us, this may look like dedicating ourselves to fostering the conditions within the organizations and communities we have influence within to facilitate more liberatory experiences for pan/bi/poly members. For others, it may look like being determined to abolish hetero/monosexism within those organizations and communities. For some, it may be revising policy, and for others, it may be coordinating programming. We may put our energy towards abolishing particular systems that we feel no

reform can truly eradicate the cis/hetero/monosexism present within. Or, we may channel our energy to ensuring the practitioners around us reject notions of authenticity and queer student development that prioritize cis/heteronormative ways of being and understanding. Ultimately, as we recognize the multiplicity and complexity of experiences pan/bi/poly students have as they journey in fraternal or higher education contexts, we must commit to validating and affirming nonmonosexual students in their identities in every way that we can (Matteson, 1995). We must ground ourselves in an understanding that every individual nonmonosexual student's sexual identity development and the associated processes and experiences are going to be unique.

Conclusion

In their chapter on *Critical Leadership Education for Fraternity and Sorority Leaders*, Gilbert (2021) posed two questions I feel are appropriate to conclude this study with:

This chapter is not about arguing for the continued existence of fraternity and sorority communities; instead, this chapter is about imagining what could be... What would it look like for fraternity and sorority members to be leaders for social justice, equity, and transformative change on college campuses? And what would it take for that possibility to be realized? (p. X)

We *are* embedded within cis/hetero/monosexist institutions (e.g., fraternities, universities, society). These institutions are also the site of liberating experiences. Our positions within the systems provide us the potential and influence to resist cis/hetero/monosexism and facilitate liberatory experiences for others at the individual and collective levels. What we reimagine and what we do now will determine the potential of liberation.

Appendices

Appendix A: Social Media Post

Greetings everyone!

Please see the attached call for participants for my master's thesis study titled "*How Does Fraternal Membership Impact Bisexual, Pansexual, Polysexual Members' Sexual Identity Development*".

Participants must simply 1) identify as **bisexual, pansexual, or polysexual**, 2) be at least **18 years old**, and 3) be a **current undergraduate fraternity member, a fraternity alumnus, or a former member of a fraternity in any capacity**.

I will be conducting 60-90-minute Zoom interviews with participants and then making sense of patterns or themes that may exist among the participants. This study is approved by the University of Arizona Institutional Review Board; all participants will choose a pseudonym and data will be protected to ensure the anonymity of participants.

Please share widely with your fraternity and sorority communities and professional networks. Feel free to utilize the two attached graphics in any social media outlets you run and are comfortable sharing on.

Interested participants can sign up by filling out this [form](#). All questions should be directed to Steve Lemerand, email: stevelem@email.arizona.edu.

Thank you so much!

How Does Fraternal Membership Impact Bisexual, Pansexual, and Polysexual Members' Sexual Identity Development

**Are you a current or former
fraternity member?**

**Are you bisexual,
pansexual, or polysexual?**

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The University of Arizona reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

***If so, please consider
joining this research
study!*** 

**For more info, if you are interested,
please fill out this form:**

**[https://uarizona.co1.qualtrics.com/
jfe/form/SV_afKQrSN1nMMOSay](https://uarizona.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_afKQrSN1nMMOSay)**

***How Does Fraternal Membership Impact
Bisexual, Pansexual, and Polysexual
Members' Sexual Identity Development***

**Email Steve Lemerand
with any questions
stevelem@email.arizona.edu**

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The University of Arizona reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Appendix B: Listserv Email

Greetings!

Are you or do you know anyone that is a **bisexual, pansexual, or polysexual fraternity member**? (Participants can be a current fraternity member, a fraternity alumnus, or a former member of a fraternity in any capacity). Please consider this call for participants for a master's thesis study titled "*How Does Fraternal Membership Impact Bisexual, Pansexual, Polysexual Members' Sexual Identity Development*".

Participation in this study includes one 60-90 Zoom interview with the researcher. This study is approved by the University of Arizona Institutional Review Board; all participants will choose a pseudonym and data will be protected to ensure the anonymity of participants.

Interested participants can sign up by filling out this [form](#). Please share with anyone you know who qualifies for this study. All questions should be directed to Steve Lemerand, email: stevelem@email.arizona.edu.

Thank you so much!

Appendix C: Participant Interest Form

What is your full name?

What is the pseudonym you would like to use for this study?

Do you identify as bisexual, pansexual, or polysexual?

For the purposes of this study, the term bisexual will be understood as broadly being attracted to individuals of more than one gender. As these sexual identities are very nuanced, similar, and also, distinct, I prioritize subjects' personal definitions of these labels over common social and scientific definitions. In other words, I care more about how subjects define their sexual identity, why they choose a particular label, and what that label means to them than what scholars or scientists define these terms to be. Nonetheless, common definitions include: individuals attracted to more than one gender, individuals attracted to all genders, individuals who experience attraction irrespective of gender, etc.

Yes

No

How would you describe your sexual identity or sexuality?

Are you a current, alumni, or former member of a social fraternity?

- Yes
- No

What fraternity are/were you a member of?



What college or university are/were you a member of this fraternity at?



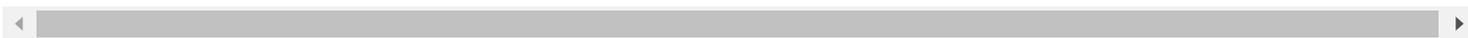
What best describes you?

- Current undergraduate fraternity member
- Alumni fraternity member
- Former or "ex" fraternity member

What is your age?



Are there other salient social identities you would like to share with the researcher at the outset of this research project? (e.g. racial identity, disability, socioeconomic status, etc.)



Please provide the best way (phone number or email address) for the researcher (Steve Lemerand, stevelem@email.arizona.edu) to get in touch with you about your participation.

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form Email

Greetings,

Thank you for filling out the Participant Interest Survey for the study entitled *How Does Fraternal Membership Impact Bisexual, Pansexual, and Polysexual Members' Sexual Identity Development*.

If you wish to continue your participation, please review the Informed Consent Form attached. Please ensure you meet the participant requirements and fully understand the participation engagements. As a reminder, you can stop your participation at any time. You may either print off the form, sign with a wet signature, and then scan and email it to stevelem@email.arizona.edu or you may utilize the DocuSign platform to electronically sign the form and email it back.

Please reach out to the Principal Investigator Steve Lemerand stevelem@email.arizona.edu with any questions.

Thank you so much!

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

University of Arizona Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: How Does Fraternal Membership Impact Bisexual, Pansexual, and Polysexual Members' Sexual Identity Development

Principal Investigator: Steve Lemerand

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you do not have to participate. This document contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate.

The purpose of this research study is to examine how fraternal membership mediates the sexual identity development of bisexual, pansexual, and polysexual members. This study is grounded in a Nonsequential Task Model of Bi/Pan/Polysexual Identity Development and aims to explore how subjects' experiences in their fraternities impact their experiences within tasks (that have no start or end point) related to one's sexual identity development.

The benefits of your participation are:

1. A deeper understanding of themselves as bisexual, pansexual, or polysexual people, especially how they potentially continue to engage and build community as members of their fraternity;
2. A deeper understanding of how their fraternity membership has impacted and/or continues to impact their sexual identity development.

The costs of your participation are:

1. The time you will spend as a part of the study.

There are minimal risks to you as a result of participating in this study, which include having some emotional reactions to discussions. As a reminder, you do not have to answer any question(s) you do not want to discuss and can stop the interview at any time. You will also be provided a list of local and national resources after your interview in case you would like to speak to someone further about what you may have discussed with the researcher in your interview.

Your involvement will include:

1. Filling out a 5-10-minute Participant Interest Survey signaling your interest in the study, and that you meet all study criteria.
2. One (1) 60-90-minute interview, which can occur in person or over online technology (e.g. Zoom) based on location, present COVID-19 public health guidelines, proximity to researcher, and/or participant desire.

For inclusion in this study, participants must:

- **Identify as bisexual, pansexual, or polysexual.** For the purposes of this study, the terms bisexual, pansexual, and polysexual will be understood as broadly being attracted to individuals of more than one gender. As these sexual identities are very nuanced, similar, and also, distinct, I prioritize subjects' personal definitions of these labels over common social and scientific definitions. In other words, I care more about how subjects define their sexual identity, why they choose a particular label, and what that label means to them than what scholars or scientists define these terms to be. Nonetheless, common definitions include: individuals attracted to more than one gender, individuals attracted to all genders, individuals who experience attraction irrespective of gender, etc.;
- **Be at least 18 years old;**
- **Be a current undergraduate member of a social fraternity, an alumni member of a social fraternity, or a former/previous member of a social fraternity in some capacity.**

All data will be coded by using a pseudonym of your choosing. Your name will not be used in any report. Identifiable research data will be encrypted and password protected.

With your permission, I would like to record the Zoom interview to “the cloud” associated with my Zoom account through the University of Arizona for the audio aspect. Whether you keep your video camera on throughout the duration of the video is entirely up to your discretion. Once I obtain the audio recording, I will engage in selective transcription, which means I will listen intently to the recording, and if a particular quote stands out to me as salient and a potential addition to the final thesis document, I may transcribe that portion. In my notes and potential transcriptions, only your pseudonym will be used.

The information that you give in the study will be coded. Your name will not be collected or linked to your answers. The data for this project will be shared with my thesis chair, Dr. Z Nicolazzo, and my thesis committee, including Dr. Judy Marquez-Kiyama and Dr. Amanda Kraus. All research team members have proper human subjects training, and only coded data will be used in public discussions of this research beyond the research team. Further, there is a possibility that study findings will be published pending the success of the study, but only coded data would be included.

The information that you provide in the study will be handled confidentially. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released or shared as required by law. The University of Arizona Institutional Review Board may review the research records for monitoring purposes.

For questions, comments, or concerns about the study you may contact **Steve Lemerand via phone (443) 945.6849 or via email at stevelem@email.arizona.edu.**

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at 520-626-6721 or online at <https://research.arizona.edu/compliance/human-subjects-protection-program>.

Signing the consent form

I have read or someone has read to me this form, and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

Date

Appendix F: Interview Protocol

PI Pre-Interview Script:

These interviews aim to generate knowledge about how fraternal membership impacts the sexual identity development of bisexual, pansexual, or polysexual members.

Sexual identity development is defined as the array of processes, thoughts, actions, behaviors, and/or milestones related to the adoption of a sexual identity; and, it is particularly salient for members of the LGBTQ+ community. For example, the process of coming out to one's family may be part of a pansexual person's sexual identity development; or, the realization and acceptance of sexual and romantic attractions to others of a same gender may be part of a bisexual person's sexual identity development; or, managing and responding to stigma may be part of a polysexual person's sexual identity development. It is different for every person; there are difficult, challenging parts and there are beautifully liberating and prideful parts.

For the purposes of this study, the terms bisexual, pansexual, and polysexual will be understood as broadly being attracted to individuals of more than one gender. As these sexual identities are very nuanced, similar, and also, distinct, I prioritize your personal definitions of a label over common social and scientific definitions. In other words, I care more about how subjects define their sexual identity, why they choose a particular label, and what that label means to them than what scholars or scientists define these terms to be. Nonetheless, common definitions include: individuals attracted to more than one gender, individuals attracted to all genders, individuals who experience attraction irrespective of gender.

Throughout this interview, I will explore alongside you how your fraternal experiences may have impacted your sexual identity development. The findings of this research study will provide recommendations for fraternity headquarters and campus-based professionals who set forth policy and advise fraternity student leaders to be better equipped to co-create more affirming and inclusive fraternal environments for bi/pan/poly members and more positive experiences related to their sexual identity development.

There are minimal risks to you as a result of participating in this study, which include having some emotional reactions to discussions. As a reminder, you do not have to answer any question(s) you do not want to discuss and can stop the interview at any time. You will also be provided a list of local and national resources after your interview in case you would like to speak to someone further about what you may have discussed with me in your interview. While I will be recording the audio of your interview, we will now begin using solely your pseudonym and all data and transcription will only utilize your pseudonym as well.

Semi-structured conversation protocol:

Let's start by talking really broadly about your collegiate and fraternity experience!

1. Tell me a story about a time you were thankful you joined your fraternity...
2. Tell me about your fraternity rush, recruitment, or intake experience...
 - a. What college or university were you at?

- b. What year or semester were you in?
- c. Why did you want to join a fraternity in general?
- d. What made you decide to join that particular fraternity?
- 3. Talk to me about your fraternity experience broadly...
 - a. How big was your chapter?
 - b. Did/do you hold any leadership positions in your chapter or Greek community?
 - c. Did you develop any close friendships in your chapter?
 - d. What did you like/dislike about your chapter?
 - e. What are some monumental events in your fraternity?
- 4. Tell me about your college experience beyond your fraternity membership...
 - a. What were/are some important friendships you/'ve developed in college?
 - b. What were/are some salient campus involvement or engagement experiences you/'ve had in college?
 - c. What are monumental events throughout your college experience?)

Alright let's switch gears to talking about your sexual identity!

- 5. Tell me about your sexual identity...
 - a. Is/are there label(s) you use?
 - b. How do you define your sexual identity?
 - c. How does it relate to your sexual attraction to others?
 - d. How does it relate to your romantic attraction to others?
 - e. What does your sexuality mean to you?
 - f. How important or salient is your sexual identity to your overall sense of self or identity?

Alright, now let's put the two together!

[Labeling]

- 6. Talk to me about how your fraternity experiences impacted your labeling of your sexual identity...
 - a. When you joined your fraternity, how do you identify internally?
 - b. Did you explore or question your identity before or during your fraternal membership?
 - c. Did any fraternity experiences impact your labeling?
 - d. Did you solidify your label during your fraternal membership?
 - e. How have you continued to challenge or understand your label(s)?

[Salience and intersection of identities]

- 7. Talk to me about other identities you hold...
 - a. What is your gender identity?
 - i. How does it relate to your sexual identity?
 - ii. How does your gender identity impact how you understand your attraction or label?
 - iii. How was your gender identity relevant to your fraternity experience?
 - iv. How did it intersect with your sexual identity in regard to your fraternal membership?
 - b. What other social identities do you hold that were relevant to your fraternity experiences?

- i. Are any closely related to your sexual identity?
 - ii. How did your fraternity membership impact the way you view these dual identities that you hold?
- c. How did the salience of your sexual identity change throughout your fraternity experience?
 - i. Did it ebb and flow throughout membership in regard to other identities? What caused this?
- d. Is it important to you for people to know your sexual identity?
 - i. Who is it important for?
 - ii. Why is it important?
 - iii. How do you know people know or don't know?

[Coming out]

- 8. Talk to me about your coming out process as it relates to your fraternity...
 - a. Were you out during your rush/recruitment/intake process?
 - b. What were some of the risks/benefits of coming out to fellow fraternity members?
 - c. When did you first come out to a fellow member?
 - d. What were your strategies or narratives?
 - e. How did you know it was the right time?
 - f. What support around coming out tasks did you have within or outside of the fraternity?
 - g. Did you develop any coping strategies regarding surprises or ambiguity within the coming out process?
 - h. Did labels change during your fraternity membership resulting in the need to re-engage the coming out process?

[Community and/or political identity]

- 9. Talk to me about how your fraternity experiences mediated your identity in various communities...
 - a. Did your fraternity membership lead you to find your place in the heterosexual community?
 - b. In the bi/pan/polysexual community?
 - c. In the LGBTQ+ community?
 - d. In other various cultural communities?

[Managing impact of oppression stigma]

- 10. Tell me about any oppression or stigma you faced as a [insert] person...
 - a. Did you internalize any of these bi/pan/polyphobic ideas or beliefs?
 - b. How did you cope with this oppression or stigma?
 - c. How did this oppression or stigma impact the way you viewed yourself?
 - d. Did you experience any other oppression or stigma as a result of another identity you hold?

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